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So Do Values: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Quality Matters

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DISSERTATION

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Dedication

To my mother, Cathy Nagy, whose work—along with that of my late father—

paved the economic path for me to attend university: Thank you.

To my wife, Leslie Nagy, whose unwavering support has made this effort possible:

All my love.

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ABSTRACT

In the first part of the 21st century, community colleges in the U.S. have embraced exclusively online coursework as a major part of their curriculum. Yet students at community colleges face a variety of impediments--including socioeconomic and cultural barriers--to their success in online coursework, and research at community colleges has revealed that success in those online courses has varied widely for the diverse student populations of those colleges. Such selective success of students lends itself to inquiry regarding why online learning has become such a prominent educational arrangement at community colleges. A review of the history and policy context of community colleges suggests an incongruous nature to the adoption of online education at those colleges, with ideological discourses newly influencing these institutions and their classrooms. Online "quality" assurance programs like *Quality Matters* (QM) have emerged to try to resolve issues attached to online courses by locating the problems of online learning within the design of courses, with no acknowledgement of the political and ideological context for the arrangement. Given the contradictions of the online learning arrangement at community colleges, this study subjects the QM rubric to a critical discourse analysis (CDA) in order to

analyze its language practices and their discursive functions. Through that CDA, this study

demonstrates that the Rubric serves as a naturalizer and ideological imprimatur for the online

learning arrangement. Furthermore, this study's CDA identifies multiple dimensions of

ideological discourse within the QM Rubric, revealing various instrumental and econometric

frames for its evaluation of online courses and a set of discursive practices that bolster

specific pedagogical orientations, neoliberal political substrates and administrative trends,

like managerialism, within community colleges. The study then considers the broader

impacts of ideological discourse on the classrooms, faculty and students at community

colleges, including inhibitory impacts on critical pedagogy and other oppositional

educational practices at those institutions, and offers a model for those processes. Finally,

the study examines if change in the QM approach to "quality" in online learning is possible,

and how it might be achieved within community colleges by the actions of faculty and other

democratic means.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I am a community college educator who has been employed at a community college in some fashion for two decades, and who has built and taught online courses for 13 years. When I served as an administrator, I prompted the creation of online courses in numerous disciplines, as I perceived "opportunity" in the effort. In the 13 years I have taught online, I have built and continuously taught multiple sections of online composition and literature courses. The contradictions and problems within my experience of administering and teaching have motivated me to study online learning at community colleges, and to critically engage the underlying purposes this particular educational arrangement serves. The study I am proposing sits at the intersection of my practices of administration, instruction, and research.

The path of my research into online learning is determined partly by my own position-driven, skeptical participation in online learning. My participation as teacher, administrator, and student of educational leadership has given me a vantage point to witness and critique the vast expansion of online learning at community colleges, wherein "97% of community colleges now offer online courses—compared with only 66 percent of all postsecondary institutions" (Community College Research Center (CCRC), 2013). The expansion of online learning has occurred in tandem with a shift in the identity of community colleges away from the ideals of comprehensive community education and toward a different institutional legitimation, a re-conception of the community college mission, for the 21st century. The social function of the community college has morphed away from what the President's Commission on Higher Education defined in 1948 as filling the "indispensable

role of education in the maintenance of democracy" (vol. 1, p. 5). Apple (2000) describes the overall education policy context as "We have entered a period of reaction in education" (p.57). Moving toward a social role which reflects and supports market-based values, community colleges are now institutions whose function is viewed in terms of global competitiveness (see Treat & Hagedorn, 2013), with cost reduction (see Meyer, 2014), flexible-but-specialized knowledge transmission, and financialized outcomes defining the horizons. The values behind such policies are reflected in the evolving discourses of community colleges, and the discursive markers appear in college mission statements (see Ayers, 2005) as well as new trends intended to reform curricula and instruction such as the "flipped classroom" (see Bishop & Verleger, 2013) and the learning paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Kelly, 2015), with its focus on measurable outcomes, learning production, and "culture of evidence" (Tagg, 2008, p 20). Beach (2011) asserts the change in the American community college milieu by describing the institution as once "responsive to the needs of local residents, local businesses, state systems of secondary and postsecondary education, and state and regional economies, as well as the myriad needs of many different types of students…[but] not likely to keep such a diverse set of missions further in the 21st century" (p. 1). The American community college increasingly pursues a mission structured around the atomized student whose personal economy is defined by the logic of the market and an under-socialized self-interest absent a view of the public good (Giroux, 2016). In this view, students are free, possessive individuals circumscribed by their projected lifetime earnings, bundled into vocational niches and endowed with relative productivity, which their "education" must serve. The change is, in a word, stark.

The larger political transformation of the institution of American community colleges toward the ideals of neoliberalism includes a reconceptualization of the institution's economic role away from providing education to the broadest range of community members, with special emphasis on the disadvantaged and underserved student, to substitute measures like expanded online education. Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p. 2). Along with an implementation at many institutions of what Chiapello and Fairclough (2010) define as the "new management ideology," the community college function has been changed so that its programs narrowly facilitate the movement of learners into the market, who "learn to earn," often within parameters and priorities established by local businesses. Hursh (2000) claims that under neoliberalism, "Schools are not evaluated for whether students become liberally educated citizens but whether they become economically productive workers" (par. 6). Hill and Boxley (2009) note how "the neoliberal project for education is part of the bigger picture of the neoliberal project of global capitalism", in which capitalist forces express the influence of markets upon education through both a "Business Agenda *for* Education (what it requires education to do) and a Business Agenda *in* education (how it plans to make money out of education)" (p. 29, emphasis by the author). Baltodano offers that "academic capitalism has entered into the classroom and it has redefined the academic premises upon which the entire higher education system was instituted" (p. 487). These neoliberal norms have started to do more than impose austerity on institutions, or advise and support the

curriculum of community colleges; they have started to transform it, as well as the way those colleges ideologically position their students, faculty, and classroom processes.

The cultural change in community college classrooms by neoliberal practices of educational governance is facilitated by administrative and policy discourses which reflect not only state and federal policy contexts, but the macro-economic strata and regional workforce trends into which community colleges have been thrust. As Levin, Kater, and Wagoner (2006) note, the work of faculty is politically entwined with social, political and economic forces beyond the institution, and any new educational arrangement reproduces political and economic culture through the institution itself (p. vii). The neoliberal influence in the political economy of the United States has been furthered by what Gee and Lankshear (1995) identify as the discourses of "fast capitalism" and "the morality of self-interest" (p.17), discourses which also express themselves in the neoliberal turn of education at community colleges, as these discourse have inevitably filtered into each corner of American social institutions, alongside new social phenomena which could be harnessed to support the discourses of capitalism and self-interest, including newer technologies.

As a major social change tied into technological innovation and capitalist ideology, online education has been a central part of the neoliberal agenda for community colleges. Like other neoliberal education trends, which have "privatized, marketized, decentralized, controlled and surveilled, managed according to the business and control principles of new public managerialism, attacked the rights and conditions of education workers, and resulted in a loss of democracy, critique and equality of access and outcomes" (McLaren, in Hill & Boxley, 2009, p. iv), online education has achieved its heft in the academy through the disruption of established organizational models, the power of shrinking budgets, the

normalization of impoverished human connections, and "largely unrealized promises of increased convenience and decreased costs" (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006, p. 173). The organizational and cultural impacts have been assured through the sheer scope of online learning across the country; the research asserts its use by millions of students (Allen & Seaman, 2014; Aslanian & Clinefelter, 2013; National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2014) and shows that over 30% of all college students are currently taking online courses (Smith Jaggars, 2014a). Community colleges are among the postsecondary institutions most consistently offering online courses, with relatively steady enrollment increases in those courses; for example, a survey study of the Instructional Technology Council (ITC) of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), given to 137 community colleges, reports in AY 2013-14 a 4.7% growth in online course enrollments, in a year when overall enrollment was down 3.5% (p. 1). Clearly, the shift in higher education of students into online learning has been tremendous in scope, and community colleges have been a central component of that shift. Reasons offered (by Sublett, 2015, for example) in the academic press for this shift at community colleges usually include neologisms like "digital nativity" among the recent generation of new students, acknowledgment of decreased state appropriations, and repetition of the neoliberal mantras of "increased efficiency" and "technological development." Yet the political context and discourses actually enabling the shift to online learning have received scant attention, despite how these discourses and contexts have been influencing institutions of higher education through advocacy of organizational change behaviors of the private sector and actuating community colleges toward a new paradigm, what Levin, Kater, and Wagoner (2006) characterize as the *nouveau* college (p. 18), shaped by neoliberal philosophies; and part of what Collini (2012) calls "an

increasingly economistic agenda" imposed on higher education over the past two decades

(p. v).

Examining Online Education at Community Colleges

Amid the growth in online course offerings, education researchers have inquired into

the nature and outcomes of online courses throughout education, from pre-K to graduate

studies. Research delving into concepts of quality and learning in higher education online

classes is robust (see Williams, Cargas & Rosenberg, 2015; Williams & Jaramillo, 2014a,

2014b, 2015) and explores quality as applied to online interaction, learning outcomes, and

other dimensions of online learning. Within the broader frame of that research emerges a

complicated picture of online learning at community colleges, in which the dynamics of

student learning and institutional policy and discourse seem at odds. Access and convenience

are among the touted and subsequently naturalized advantages of online courses; for example,

ITC 2014 Distance Education Survey Results (2015) claim "Online education represents a

significant paradigm shift in the history of higher education. In just ten years, distance

education has…greatly improved student access to higher education opportunities" and that

online courses "enrolled more than 5.5 million students in the United States in 2013 in

educational programs they would probably have missed otherwise" (p. 1). Online education

is thusly characterized as a game-changer, uniquely enabling student access to higher

education, but this perspective frames access as the ability to study while still working, and

positions employment as the necessity and education as the ancillary pursuit (see Pern,

2010)—in line with neoliberal priorities, and the discourse around online learning reflects

them.

However, other research suggests that students in online courses at community colleges experience not just a simpler and more convenient educational arrangement, but continuing impediments to learning and success in their academic pursuits. At the very least, embracing online education "has the potential to present community colleges with serious challenges as they seek to utilize instructional innovations…to expand their capacity to serve a growing and changing community college student body" (Castillo, 2013, p. 36). More specifically, barriers for lower SES status persons associated with the still-present "digital divide" are well documented and include the basic but elusive condition of maintaining high-quality Internet access. Internet access, even if maintained, does not guarantee usage value; various researchers conclude that "when the Internet matures, it will reflect known social economic and cultural relationships of the offline world, including inequalities" (Van Deursen & van Dijk, 2014, p. 507). Yet those logistical barriers to access are only one of a number of issues now associated with online courses at community colleges; studies (Bragg & Durham, 2012; Smith Jaggars, 2011, 2013, 2014a) have found disparate educational outcomes for community college students taking online courses, and more specifically, lower grades for some students upon completion, fewer course completions, as well as a negative impact on subsequent progression toward program completion. In examining student choice regarding online and face-to-face classes, some research (Smith Jaggars, 2014b) indicates that community colleges have begun to face a dilemma: choosing between offering more online courses or more face-to-face sections. While the question about success in online courses at community colleges can be asked from various perspectives and is still being researched, a substantial body of evidence indicates that online courses likely do not offer to all students equitable educational opportunities.

When I observe the above research into online education at community colleges, I find these problems to be significant—and perhaps debilitating—enough to prevent online education at community colleges from providing authentic access to educational opportunities, and enough to prevent those online courses from serving students equitably, in the tradition and ideology of comprehensive community colleges. Community colleges have long been the standard bearers of social mobility in the United States; for example, Cohen and Brawer (2008) characterize the role of community colleges as being institutions which "reached out to attract those who were not being served by traditional higher education" (p. 33), resulting in "community colleges [being] untraditional but…truly American because at their best, they represent the United States at its best" (p. 41) because of their emphasis on access and equity. As suggested by Stern (2010):

> Community colleges are a quintessential American creation, and their century-long history is interwoven in complicated ways with the nation's ideals of democracy, equality, and opportunity for all. Since their founding in the first decade of the 1900s, community colleges have multiplied rapidly throughout the United States. A lofty rhetoric has accompanied their steady rise. Leaders in politics and education have repeatedly hailed the community college as an "apple pie" enterprise—an exemplar of civic values and an open door to skills development, critical thinking, and career success. (para. 1)

Any learning arrangement that fails to maintain or improve access and equity in the education of community colleges is, at minimum, discordant with the mission and distracting to the institution, if not outright discriminatory against the most vulnerable of populations seeking higher education. Despite and perhaps even because of neoliberal and market

influences, incommensurate educational opportunities and broader questions of social justice remain fundamental issues in the mission of democratic education institutions like community colleges. Because community colleges are a uniquely American institution, rooted between the lofty prestige of universities and the pragmatics of secondary education, and came into being to expand higher education in America, their continuing role in access and equity is of vital importance, as they represent the only open-enrollment opportunity for higher education available to millions of Americans which is not operating for the interests and profits of others, and which will not endlessly indenture the future of said Americans through the overwhelming student loan debt associated with online and for-profit colleges, entering what Hedges (2013) calls "debt peonage." Furthermore, conducting unrelenting examination of educational opportunity in America is vital to its democracy because many observers like Dewey (1916) have long discerned that, "In order to have a large number of values in common, all the members of the group must have an equable [sic] opportunity to receive and to take from others… Otherwise, the influences which educate some into masters, educate others into slaves" (chapter 7, para. 5). Accordingly, online education can be seen as a questionable fit for institutions that have otherwise endeavored for decades to create a reality of open enrollment and near-universal access, and its omnipresence may be explained through the neoliberal discourse surrounding online learning at community colleges which builds, deflects, or confines understandings of it.

Additionally, the broader questions of community college online education include whose economic interests the educational arrangement serves, and how ideological discourses mediate the contradictions presented by the arrangement (see Briggs, 1996). Dewey (1916) himself saw that the means of education need such examination, as he asks

directly, "Is it possible for an educational system to be conducted by a national state and yet the full social ends of the educative process not be restricted, constrained, and corrupted?" (chap. 7, para. 19). My initial examination of the discourses constructing the role of online education for community colleges has raised numerous questions, beginning with what Brooks (2009) identified as the "excellent inevitability of online education" (p. 1). Such a declaration provides a clear example of how a separate ideology is in action within online education, akin to what critics focused on technology have labeled the "technological imperative," which has been explored by critical observers (Elul, 1980; Winner, 1986). Ideology is defined by Giroux (1983) as a

> dynamic concept that refers to the way in which meanings are produced, mediated, and embodied in forms of knowledge, cultural experiences, social practices, and cultural artifacts. Ideology, then, is a set of doctrines as well as the medium through which human actors make sense of their own experiences and those of the world in which they find themselves. (p.209)

Studying the ideologies actively constructing online education at community colleges through the discourse of specific participating organizations offers the possibility of uncovering the contradictions and interests, even hegemonies (Gramsci, 1971), whose influence shape access and equity at community colleges. The various discourses that reveal the ideologies associated with online education at community colleges will provide this study with a window into the related changes of access and equity at those institutions. Different organizations have participated in the expansion and naturalization of online education at community colleges, but one in particular, Quality Matters, has played a critical but largely unexamined role in the legitimizing and acceptance of online learning, as it provides an

imprimatur of "quality assurance." Therefore, the ideological discourse of Quality Matters is both the cause and the focus of the critical analysis of this dissertation.

1. This study proposes to critically examine the discursive context created by Quality Matters, focusing on its QM rubric. My initial question is: What critical insights does an analysis of the QM rubric reveal about its discursive structures and their positioning of community college faculty and students in online coursework?

2. One related goal for this study is to determine how Quality Matters functions as a potential specific manifestation of new ideological influences within the institutional context of community colleges, via the discursive context of online learning. The study is also motivated partly by the prompt of Creswell (2012) toward pedagogy with a critical stance—which "exposes the assumptions of existing research orientations, critiques the knowledge base, and through these critiques reveals ideological effects on teachers, schools, and the culture's view of education" (p. 31)—for community colleges.

3. The purpose of this exploration into power and discourse at community colleges is two-fold: to ask if change in the Quality Matters paradigm of online learning and "quality" of online education is warranted; and to ask if power for change exists.

Chapter 2 will build a historical context of community college development, to consider how community colleges became comprehensive educational institutions playing a vital role in American society, and then document changes to the institutional model associated with online learning and other neoliberal forces. Chapter 3 will offer the critical

frame, including a consideration of broader economic forces involved in the discursive context of online learning at community colleges, theoretical and sociological perspectives upon that online learning and its problematic nature, and methods for the discourse analysis of Quality Matters. Chapter 4 will present the specific analysis and its results. Chapter 5 will discuss the implications of those results for practice, present a model for the influence of discourse upon community colleges, and discuss possible directions for future research.

Chapter 2

A Brief History of Community Colleges and Their Ideology

Historical perspectives (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Diener, 1986; Eaton, 1988) on community colleges reach back into the 19th century, when the antecedent institutions of 2-year vocational and junior colleges were fulfilling their mission of supplying industry with workers and managers. At the close of the 19th and the opening of the 20th centuries, vocational training and its related discourse heavily influenced the public profile of two-year higher education institutions. In 1900, there were eight junior colleges in the United States, and in 1902, the first community college in the United States was founded (Kerr, 1991, p. 22); but there was a vast array of vocational schools. As Veblen (1918, Chapter VII, para 1) expressed, non-university postsecondary institutions existed in great variety, as

> fitting schools, high-schools, technological, manual and other training schools for mechanical, engineering and other industrial pursuits, professional schools of divers [sic] kinds, music schools, art schools, summer schools, schools of 'domestic science,' 'home economics"…schools for the special training of secondary-school teachers, and even schools that are avowedly of primary grade; while a variety of 'university extension' bureaux have also been installed. (para. 1)

The instrumentalist perspective of education of this time associated with this great variety of institutions dominated discourse and was manifested legislatively in the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, which funded different forms of career education in agriculture and industry (Roth, 2012). These material forces meant two-year schools retained a narrowly-defined role, although forces in the university system began emerging to expand the two-year schooling paradigm, as some prominent 19th century educators wanted to switch the

responsibility of teaching undergraduates entirely to two-year schools (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p.7).

Exterior pressures from state universities would continue to influence community colleges throughout their emergence as an institution, as universities served as educators of (and the source of credentials for) community college faculty and administration, institutions of transfer for students, as well as eventual competitors within state budgeting apparatuses. But the greatest influence universities exerted upon two-year colleges at the opening of the 20th century was the political discourse around access and equity in higher education, which eventually situated community colleges as part of the drive toward social equality and as a contributor to the community's wealth (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 1) Advocacy for broader access to higher education also became notable in scholarship and politics; public intellectuals and scholars like Dewey (1897, 1916, 1938), Du Bois (1903) and Counts (1932) propounded expansive definitions of higher education, forging rhetorical, philosophical, and scientific links between human freedom, democracy, and continued learning. Dewey in particular is known for having rejected calls for narrowly-tailored education at any level. Dewey's view (1916) emphasized plasticity and habits of learning, given the unpredictability of social and technological change: "The inclination to learn from life itself and to make the conditions of life such that all will learn in the process of living is the finest product of schooling" (chapter 4, par 21). Dewey's central variable of learning is for students to develop "habits of mind" that allow them to keep learning broadly, even as they achieve specific proficiencies, with the belief that such a constellation of abilities and interests best serves both society and students as whole persons, including in their roles as citizens of a democracy. Given the material history of the Great Depression, when such "learning from

the process of living" rarely guaranteed the essentials of subsistence for any American

worker, one can question Dewey for this sweeping degree of confidence. Yet Dewey's

ideological conceit of uniquely American optimism regarding the purpose and capabilities of

public education, as well as the GI Bill and the intense demand for education by the

generations which fought World War II (WWII), is soon reflected in the next stage of

institutional development for the community college.

Post-WWII optimism influenced many parts of American life, and higher education

was no exception. Before the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly known as

the G.I. Bill, and the Truman Commission of 1947, limited access to higher education was

perceived as a reality of American life because of the social, economic and cultural barriers

associated with higher education (Gilbert & Heller, 2013). However, the landscape of

American higher education was changed with victory in WWII, and a new emphasis on

liberal thought to counter the threat of fascist ideologies emerged. In 1944, President

Roosevelt signed into law the G.I. Bill, which included reimbursement for tuition and living

expenses while attending college for returning veterans. The GI Bill began pushing

resources into a higher education system not well prepared for it (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p.

31). In 1946, President Truman President's Commission on Higher Education tasked a to

study the now-stressed higher education system of the United States. That Commission's

report, *Higher Education for American Democracy*, completed in 1947 and published in

1948, presented a six-volume picture of a nation with many educational needs and a system

struggling to respond to those needs. Most notably, the report presents a potent rationale for

universal access to free higher education, and community colleges were a key component in

those goals, in which the institutions were defined as "the next great area of expansion in higher education" (vol. 2, p. 22).

With the G.I. Bill and the Truman Commission, the federal government, in cooperation with state and regional authorities, conceived and assumed a greater role in higher education. This greater role sought expanded access to higher education, which included a push for the development of more educational institutions, with broader geographic distribution, and greater financial support for the system. In substance, the expansion of access to higher education occurred through two mechanisms: 1) construction of colleges nationwide, and 2) the offering of financial support for college attendance. However, another important component was the basic challenge to the cultural assumptions built around the standard four-year institution that two-year schools presented, which began to transform the notion of college in the American popular mind. Brint and Karabel (1989) observe how the emergence of the two-year college changed the system of American higher education, introducing a new tier into the existing hierarchy, which—because two-year institutions did not offer a bachelor's degree—redefined college in America (p.6).

The Truman Commission's recommendations about developing greater access to higher education included seeking equal availability of that education regardless of "the race, creed, sex or national origin" of students (vol. 1, p. 38). The Report also called for institutions of higher education to be rooted in and reflective of the communities across the nation--popularizing the term "community college"—and established the essential principles upon which community colleges would exist: access and equity. With some rhetorical urgency, the Report declares, "It is obvious, then, that free and universal access to education, in terms of the interest, ability and need of the student, must be a major goal in American

education" (vol. 1, p. 36). Furthermore, according to the Commission, local, state, and federal levels had the responsibility to assure that financial obstacles did not prevent any "able and otherwise qualified young person" from access to higher education. With vehemence, the Commission asserted America's need as a democracy to continually expand educational opportunity and achievement, founded on the federal government's obligation to promote "the widespread realization that money expended for education is the wisest and soundest of investments in the national interest," and that "the democratic community cannot tolerate a society based upon education for the well-to-do alone. If college opportunities are restricted to those in the higher income brackets, the way is open to the creation and perpetuation of a class society which has no place in the American way of life" (vol. 2, p. 23).

This philosophical foundation for community colleges, and the ensuing decades of federal legislation to follow, constructed in the abstract a distinctive cultural edifice of higher education based on access and equity--broad enrollment, practicality, and affordability. The American cultural legacy of the Truman Commission is long: as Brint and Karabel (1989) characterize it, "the idea that…higher education in particular should provide ladders of upward mobility is so familiar as to be taken for granted" (p. 510).

Perspectives varied on the primary drivers of individual community college development and construction. Different analyses of the founding of community colleges nationwide have attributed the formation of particular colleges to the work of local leadership, including school administrators, university officials, and business representatives. Some of these analyses (Gallagher, 1994) have sought to challenge the belief that community colleges are a product of a national agenda, and some even portray the local effort at overcoming state-level resistance (Dougherty, 1994).

At the state level, different governments sought to develop their community college system to varying degrees. In California, Clark Kerr, president of the University of California, began planning for statewide community college development in the late 1950s. California's Master Plan for Higher Education of 1960 positioned community colleges within the UC system and sought to make community college education universally accessible and affordable to all adults over 18, and perhaps serve as a blueprint for national use. As Maclay (2003) states, "the state's 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education produced an influential model for America and the rest of the world." Kerr, when he became a member of the liaison committee assigned to come up with a plan, "turned into its chief architect, engineer and skillful shepherd" whose influence helped maintain "mission differentiation between the community colleges, the state university system and the University of California" (Maclay, 2003). This effort both established community colleges as an essential part of the California higher education system, but also affirmed the hierarchy, as "the existence of open-admissions community colleges enables the public university system…to maintain their selective admissions policies" (Cohen, 1998, p. 313).

Other mechanisms emerged in California to examine access and equity in higher education in the state. In 1968, the Coordinating Council of Higher Education recognized in a report that many non-white minority students were being set-up to fail in higher education by a public school system and an unsupportive social environment (Martyn, 1968). Soon thereafter, California was one of the U.S. states identified in a report published in 1970 by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, which demonstrated that the higher education systems of several U.S. states were still highly segregated by race (Beach, 2011, p. 92). Included in this data of this report were California's community colleges, whose student

populations reflected the residential and labor market segregation of the state, although the

report offered no solutions to the problem. In 1973, the California Postsecondary Education

Commission (CPEC) was established as a planning and coordinating agency (Beach, 2011, p.

94). CPEC also maintained enrollment, degree, cost, and other data on California higher

education, and administered federal grant funds to colleges and universities for teacher

professional development (CPEC Press Release). One report, *Through the Open Door: A*

Study of Patterns of Enrollment and Performance in California's Community Colleges,

published in 1976 by CPEC, showed that enrollment at those two-year schools nearly

doubled between 1969 and 1974 (p. 5). Like many other educational agencies in higher

education, though, CPEC found difficulty in measuring outcomes for community college

students, and especially monitoring the transfer rates of students. Although CPEC was

responsible for evidence-based pursuit of equity in the educational system, "to measure

outcomes as well as opportunities," the agency would gradually be consumed by assessment

and accreditation, standardizing the curriculum, and school rankings; as Beach (2011)

describes it, CPEC's role as institutional evaluator would come to overshadow its original

focus on educational equity (p. 95). Eventually, due to budgetary pressures, Governor Jerry

Brown closed down CPEC on November 18, 2011, and its duties were officially assumed by

the California Community Colleges Chancellor's office (http://www.cpec.ca.gov/), although

no mention of access and equity are made in the Chancellor's mission and vision statements

(California Chancellor of Community Colleges website). The closure of CPEC likely asserts

a political shift in focus away from programmatic efforts to measure and implement equity-

mindedness, access and outcomes at community colleges.

The importance of the State of California's efforts to observe, recognize, and ameliorate the inequities in its community college system reside as much in their very existence as in their success. Beginning in the late 1960s, the State of California problematized the access and equity of its community college system, including variables of race and ethnicity. While the tangible attainments of those efforts was debated extensively, the problem was not (and technically still isn't) ignored; and the efforts are emblematic of the national community college ethos of access and equity, as a means to promote greater economic opportunity and greater degrees of participation in society, including the wider scope of long-term humanistic possibilities. The presence of these efforts demonstrates the existence of the ideals of access and equity as fundamental to the institution of the American community college, and a symbolic (at least) challenge to the rule of dominant groups over higher education.

Because of this challenge to the dominant ideal that higher education exists for the middle and upper classes, the national system of community colleges achieved a level of success rarely seen on a global scale, expanding the number of students participating in higher education to new levels. Some critics disagree, labeling community colleges "underfunded, second-class institutions at the bottom rung of highly selective and segregated state systems of higher education" (Beach, 2011, p.125). Cohen (1969) described the institution at the time: "Despite its size, growth rate, and multiplicity of functions, the junior college has not yet succeeded in gaining a position as a genuinely respected force in American education" (p.15). Yet Cohen himself later reveals much by raising questions about the myriad of roles that community colleges began to play, asking (1980, p. 33) "What are they of themselves? Institutions of learning? Agents of social mobility? Participants in

the welfare system? Purveyors of dreams? Contributors to community development?" Others

have argued that the conflicting objectives of academic and vocational education can

reinforce class distinctions and accentuate inequality (Bailey & Morest, 2004). While

concerns remain regarding the outcomes of community college education and gender

(Lederman, 2006) and race (Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; CCRC 2013), according to Bailey and

Morest (2006), community colleges serve more first-generation, part-time, non-traditional-

age, low-income, minority, and female students than any other type of public higher

education institution. However, the reality of the work of community colleges that has

followed their inception has revealed a variety of questions—which scholarship has both

raised and attempted to address in both theory and praxis—about how successfully

community colleges have undertaken their mission, and the social issues and phenomena

which have impeded and complicated progress.

Institutional Maturation and New Challenges for Community Colleges

According to the *Digest of Education Statistics* (2001), there are 1,655 community

colleges in the United States; the American Association of Community Colleges claims

1,123 (AACC Fact Sheet, 2015). Slightly over 1,000 are public institutions and a little over

400 are private, and in the year 2000, 62% of public community colleges had an open

admissions policy. Community colleges have been the fastest growing sector of higher

education since 1970; enrollment has increased 375% in that time, compared to 103% at

public 4-year colleges and 70% at private 4-year schools (Wellman, 2002).

Community colleges reflect many of the economic and social changes of the last 40

years in the United States and its education system, and as part of that, they have been

serving a growing population of students. The American Association of Community

Colleges claims 12.8 million students attended 1,123 community colleges in the U.S. in 2012, alongside the 20.6 million students attending universities (NCES). Yet it is widely acknowledged (Harbour & Jaquette, 2007; Jenkins & Rodriguez, 2013) that the fiscal environment and financial support for higher education from states has diminished, including community colleges, and despite the growing constituency, enrollment has consistently increased such that Leinbach (2005), for example, identifies their role as critical in serving the educational needs of regions. The question looks to be whether community colleges and the policies that direct them still retain their fundamental and defining commitment to access and equity, and how changes in education have impacted the ways community colleges serve their students. One of those changes—the growth of online education at community colleges—has become a major force in community college education. However, as the Truman Commission states, those in pursuit of education for democracy need to "understand, appraise, and redirect forces, men, and events as these tend to strengthen or to weaken their liberties" (vol. 1, p. 50).

Furthermore, statistics regarding the development of the community college may be considered at least a partial realization of the vision of the Truman Commission, but many critical observers retain uncertainty about the community college as a mechanism of access and equity in American higher education. Bernacchio, Ross, Washburn, Whitney, & Wood (2007) express what may be a common sense of skepticism when they say, "Ideals associated with democratic education are frequently espoused, but rarely attained" (p.56). Some observers are cynical of community colleges; Beach (2011) concludes his monograph on community colleges by claiming they "structured the failure of many students by not also providing the necessary support services, financial aid, and trained teachers that would

ensure their success (not to mention the needed state programs to address segregated housing

and labor markets)" (p. 125). But therein lies the rub; even comprehensive educational

institutions—despite their reach with financial aid, child care, and job connections—are part

of the social milieu, and exist amid social agendas and their effects, which in the 21st century

have notably included American valorizing of the wealthy (Wise, 2015), continuing

institutional racism (Feagin & Sykes, 1994; Fenelon, 2003), gender discrimination (Hurst,

2016), and corporate domination of social agendas (Domhoff, 2013). Community colleges

may resist the social reproduction of these oppressive dimensions of American society, and

attempt to contribute their own forms of cultural production, but as Americans perform what

Ross Wayne (2014) describes as "the recursive dance between humans and the

societies…they build in which to house themselves," community colleges are themselves

institutions whose operations depend on the collective memory of their purpose and the

public, and the counter-public, they have served.

Online Learning and the Community College Mission

As suggested previously, online education is an innovation around which concerns

have emerged surrounding the traditional mission of community colleges and the population

of students taking online courses. One of the original rationales for online education, cost

savings, has not shown itself yet; Smith Jaggars suggests, "there is very little concrete

information regarding the cost-effectiveness of online coursework under the current set of

practices; there is also very little information on whether online learning can provide savings

to institutions without compromising student success" (2011, p.3). According to Meyer

(2014), expanding online education allows for three cost-saving economic substitutions—

capital for labor, lower cost labor for higher-cost labor, and capital for capital—that make for

more efficient service of a greater number of students in an economy of scale, given a

plethora of assumptions regarding those students (and a disregard of the question, greater

efficiency and economy for whom?). Still, even without assurance about the cost savings for

institutions, many colleges stumble forward with somewhat blind faith in the technology as it

is unfolding, hoping that positive intents outweigh the costs and social detriments. But now,

enough studies have been completed to motivate educators to ask if online education is a

deviation from the social role of community colleges, and in particular, in their service to

marginalized and low-income students. Results of some studies suggest that online courses

may be a de facto influence on the student population attending community colleges since, as

mentioned previously here, community college online students have been observed to be

from relatively strong academic backgrounds, more prepared at entry, from higher income

neighborhoods, white, and fluent in English (CCRC, 2013). Halsne and Gatta (2002) studied

the characteristics of successful online learners at a community college and found students to

be atypical, with income averages more than 3 times the average of traditionally-attending

students. However, as of yet, and partly due to greater political forces that have prioritized

completion, public policy and institutional practice around online learning has not been

directed to enhance equity and improve educational opportunities for all students in online

learning at community colleges. Still, as Bragg and Durham (2012) have noted, even though

we are "in an era when college completion dominates the policy agenda, matters of access

and equity are critically important" (p. 1).

Furthermore, online learning has undergone scrutiny for its quality. Both public and

private higher education institutions have observed the development of their online programs

and have questioned the quality of online degree programs. A study of leaders at for-profit

institutions suggests that even the leaders of those for-profit institutions have a dim view of

the quality of their online programs (Allen & Seaman, 2010, p.12)—a distant fact, perhaps,

in the evaluation of online learning at community colleges, but part of the landscape of online

learning in higher education, reflecting some of the concern about the quality of online

education.

Also part of the context for new policies concerning online learning in higher

education is the partisan nature of our current political environment, which both impedes and

facilitates the deployment of resources at all higher education institutions. The political

context is almost entirely supportive of the shift of educational resources into online learning

although, as New (2014) observes, "the two major political parties tend to support different

forms of online learning for political reasons" because of their different beliefs on what it

offers students and who is providing the online courses (p.1). Neither of the two sets of

beliefs is based in established fact, but they appear to persist. Liberal or "left-leaning"

politicians appreciate the still-unproved belief that online courses create greater access and

allow more students to participate in higher education. Conservatives or "right-leaning"

politicians appreciate the idea that private institutions may be capturing more of the online

learning market than public ones. This close identification by conservatives of online

learning and for-profit institutions is at least partly erroneous, because as noted earlier in this

study, "97% of community colleges now offer online courses—compared with only 66

percent of all postsecondary institutions" (CCRC, 2013).

But advocates of private sector efficiency have captured the mantle of the affordable

online learning experience, regardless of the veracity of that claim, and have continued to

push for-profit educational institutions as the sustainable model of education, in which online

learning plays a substantial role. Conservative support of online and for-profit learning has also led to attacks on accreditation, which they see as a barrier to the expansion of online models of education. As part of broader neoliberal goals for education, the accreditation reform agenda is often promoted by private organizations like the Lumina Foundation, whose experts extol external and non-educationally-defined "accountability" for colleges. For example, Lumina's former vice-president, Robert C. Dickeson, when serving as a consultant to the Education Department's Commission on Higher Education, notably claimed that "The reform of accreditation in the United States is necessary because accreditation has become too important to remain the exclusive prerogative of the very institutions being accredited" (Lederman, 2006). How this contentious political context for online education will affect its development at community colleges remains unclear, and it evidently did not stop the development of online learning. The debate may become less intense, however, as the national agenda for community colleges has been occupied by neoliberal doctrines and become much more business-oriented; as Beach (2011) describes the change, community colleges "have taken a more corporate and businesslike approach to education. Community colleges have become focused more on money and less on educational objectives" (53)—which may diverge, even widely, from the original mission.

Community College Online Learning and the Underserved

Limited research has been done on the success of low-income, disadvantaged and marginalized students in online courses. Some of the research that has been reviewed for this dissertation included studies that have looked at the impact of online learning on a variety of students, "on all postsecondary students, including graduate students, with an eye to how the overall postsecondary results may or may not be generalized to low-income and

disadvantaged students" (Smith Jaggars, 2011, p.3). More specifically, relevant studies have

focused on the key issues of access, learning outcomes, and completion, as related to online

learning and low-income and disadvantaged students. A portion of the studies (Bambara,

Harbour, Davies, & Athey, 2009) have identified at least part of their sample population as

"at risk," while others have specifically targeted students in developmental online courses

(Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010; Carpenter, Brown, & Hickman, 2004). But limits to the

applicability and generalizability of the studies are stark; the overwhelming majority of

studies address all students without focusing on the characteristic qualifiers which higher

education institutions associate with historically disadvantaged and underserved

populations—race, income, educational background, disability, and family history—and who

make up the core of the community college target population (see Katz & Davison, 2014).

In the following sections of this study, I review research into online courses at

community colleges with a focus on issues of access associated with a disadvantaged student

population. For the purposes of this study, access is defined by amalgamating the idea as

purported by the Truman Commission—of "an expansive, inclusive and diverse system of

postsecondary education in the United States," as noted by Kim and Rury (2007) —with the

more contemporary notions of historically disadvantaged and underserved populations—race,

income, educational background, disability, and family history, as alluded to above. The

research in online courses is also viewed through the lens of related community college

objectives of equity and outcomes.

Key criterion #1: Access. Access "has been the quintessential tenet of community

colleges for decades…[and] it underscores the complexity of achieving the nation's college

completion agenda" (Bragg & Durham, 2012, p. 109). Yet access is a shrinking part of the

larger picture; in light of new policies like dual credit, it has merged with (although some would say faded into) the other issues surrounding college attendance like completion and workforce preparation. Community college educators struggle to retain an appropriate amount of spotlight on access, for it is only with access that success is possible, while also ensuring that "The object of access and the hoped-for outcome of efforts to improve completion is not simply that more students complete their programs of study, but that they learn while doing so" (Tinto, 2014, p. 4). As already noted, online learning has become an important part of almost every community college's enrollment, and each institution has implemented its own version of online learning for its student body.

Largely absent from any discussion about online learning at community colleges is the so-called "digital divide," which has generally been defined as "the gap in access to technology by socioeconomic status, race, and/or gender" (Block, 2010, para. 3). Some research has concluded that "racial and socioeconomic disparities in computer access at school were largely eliminated by 2003" although it adds the caveat that other "recent evidence indicates…that differences in access to home computers persist" (Vigdor & Ladd, 2010, p. 1). Reich (2015) characterizes broadband service in the U.S. in 2014 as having "some of the highest broadband prices among advanced nations, and the slowest speeds…and many lower-income Americans had no high-speed access at all in their homes because they couldn't afford it" (p. 31). Even when community college students often experience disruption in their access to computers and broadband service, community colleges have tried to patch those holes with computer labs, laptop check-out, and wi-fi service on campus, although these measures often require actual physical presence on campus. Additionally, checkout conditions—for example, a two- or four-day limit for laptop

computers, implemented to prevent theft or loss—may be onerous for students. However much success these cyber-wrap-around services achieve in stabilizing the technological element of online course participation, experience dictates that the need remains great for students whose background and experience does not include personal computer and broadband use, and whose economic resources do not have the depth to ensure dependability of use.

However community college educators seek to leverage the ongoing growth in online learning to enhance access and meet the other educational needs of community college students, a substantial population of students have yet to achieve success in community college online courses for reasons connected to the technology itself and the cost of broadband service, the price of which is held artificially high by cable companies that "exemplify the new monopolists" (Reich, 2015, p. 31) in the United States.

Key criterion #2: Educational outcomes. Many studies that have addressed the issue of learning/course outcomes regarding the population of students enrolled in online courses have not addressed how those courses meet, or fail to meet, the needs of disadvantaged or low-income students. Much of what might be considered traditional course outcomes measures overlaps with Key Criterion #3 in this study.

Bragg and Durham (2012) offer some insight into how we can evaluate completion data in the current higher education environment:

Knowing who enrolls in community colleges leads logically to the question of who completes. Understanding patterns of student participation, persistence, and completion is critical to planning and implementing both governmental and

institutional policies that have the potential to enhance student access, equity, and success (p.6).

However, the picture of course outcomes for community college students—let alone disadvantaged and low-income students—is opaque, at best, on a national level. Every study has limits, but discerning outcomes for all students, including transfer students, part-time students, and students who withdraw and re-enter repeatedly (so-called "swirling" students), is not even attempted by the many studies that measure student outcomes in aggregate. Furthermore, much research disregards equitable outcomes; as Baldwin, Bensimon, Dowd, and Kleiman (2011) suggest, the constraints of information systems at all levels of research—federal, state, and local levels—obstruct the measurement of student outcomes, as well as the complicating factors of privacy and disclosure.

Finally, one concern regarding completion that underlies all questions surrounding educators and their role in college completion is "equity-mindedness," a phrase utilized by Bensimon, Harris, and Rueda (2012), which stands in contrast to conventional ideas of equity that are rooted in market-based concepts around the distribution of resources. "Equity-mindedness" foregrounds the socially-constructed nature of equity and situates it within the beliefs and mindset of educators toward students of color and other traditionally disadvantaged groups. These factors may influence the predisposition of instructors in their evaluation of students like they have been shown to influence instruction in secondary and primary education.

Key criterion #3: Completion. The American Graduation Initiative of 2009, developed by the Obama Administration, is "a 10-year, $12 billion program initiative to fund 5 million community college graduates by 2020," and part of a reform in higher education

that has shifted policy focus from access to completion (Carnevale, 2010, P. 16). In New

Mexico, the Administration of Governor Suzanna Martinez has been part of the Complete

College America agenda, which has initiated a wide set of prescriptions and funding changes

for community colleges, including a large-scale revamping of developmental education as

previously practiced at community colleges in New Mexico. A great deal of scholarly

publication has taken place in support of what is known as the completion agenda (for

example, see *The College Completion Agenda: Practical Approaches to Reaching the Big

Goal,* 2014, B. Phillips & J. E. Horowitz, eds.*).* But the current emphasis on completion

instead of access presents a quandary of incentives for many community colleges, as the vast

majority of them are open-door institutions designed to take all-comers, including the

academically disadvantaged. Because developmental education is being seen as part of "the

problem" in raising completion rates at institutions, disadvantaged and first-generation

students, who often lack a "roadmap" to navigate their way to successful course completions

(let alone graduation), are no longer the only population most challenged by college, like the

population conventionally being sought or served by comprehensive community colleges.

Underprepared and otherwise traditionally disadvantaged students are now a financial

liability for many colleges, whose "success" and funding—hidden within what Ball (2012)

terms the increasingly "arcane mercies" (p. 23) of funding policy for higher education--is

being tied to completion rates. Online courses are a part of this larger picture in relation to

completion, access, and equity.

Course completion for online courses presents a number of difficulties of analysis.

Although many studies of student completion in online courses have been conducted,

significant methodological questions arise regarding the majority of those studies, which

have often failed to create control groups or to control for various factors influencing student success after enrollment, including course quality, technical support, and amount of student-instructor interaction (Smith Jaggars, 2011). For this reason and others, withdrawal rates from online courses have been shown to both vary significantly from face-to-face courses and to not vary significantly. When the rates have been shown to vary, the rates have been higher than face-to-face classes, although the makeup of the students who withdraw from online courses has not been particularized enough to make definitive claims about the status of those students. Early studies that included community colleges reported dropout rates as high as 80% in online classes and suggested "course-completion rates are often 10 to 20 percentage points higher in online courses than in traditional offerings" (Carr, 2000, p. A39). This result can be attributed to the demographic that distance education students are frequently older and have more life obligations. It also can be attributed to the mode of instruction itself, because online classes lack the human element of face-to-face accountability (see Porter, 2015). One study conducted in Washington and Virginia examined failure and withdrawal rates among community college students both overall and specifically in "gatekeeper" math and English classes, and found a significantly higher rate of failure and withdrawal from online courses than face-to-face courses, with students in developmental courses failing at over twice the rate of their face-to-face peers (CCRC, 2013, p.2). Furthermore, the study found that those students who completed their online courses performed poorly, 3 to 6 % lower, than their face-to-face peers; students who take online courses are less likely to persist and attain a degree; "opportunity gaps" enlarged in online courses; and the stricter the controls employed by the researchers, the more negative the online outcomes (CCRC, p. 4).

In sum, despite the proliferation of literature, performance measurement for online instruction is quite difficult to discern and often opaque concerning the failure of the online arrangement to meet the needs of all its students. One cannot be blindly optimistic about the equity-mindedness of any educational arrangement, but in particular, it is exceptionally difficult to anticipate equity-mindedness in online course instruction when observing course outcomes. Community colleges have only begun to examine the impact of online learning on their unique role in higher education as bridge-builder to low-income and disadvantaged students. Policies on a state-by-state basis can have a significant impact on the population attending community colleges, and online learning reflects and responds to such trends. Broadly speaking, though, current income inequality and economic conditions in the United States confirm the need for any lift the community college system can offer to working poor and disadvantaged Americans (see Piketty, 2014; Reich, 2015), and if online education positively impacts access for such a disadvantaged population of potential learners, then online learning is a plus in its impact on the equity of education offered by community colleges. However, if the newest course offerings at community colleges are courses whose outcomes are inequitable and insensitive to the unique needs of low-income and disadvantaged students, then those courses undermine the traditional role, mission and purpose of the colleges, as well as serve the economic purposes of, and facilitate transfers of resources from low students to, corporations and their shareholders. Such inversion of the community college mission exacerbates economic inequality, violates the founding spirit of community colleges as an institution for the maintenance of democracy, and perpetrates an injustice upon a vulnerable population of Americans whose only offense is pursuit of their right to higher education and toward a more substantive participation in American society.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Frame and CDA Methods

To reiterate, the research questions of this study are:

1. What critical insights does an analysis of the QM rubric reveal about its

   discursive structures and their positioning of community college faculty and

   students in online coursework**?**

2. How does Quality Matters function as a specific manifestation of new ideological

   influences within the institutional context of community colleges, via the

   discursive context of online learning? What are its ideological effects on teachers,

   schools, and the culture's view of education at community colleges?

3. Is change in the Quality Matters paradigm of online learning and "quality" of

   online education warranted? Does power for change exist?

The Interests of Others: The Economic Context of Online Learning at Community

Colleges

As the online course offerings at community colleges grew rapidly in the first decade

of the new millennium, developments associated with online learning included vast and

expensive technological infrastructure projects, enlisting—and sometimes facilitating the

development of—numerous private corporations like Blackboard, Inc., Instructure, and D2L.

Some of these corporations were associated with publishers, some not; and the category of

learning management systems (LMS) providers becomes indistinct, as some LMS providers

began to offer corporate learning systems and others began purchasing competitors. The

recent history of one of the largest LMS providers, Blackboard, includes 15 separate

transactions and acquisitions of technology providers, one of which included the acquisition

of Blackboard itself by a private equity firm (McIntosh, 2015). The established pattern of

predatory behavior by private equity firms, including over-borrowing, bankruptcy, looting of

pension funds, and disruption of quality in products and services (see Kosman, 2009), and

the potential impacts on higher education's student populations, seem to have not received

consideration by interested parties. Aided by new neoliberal norms, the pattern of

criminality displayed by private equity appears not to have impacted this transaction, nor

even created questions about its propriety.

As colleges and universities struggled to make online education functional,

corporations like Blackboard sought contracts with those educational institutions and have

maintained their viability because of that stream of public monies. These corporations serve

as key examples of the online education industry that came to exist because of public subsidy,

public legislation, and institutional policy, and their profits reflect a potent manifestation of

neoliberal philosophy—that the market can provide and serve sectors of the economy with

greater efficiency and quality than public institutions (albeit with public monies). Yet they

were only the forerunners of many private service provider companies who would emerge to

realize the online education industry, including the subject of primary interest to this study—

Quality Matters.

Alongside the private corporations in the development of online learning in higher

education, including community colleges, grew a surfeit of academic journals, to define and

explicate online higher education, as well as host conferences and expositions for new

products. These journals include, but are not limited to, *Computers & Education*, *Journal of*

Online Education, *The Internet and Higher Education*, and are concerned primarily or

secondarily with online instruction, educational theory, and related praxis (Distance

Education Certification Program, 2013). Peer-reviewing offered editing and publication

opportunities to tenure track faculty, which served to integrate these journals into the

academic mainstream. This journal segment of the online industry impacted community

colleges through the discourse it created surrounding the educational practices of online

education, as well as publishing the individual work of community college faculty,

administrators and staff—creating the appearance and growth of what Giroux (1983, p. 132)

calls the "material existence" of ideology, and how it "is deeply embedded in social practices

that constitute such fields as schooling, law, history, and sociology" (p.132). By their

existence, these journals support the academic interest, study, and debate about online

education, but in effect, further the ideologically-driven process of naturalizing online

education and its being embedded at institutions, including community colleges. Further

support is found in the attention of accreditation organizations like *The Higher Learning

Commission*, with its far-reaching influence, annual conferences, academies, publications,

and workshops. The primary interest of accreditors lodged with credentialing matters for

online courses and programs, considering whether degrees achieved exclusively online

should be credentialed the same. Here begins the foundation of a cultural apparatus to

maintain policies and systems through consent, as well as career and financial interest.

Whether an individual faculty member or administrator teaches online courses or not, they

are inscribed with the ideology and apparent legitimacy of online learning, and the culture of

institutions is transformed and incorporates online learning into its previous processes, or

builds new ones to adapt to it: tenure committees consider the merit of publications and

presentations; grants are designed by government agencies and awarded to institutions for

training of faculty in the new online learning arrangement; administrators and committees

must consider the merit of paying for travel for workshops; institutions assess the

opportunities of sponsoring conferences; and so on, creating new incentive structures for

individuals and institutions, the depth and permanence of which reflects the potency of the

ideological forces sweeping the institutional landscape.

The online education industry and its offshoots precipitated out of a tumult of what

theory defines as artifact production, commodification and monetization—what Swardt-

Kraus (2011) detects when "the social forces of valorization encompass the creation,

realization and generation of monetary values" (p. 9). In this ferment, the Quality Matters

organization would emerge as a provider of quality assurance for online education. The

organization began in 2003 as part of a non-profit consortium of institutions known as

Maryland Online, Inc., as a project to design criteria, develop benchmarks, and create a

group evaluation process for online courses. Three years later, QM was spun off into its own

entity, and it has acquired 900 colleges and universities, through the U.S. and internationally,

as "subscribers," and has put more than 30,000 educators through its own online course in

online design standards. Additionally, QM has offered certification for some 4,000 online

and blended courses to its subscribing institutions as part of its larger effort to offer "quality

standards" to online education (QualityMatters.org).

The primary method Quality Matters uses for its quality assurance in online education

includes a peer-review rubric system for online education, wherein QM trains online

instructors to work in small teams (of usually three reviewers) observing online courses for

their integrity and accessibility, and other design features, through the application of a rubric.

QM (2014) describes the QM Rubric as

a set of 8 General Standards and 43 Specific Review Standards used to evaluate the

design of online and blended courses. The Rubric is complete with Annotations that

explain the application of the Standards and the relationship among them. A scoring

system and set of online tools facilitate the review by a team of Peer Reviewers.

Team utilization of a 43-standard rubric to generate a score for an online course may be the

paragon of techno-bureaucratic methodology to achieve educational aims, yet it is consistent

with educational reform contemporaneously practiced in all parts of American public

education, and the method's popularity (as noted in the QM statement above) has increased

rapidly as institutions offering online courses have sought to standardize their offerings and

address issues of effectiveness, often for purposes of accreditation. Although other

organizations began examining standards for online education policy (including the

American Association of University Professors), and despite a far-reaching debate within

academic literature about quality in online courses, QM has expansively filled the "quality"

niche that only a few, like Blackboard's Exemplary Course program and the Sloan Online

Learning Consortium, have occupied, and QM is by far the largest independent organization

in the field, leading Bento and White (2010) to refer to the QM rubric as "arguably becoming

the national standard for evaluation of the quality of online courses in the United States" (61).

QM conducts its own research (see Shattuck, 2015) into the impacts of its application in

higher education, although much of that research is QM-funded and managed.

QM training for reviewers is offered online, and offers several levels of training for

faculty interested in, or coerced into (as a condition for their continued employment), the QM

review process: 1) Independent Application of the Quality Matters Rubric (APPQMR); 2)

Peer Reviewer Course (PRC); 3) Master Reviewer Certification (MRC), which according to

QM (2014) includes "management of the entire review process and coaching peers to ensure

helpful recommendations are provided for course improvement." Institutions may also

choose to adapt the QM review methods—referred to by QM as "subscriber managed review"

—and incorporate them in-house, although fees remain for such in-house application of the

rubric. Courses reviewed with QM-trained reviewers using the (entire) QM Rubric can

receive the QM logo (see Figure 1). However, many smaller institutions have customized

their use of the QM rubric to review their online programs, summarizing or eliminating parts

they consider less essential. QM allows for such adaptation, but like any franchising service

that sells its methods, it has acceptability limits, and the rubric can be modified only so much

before it jeopardizes QM certification.

Figure 1. Trademark-protected logo of Quality Matters, for courses reviewed.

In sum, QM has achieved a staggering popularity—one might say dominance--over

online education, through disseminating schemata for application to online courses toward

the goal of achieving "quality" in online instruction, although its instructional impacts and

influence have yet to be broadly subjected to inquiry. (Even the potential problems of

providing quality assurance training for higher education online courses, online, have not

been explored.) The central method of rubric-guided peer review is both familiar and

consistent with professional and educational practice in many Western nations, and very much in accord with online learning expectations and norms (although the QM definition of peer is worthy of closer examination), which likely eased the process of adoption. Whether or not QM is expanding rapidly due to its utility, a compliance mindset throughout community colleges, or pressures for any higher education institution to have the "stamp of quality" in order to impress constituents and communicate the omnipresent process of reform, remains unclear.

Still, given the reach of QM—and to reiterate their claim, QM has "attracted nearly 900 colleges and universities, through the U.S. and internationally, as subscribers, [and] trained more than 30,000 educators in online course design standards, and certified thousands of online and blended courses" —inquiry into its nature and impact has begun. Scholarly research into Quality Matters is limited, but some work (outside of Quality Matters' own white papers) has examined the implementation of QM review programs and their impact on instruction in different disciplines. Gibson and Dunning (2012) conducted a case study, somewhat typical in its pursuit of evidence of student improvement, on the implementation of Quality Matters principles in the MPA program's online courses offered by Troy University. Other studies (Bento & White, 2010; Dietz-Uhler, Fisher, & Han, 2007; Holsombach-Ebner, 2013) have sought to measure the influence of the external course review process and quality standards on course design and outcomes like student retention, while still other studies (Roehrs, Wang, & Kendrick, 2013) have examined the experience of faculty while participating in different kinds of QM training, and faculty members' self-identified needs for successful implementation. Finally, a study by Sharif and Gisbert (2015) inquired into the effect of cultural differences on online course designers' perspectives of

quality in online environments using the QM rubric to examine those differences in instructional design in Canada and Spain.

The above studies demonstrate that scholarship has started to locate specific impacts of Quality Matters review processes upon online learning in higher education. The framework in which the impacts of Quality Matters are offered is inclined toward social science structuralism, which accepts an objective and scientific frame for knowledge generation. Gleeson and Whitty (1976) define four features to this model, including that knowledge is a distinctly tiered phenomenon; that the social science knowledge in question is of equal rank with other sciences; that, as superior knowledge, it necessarily upsets any other order of knowledge like those established through folkways and informally-derived understandings; and that such knowledge is binding in its systematization and order.

The limitations of this scholarship for those involved directly in online higher education is a distinguishing feature of this admittedly small body of research into Quality Matters. The body is distinctly *uncritical* concerning the discourse and discursive context of Quality Matters. The limitations of this methodology in the existing research into QM— especially when manifested in the special social conditions inherent to online education at community colleges, and the vulnerabilities of the population served—mean that there is room for critical assessment of Quality Matters and its discursive context, including its materials (like the Rubric) and publications, its website, and its other communications. This need for critical inquiry exists despite, or may be enhanced by, the political and professional context of our times and prevailing belief systems about the goals of educational reform, which Saltman (2009) succinctly presents as such:

In this perspective, instructional methodologies become the primary concern of

teacher practice, and methodologies are disconnected from the matter of what is

taught. The experts who know determine what students should learn. The teacher

becomes a routinized technician proficiently executing what has been determined to

be the most efficient instructional methods…In the traditions of Taylorism's scientific

management, the classroom becomes "teacher-proof." (68)

However, few mentions are made in the literature addressing online learning about the

naturalization of commerce within educational spheres, the distortions and biases that may

arise from corporate influences, or making classrooms corporation-proof and exempt from

the profit-making of shareholders. On the whole, scholarship in online learning barely

recognizes the power of corporate structures in these educational arrangements, and more

specifically, the ontological power to define and distort perception in its accounting of

learning strategies and then stratifying and evaluating them.

Theoretical Framework

As briefly stated above, the theoretical framework for this study is informed by the

critical theorists of the late 20th century, particularly those of the Frankfurt School, who

explore the relationship of discourse and power, and the influence of ideology and structures

of domination upon individuals and groups, including in communication and education

(Adorno, 1982; Althusser, 1971; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Fromm, 1969; Habermas, 1987,

1989). It is in part these frameworks and their interdisciplinary applications that informed

the discipline of CDA (critical discourse analysis).

Discourse is definable in varied ways, and to different ends. Some discourse analysis

is conducted upon signs with the intent of solely describing their relations. The object of this

version of linguistics is the independence and interdependence of all signs and the accepted

relations of a sign with what it signifies. Furthermore, a sign's validity is owed to both its

immediate context and the expanse of all the signifiers that define the language at a given

moment, with the focus of analysis upon how it is constrained to say what it does say

(Foucault, 1998, p.90). Such analysis usually seeks to describe and explicate the semantics

and syntax of discourse to uncover its potential meanings, while context variables, if attended

to, are seen largely as correlates of the language functions. These methods hold that

discourse analysis can and should be primarily descriptive in its analysis.

Accordingly, the CDA framework has "particular interest in the relation between

language and power" (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 2), wherein the context of language is a

social field (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) that imparts symbolic force to, and which

constellates the symbols into, discourse, and as such, is *conditional* to the power of language.

Access to discourses and other forms of communicative events is key to CDA, which targets

social inequality "as it is expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized and so on by language

use" (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p. 2). According to van Dijk (2008), "discourse is not only

analysed as an autonomous 'verbal' object but also as situated interaction, as a social practice,

or as a type of communication in a social, cultural, historical or political situation" (p.3).

Although all discourse occurs in a given time and space—which makes discourse analyzable

in its origins as historical, knowledge-bound, and structured by dominance—as Foucault

contends, "It is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together" (1977, p. 100).

The CDA frame ascribes a multiplicity of power to discourse, to analyze its existence both

through time and distance, and in its material forms. These three central concepts of CDA:

power, history, and ideology (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p.3) —guide analysis alongside the fundamental assumptions that discourse:

- necessarily materializes social relations;

- takes place in power structures and reverberates in human behavior;

- reflects culture;

- is an ideological form of power that dominates, legitimates, and reproduces itself.

As Ball contends, "we do not speak a discourse, it speaks us," as a social, and intermittently individual, reality (1993, p.10). CDA aims to disentangle that cultural means of power and offer understanding, if not remediation.

In related fashion, what makes CDA critical, and as I intend to practice in the object of analysis for this study, is the way its practices are informed by theories, hermeneutic, semiotic, sociological and political, in exploring the construction of discourse as the expression of ideological power; and the fashion in which it transpositions the dictums of values-free, technical instrumentalism in education research. As Fairclough notes, "Language connects with the social through being the primary domain of ideology, and through being a site of, and a stake in, struggles for power" (1989, p. 15). CDA is multidisciplinary and employs ideas from sociology, economics, philosophy, and cultural studies toward its critical processes; CDA employs an understanding of discourse that expands to its context, and develops models of discourse that elucidate how discourses inhere power to economies, cultures and societies, and of specific interest here, systems of education. CDA seeks to lift the veil of pretense over the ways in which institutions, including schools, "act as agents of social and cultural reproduction in a society marked by significant inequities in wealth, power, and privilege" (Giroux, 1980).

Regarding the concepts of quality and accuracy in data collection and analysis, in CDA, "the classical concepts of validity, reliability and objectivity used in quantitative research cannot be applied in unmodified ways" (Wodak & Meyer, 2001, p.31). A fundamental assumption of CDA is that no knowledge can exist without a perspective from which it is gained. Accordingly, objectivity and the role of the researcher-subject remains an undertaking in CDA not dissimilar to the dominant model of quantitative research. In that dominant model, the research situation is arguably dependent upon pretext as much as process, what Adorno calls "the filtered residuum shaped to fit the requirements of subjective reason" (1982, p.506). Consequently, I as a researcher-subject employing CDA act in the belief that discourse, as object and practice, is observable within a framework of power, linguistic interactions, and meaning; but I observe it through a "socially committed scientific paradigm" (Wodak, 1996, p. 20) that is always reflexive, oriented toward social justice (see Weis & Fine, 2004) and hyper-cognizant of the broader social order in which the practices of discourse occur, but does not seek via scientific representation to dissociate researchers, or their investigations, from the social relations of power in which they operate.

To reinforce the strength of this study's outcomes, other methods related to CDA like discourse-historical analysis (DHA), often associated with the work of Ruth Wodak, will be considered and adopted as necessary. DHA studies often adopt a theoretical "triangulatory approach" to structure the concept of context as applied to analysis, utilizing four levels of data to ensure against bias, including "the immediate language or text-internal co-text; the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres, and discourses; the extralinguistic social level of context… and the broader historical and sociopolitical context" (Silverman, 1993, p. 156). Accordingly, this study will include data sourced from

multiple levels of the context for QM and online learning at community colleges, and will

seek to delineate carefully the sourcing process as well as the structural and evaluative role

for said data in conclusions drawn; it will examine the multiple sites and expressions of the

discourse, and the power exercised therein, within the Quality Matters legitimation of online

learning at community colleges. This analysis will be conducted in light of the historical

position of community colleges as an American institution (previously outlined in Chapter 2)

and the student population those colleges serve, in this historical and economic moment, and

the material reality attached to online courses at community colleges. This analysis will be

historicized and connected to ideology as it actuates domination and materializes social

relations and human behavior. Furthermore, the study intends to examine the artifacts and

materiality of the consequent culture influenced and formed by QM and online learning at

community colleges, and the mechanisms by which that culture reproduces itself.

One additional critical model used for the analysis of this study will includes the

theoretical frameworks of the ideological state (ISA) and repressive state apparatuses (RSA)

of Louis Althusser (1971), which posit how the conglomeration of social elements and

organizations utilize discourse as means for power and control in material relations,

economic and state functions, through a constructed process of *interpellation* by individuals;

and thus provides theoretical understanding for the direct exertion of power by institutions

and organizations through discourse. Althusser (1971) includes at the nexus of ideological

power one of those ideological state apparatuses, education:

> the school…teaches 'know-how', but in forms which ensure subjection to the ruling
>
> ideology or the mastery of its 'practice'. All the agents of production, exploitation
>
> and repression, not to speak of the 'professionals of ideology' (Marx), must in one

way or another be 'steeped' in this ideology in order to perform their tasks 'conscientiously' – the tasks of the exploited (the proletarians), of the exploiters (the capitalists), of the exploiters' auxiliaries (the managers), or of the high priests of the ruling ideology (its 'functionaries'), etc. (para. 26)

As opposed to the "soft power" of the ISA, the repressive state apparatus is comprised of the army, the police, the judiciary, and the prison system, but which depends on the tools of surveillance and forms of state power which exercise control through terror and fear. Both the ISA and the RSA may play a role in the online classroom, which in itself is subjected to total surveillance, in the perpetuity of its data. The control and power of institutions over the online classroom, and its students, is materialized in online learning because no facet of the online classroom is unwatched. The effects of such surveillance upon the participants in an online classroom, both students and instructor—and which are further facilitated through QM's attempted standardization of student experience—may be articulated through application of Althusser's model (2014) of social apparatuses and power.

A supporting contributor of theoretical development of ideology and its authority in the constitution of the subject, Žižek offers ideas that reflect some of Althusser's premises but add important elements. For Žižek, ideologies work to identify individuals with important terms, which Žižek calls "master signifiers," that can bind subjects (Žižek, 2012). Such political words, according to Žižek, remain largely undefined, but work to make forced or artificial constructions of reality appear natural or conventional (2005, p. 371). Applied to the realm of online learning and neoliberal ideology, this particular and totalizing concept may offer a way to classify discourse that "is not a simple empirical quality that makes sense of previously existing circumstances, but rather a kind of radical hypothesis that proposes an

always unrepresentable signifier through which these very circumstances become visible for the first time" (2005, p. 277), and a window into interactions between primary and secondary audiences and QM.

Of additional use for analyzing the concept of rubrics like the QM Rubric, their adoption, and endowed powers is the "magic helper" (Fromm, 1969, p. 173). The magic helper is often used by authoritarian doctrines, which harness the unconscious drives away from isolation and toward "symbiosis". Ultimately, this is manipulation to foster unconscious dependence and an extrinsic locus of power (Rudnytsky, 2015, p. 2), aiding the "anonymous authority" that is part of dominant ideologies (Fromm, 1969, p.161) and their definitive manifestation, totalitarian rule.

Such concepts offer important theoretical foundation for CDA applications toward uncovering the structures and expressions of power in discourses and their contexts, like education; and it extends this analysis to the rhetoric, style, and semantic motion of texts, images, and artifacts. When CDA looks at the interplay of economic and material structures—for example, within and without institutional policy—and individual agency via discourse, CDA pays particular attention to power exercised through oppressive means, with the intent of recognizing it and calling for changes in practice and understanding. As Marcuse (1960) has argued:

> Since the established universe of discourse is that of an unfree world, dialectical thought is necessarily destructive, and whatever liberation it may bring is liberation in thought, in theory. However, the divorce of thought from action, of theory from practice, is itself part of an unfree world. No thought and no theory can undo it; but theory may help to prepare the ground for their possible reunion, and the ability of

thought to develop a logic and language of contradiction is a prerequisite for this task.

(p. 69)

That reunion of theory and practice, and critique of contradiction, is part of the goal of this dissertation's CDA of the educational practices and context of Quality Matters in online education at community colleges.

As part of a discussion of power and knowledge, Habermas (1984) examines human motives among epistemologies, ideology, and conventions of inquiry, including scientific positivism and instrumentalism:

The concept of knowledge-constitutive human interests already conjoins the two elements whose relation still has to be explained: knowledge and interest. From everyday experience we know that ideas serve often enough to furnish our actions with justifying motives in place of the real ones. What is called rationalization at this level is called ideology at the level of collective action. (p. 311)

As Cukier, Ngwenyama, Bauer & Middleton declare, Habermas "draws our attention to the power of institutions to select and shape the presentation of messages and to strategic uses of political and social power to influence the agendas as well as the triggering and framing of public issues" (2009, p. 176). Habermas' critical understanding of ideology and the grounding of critique, and the construction of individual agency, informs this dissertation and its CDA of power relations in discursive contexts

One additional important idea borrowed and adapted from Habermas (1991) will be the public sphere. Of particular interest is the shape of and prerequisites for communication in a public sphere, and its relation to the community college classroom. Although the concept of the public sphere has been thoroughly critiqued (see Fraser, 1990; Sparks, 2001),

Negt and Kluge (1993) consider the public spheres of utterance and production for dominated actors, a proletarian sphere, and "the question of how social experience is articulated and becomes relevant—in other words, by which mechanisms and media, in whose interest, and to what effect a 'social horizon of experience' is constituted" (p. ix). According to Negt and Kluge, "The public spheres of production collect the impulses of resentment and instrumentalize them in the productive spheres...The interests that are incorporated in the public sphere of production are given capitalist shape, and questions of their legitimacy are thus neutralized" (p.13). The impact of the online public sphere, and the influence of neoliberal discourse therein, on learning for community college students, will be explored in the study's analysis.

Another theoretical basis in this study for CDA of the interplay of individual agency and organizational power through shared discourse will be provided by the work of Bourdieu (1977). Bourdieu's socioanalytic approach to power relations is a political economy of social being, practices, and different forms of capital, including the symbolic, with which being is produced and distributed unequally. For Bourdieu, individuals act as both agents and predisposed, potentially-dominated subjects through *habitus*, and their structured practices occur in constitutive arenas called fields. According to Hilgers and Mangenz (2014), a field is

> a structure of relative positions within which the actors and groups think, act and take
>
> positions. These relative positions are defined by the volume and structure of their
>
> capital. In their position-takings, persons and groups - sometimes unconsciously -
>
> pursue interests linked to their relative positions in the field, which may consist in

preserving or transforming the position they occupy and the resources associated with

it. (p. 10)

Accordingly, society is "an array of relatively autonomous but structurally homologous fields

of production, circulation, and consumption, of various forms of cultural and material

resources" (Swartz, 1997, p. 9), and individuals act in fields through their own determination

but also through their *habitus*, which is the mechanism for transformation of biologically-

driven dispositions into social dispositions, or "the social attunement of the body" (Hage,

2009). According to Giroux (1983), habitus refers to the subjective dispositions which

reflect a class-based social grammar of taste, knowledge, and behavior inscribed permanently

in the body schema and the schemes of thought of each developing person" (p.89). In fields,

power can be exercised through symbolic violence, which results in "symbolic strengthening

of power relations" leading to compliance, and individuals or groups acting against their own

interests (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p.5). As conveyed by Burawoy and Von Holdt (2012),

"For Bourdieu compliance was and is achieved 'through misrecognition rooted in the

individual's habitus...Symbolic domination through misrecognition rests on the bodily

inculcation of social structure and the formation of a deep, unconscious habitus" (p. 189).

Another important concept in Bourdieu's understanding of power is that of '*doxa*',

which is, according to the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex, "the

combination of both orthodox and heterodox norms and beliefs – the unstated, taken-for-

granted assumptions or 'common sense' behind the distinctions we make." *Doxa* exists as

humans disremember the boundaries of power that result in unequal lots in society; it is "An

adherence to relations of order which, because they structure inseparably both the real world

and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident" (Participation, Power and Social Change

Team). Bourdieu placed special emphasis on the role of *doxa* and *habitus* in capitalist and

neoliberal systems; according to Chopra, Bourdieu "describes how neoliberalism

establishes itself as a *doxa*– an unquestionable orthodoxy that operates as if it were the

objective truth – across social space in its entirety, from the practices and perceptions of

individuals (at the level of habitus) to the practices and perceptions of the state and

social groups (at the level of fields)" (p.421). *Doxa* aids CDA examination of the

discursive creation and transformation of fundamental assumptions and the reflection of that

transformation in institutional practices via participant behavior, like those which may be

seen in online instruction and course re-design associated with Quality Matters.

As already suggested, another essential concept from Bourdieu for this discourse

analysis is the concept of fields. This concept of field has wide applicability to CDA in

educational contexts and models of education and their role in cultural reproduction. Fields

in education, including institutions like community colleges, are frameworks for what

Bourdieu and Passeron term "pedagogic authority" and serve as a mechanism of concealment

for the arbitrariness of said authority (1977, p. 5). Agents within these educational fields

experience and foster symbolic violence but through the ideological "transubstantiation of

power relations" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, p.12) and misrecognition of domination, the

power relations are hidden. Like other pedagogic forms at community colleges, online

instruction operates and reflects the power structures of those community colleges and their

pedagogic authority. This study intends to examine the role of fields in community college

education and how the related constitution of instruction, the positioning of instructors and

the issue of quality in online instruction are all potential actuations of dominance and power,

and the fashion in which they may serve to create what Macedo calls the "pedagogy of domestication" (1993, p. 203).

Finally, the value of experienced CDA analysis found in the scholarship of Fairlcough, Wodak, van Dijk, and van Leuwen, will be constitutive to this dissertation and the development of its analysis. Although previously introduced in this study, these are discussed in more detail below.

Critical Discourse Analysis, Community Colleges, and Online Learning

As a methodology of research, critical discourse analysis is part of a larger study and critique of social practices that contribute to inequality and oppressive power relations, specifically by focusing on the role of discourse in the reproduction and resistance to what van Dijk (1993) defines as "the social power of elites, institutions or groups that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality" (pp. 249-250). Kincheloe and McLaren (1994) summarize the methodological precepts of CDA to include how all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations, language is central to the formation of subjectivity, and all facts have ideological inscription like all signs have tentative relations to the signified, which includes mediation by capitalist power structures. Furthermore, CDA accepts that certain groups in any society are privileged over others, that particular forms of oppression cannot be successfully fought at the expense of other forms, and mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the systems of class, race, and gender oppression (1994). CDA methodology as defined will provide guidance to this dissertation.

If discourse analysis examines the role of discourse as a mechanism of power and its workings in processes of governance, in organizations, and in social relationships, the goal of

this application to a particular discourse medium (online education) and a form of control

instituted over that discourse medium (QM rubric & reviews) is to uncover links between

power structures and dominance in two forms: 1) the instance of discourse (in the rubric), but

also 2) the processes of control *enacted* by that rubric. Analysis of the QM rubric will

observe how, through its precepts—its assumptions, terminology (especially "alignment"),

substitutions and omissions, and the consequent reviews pursuant to the QM ends—the

rubric/review is a mechanism of control of the modes of discourse (that are online courses

themselves, between faculty and students) that is a reflection of power in service of the

existing social order; and whether the rubric's influence on the properties of the text and

context of online courses implements controls over the depth of participation by faculty and

students. The analysis will also seek to explore what van Dijk (1993) identifies as the

"sociocognitive interface between dominance and production" (p. 261) and build a model of

QM review and its manifestations of dominance, and link it with the specific discourse form

of online courses. Furthermore, this analysis will consider of the QM rubric the exclusive

focus upon design. QM in its rubric self-consciously and scrupulously avoids addressing

content and attempts to focus on the *design* of online courses. (At first glance, this divide

between *design* and *content* is an illusion; the division denies both "the content of the form"

(see White, 1990) and the power behind QM's normative discourse, which is constructing

students as learners whose "learning" follows the rubric's script.) The analysis proposed

here will explore how the rubric empowers the QM model and extends its power through the

conduit of interpretation of the team; it will consider the rhetoric, style and manner of the

QM rubric. This analysis will also consider the meta-language of QM's methods, what

Fairclough (1992) calls the "manifest intertextuality" and "interdiscursivity" as applied to

online learning, and observe the discursive structure as a means to structure social practice

with specific social orders. Finally, the analysis will also consider whether the rubric's

influence on micro-discourse within online courses exploits the surveilled nature of online

communication, and how this influences what Bourdieu called the *doxa* (1984: 471)—what is

taken for granted—of online students and faculty regarding the educational process.

Toward specific application, the analysis will use descriptive, interpretive, and

explanatory methods offered by van Dijk (1993) and Fairclough (1993; 1996) in conversation

with one another to derive and examine data from the discursive context and materials of QM.

van Dijk (1993) offers the following criteria for CDA analysis of discourse, text, and context:

(a)   Argumentation: the negative evaluation follows from the 'facts';

(b)   Rhetorical figures: hyperbolic enhancement of 'their' negative actions and

'our' positive actions; euphemisms, denials, understatements of 'our' negative

actions.

(c)   Lexical style: choice of words that imply negative (or positive) evaluations.

(d)   Storytelling: telling about negative events as personally experienced; giving

plausible details about negative features of the events.

(e)   Structural emphasis of 'their' negative actions, e.g. in headlines, leads,

summaries, or other properties of text schemata (e.g. those of news reports),

transactivity structures of sentence syntax (e.g. mentioning negative agents in

prominent, topical position).

(f)   Quoting credible witnesses, sources or experts, e.g. in news reports. (264)

Although van Dijk is referring to public and open discourse (as evidenced by his use

of Parliamentary debates from the UK as examples), his signal markers of discursive power

mechanisms are nonetheless useful in this analysis, since "structures may be interpreted as managing the processes of understanding in such a way that 'preferred models' are being built" in the audience (p. 264)—which is explicitly the goal of Quality Matters.

Fairclough's orders of discourse, "determined by changing relations of power at the level of the social institution or of the society" (1989, p. 30), focus upon a materialist construction of power relations. Pennycook (2001) renders Fairclough's model as one where "the socioeconomic determines the discoursal," and one in which the end is "an alternative order, that is, a social order in which capital does not determine the order of discourse" (p.78). Fairclough's three-box model (also seen as a three-dimensional model, or three categories of function) is central to his work, and visually reflects the approach to textual analysis.
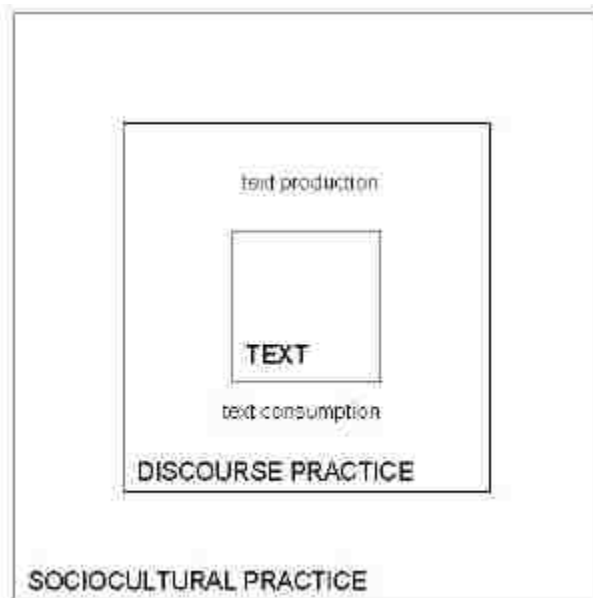

Figure 2. Fairclough's model, 1995, p. 59.

Fairclough describes the three dimensions of textual analysis in this model as "ideational, interpersonal and textual" (1995, p. 58), in which the analyst utilizes linguistic and semiotic tools to scrutinize the "argumentation, narrative, modality, transitivity,

nominalization, [and] voice" of a text. The second box demarcates the possible discourses operating through the text in its production and its audience, and relies more on theoretical constructs to unveil ideological modes of power operationalized in the text, exploring the potential understanding, acceptance or resistance to a text. The third box of Fairclough's model considers the broader social and cultural context of the text and its audience, including power regimes the text may support, conceal or subvert. The three stages of Fairclough's analytical model allow a CDA to proceed from a single communicative event and its textual features, to the dynamics and variables of consumption and interpretation, to sociocultural practices which can be part of the larger social life of a text and related discursive flows of the maintenance of, or challenge to, inequality.

The combination of models of van Dijk and Fairclough will provide this analysis with tools to facilitate critical reading of QM texts and their audiences. The combined methods will aid this researcher in looking for patterns within the QM materials, vital to the discovery of ideological footprints and mapping the modes of domination therein. With both models, I can look at the "top-down relations of dominance" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250) within the social practices at play in QM, its discourses and their neoliberal contradictions, but also the social position of the individual text producers, texts, and audience. Finally, these models— supplemented by additional CDA research—will help support operationalizing the insights provided by the analysis into if not a vision, then at least arguments toward alternative pedagogical modalities.

The following Chapter 4 will present the critical insights gained from the analysis of the QM rubric reveal and its discursive structures, including their positioning of community college faculty and students in online coursework and the evidence of QM as reflecting new

ideological influences within the institutional context of community colleges, via the

discursive context of online learning. Then Chapter 5 will consider the ideological effects on

teachers, schools, and the culture's view of education at community colleges, as well as

ponder if change in the Quality Matters paradigm of online learning and "quality" of online

education is warranted, and if power for change exists.

Chapter 4

Critical Discourse Analysis of the QM Rubric

To reiterate, the guiding research questions of this dissertation are as follows:

1. What critical insights does an analysis of the QM rubric reveal about its discursive structures and their positioning of community college faculty and students in online coursework**?**

2. How does Quality Matters function as a potential, specific manifestation of new ideological influences within the institutional context of community colleges, via the discursive context of online learning? What are its ideological effects on teachers, schools, and the culture's view of education at community colleges?

3. Is change in the Quality Matters paradigm of online learning and "quality" of online education warranted? Does power for change exist?

The focus of this chapter will include:

Analysis of how the discourse and discursive context of the Quality Matters Rubric constructs and positions, in the online learning arrangement, community college faculty members. This analysis will examine if and how the QM Rubric's discourse and context reflects ideological power in instruction and over curriculum decisions, and over students. A critical framework examining social practices, symbolic violence, ideology, and distinction as informed by Bourdieu, will be employed for the analysis.

Furthermore, the role of state and corporate apparatuses and their ideological appropriation of discursive authority and utilization of related power will help situate and analyze the rubric's role in the production of quality assurance for the community college online learning arrangement, and help examine, if found, ideological sources, as well as

legitimations, contradictions and ambiguities reflecting ideological influences. Alongside these ideological considerations, the concept of the magic helper will be applied to the rubric in an analysis of the psychodynamic forces operating within individuals as motivations of dependence and constructions of dominant ideology.

Using key concepts from these sources, the chapter will consider how Quality Matters discourse and context may impact the learning environment of the community college through its emphasis on measurability and other instrumental qualities.

Finally, the pedagogical writings of Freire will also provide a critical lens for understanding the teaching, learning, and related roles of persons who undertake those efforts in the community college online learning context.

This chapter's analysis will be enabled and guided by prominent methods provided in the works of CDA scholars, as they apply to QM discourse, the central object of research. Included in this body of CDA methods is work within critical linguistics, which has the potential to provide an in-depth theoretical account of ideological workings in any aspect of texts which influence curriculum (Hodge & Kress, 1993). Such CDA methods employ inclusive approaches to their analysis, which acknowledges how "any part of any language text, spoken or written, is simultaneously constituting representations, relations, and identities" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, p. 275). Fairclough himself defines critical discourse analysis (CDA) as "not analysis of discourse 'in itself' as one might take it to be, but analysis of dialectical *relations between* discourse and other objects, elements or moments, as well as analysis of the 'internal relations' of discourse" (2010, p. 4, emphasis by the author). For this study, these "objects, elements or moments" are sought in the expressions of power

structures, dialectical relations, legitimating ideologies and internal relations as observed in the QM Rubric and Reviews, and will be constitutive to this analysis.

Furthermore, the CDA herein has been conducted as a conversation between educational domains and their methods—what Fairclough calls dialogues between disciplines, theories and frameworks—in order to utilize transdisciplinary developments which analyze human practices in power relations and contingent social constructions: "Given that CDA should be transdisciplinary analysis, it should have transdisciplinary methodology…which constructs *objects of research*…cogent, coherent, and researchable research questions" (2010, p. 5). Similarly, this study is informed by the CDA precept that "texts should be studied as representations as well as interactions (strategic or otherwise)" (van Leuwen, 2008, p.4), inextricably connected to social practices; and that "representations of the world [are modeled] after social organization," and CDA is "analysis of…texts for the way they draw on, and transform, social practices" (p. 5). All representations of social practices in such texts as the Quality Matters Rubric and Reviews include multiple essential elements: participants, actions, performance modes, eligibility conditions for the participants, presentation styles, times, locations, eligibility locations for those locations, resources (tools and materials), and eligibility conditions for those resources (van Leuwen, 2008). Finally, this analysis seeks to extend the reach of critical inquiry into the discourse of community college online learning management systems, and open those systems to reflection and discussion of their use as ideological in nature. This CDA of Quality Matters discourse and discursive context will be performed with the guidance of these modes of critical articulation.

The first part of this chapter seeks to operationalize research question #1, which means presenting an analysis of the constructs of faculty and students in the QM Rubric.

Along with this analysis of faculty and students in the QM Rubric and Review, this chapter

will present an analysis of the community college context(s) for the Rubric that seeks to

uncover hidden expression of power relations and ideological formations operating among

participants using or impacted by the QM Rubric. The central source of data for the analysis

will be the 5th edition of the QM Rubric, produced in 2014, as well as related materials used

to instruct teachers in the utilization of the rubric; these sources provide the main corpus of

data for this study, from which samples will be drawn to support the analysis. The analysis

of data that drives this chapter required a review of the 43 standards of the QM Rubric, 5th

edition, which can be found in Appendix A. As part of this chapter's pan-semiotic analysis

of the discursive schemata and nature of QM, this chapter unfolds the revelations central to

research question #1 within an analysis of power relations inherent in QM discourse and its

particular context at community colleges.

To operationalize research question #2—How does Quality Matters function as a

potential, specific manifestation of ideological influences within the particular institutional

context of community colleges, via the discursive context of online learning? —this chapter's

analysis presents findings identifying influential ideologies involved and attempts to

determine the import of these ideologies, and their presentation of empowered, or

confounded, pedagogical agency in the QM Rubric and related materials. The analysis in

this chapter will identify as germane the language and hermeneutical structures (formations

which support particular interpretations) of the discourse in the Rubric that inflict observable

symbolic violence to effect, including ideological purposes like the deterrence of counter-

hegemonic educational practices and other obstacles to critical or emancipatory pedagogy,

and the disempowering of faculty over the curriculum of online courses. Symbolic violence

is violence that discursively "act[s] upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu

& Wacquant, 1992), and which helps create or maintain social relations of domination. This

study's use of symbolic violence conceptualizes it as pre-consent—that is, such violence

occurs prior to the understandings of agency, which actualizes consent. When applied, this

concept of the hermeneutical structure that enacts symbolic violence can help explain the

domination occurring via the work routines enforced on an employee like an instructor,

whose work potentially extends the power of ideology over students, or conversely, may

identify or disrupt symbolic violence through subversion of hermeneutical structures and

ordained interpretations. Symbolic violence can alter or distort the relations between

instructor, student, and the symbolic pedagogical realm in which they are operating; and as

Shudak and Avoseh (2015) claim, "Whatever teaching is, at the very least, it is relational" (p.

463) As part of operationalizing research question #2, the chapter will attempt to discern

within the QM Rubric any hermeneutical structures enacting symbolic violence and if that

violence causes alterations and distortions to the symbolic space of the classroom, including

the language flow between instructor and student, and how those alterations connect to the

ideologies otherwise in evidence.

Research question #3 will be primarily addressed in Chapter 5, as examining existing

power and capacity for change in the institution of the community college inclines away from

analysis and toward normative content, and will include derived implications for practice and

recommendations for research. However, before these specific steps will be undertaken, the

larger context of community colleges and the emergent influence of ideological discourses on

that context will be revisited, as these discursive influences have provided definitive

components to the entire posture of curriculum development at community colleges (Ayers,

2005; Bylsma, 2015; Dowd, 2003; Lynch, 2006; Mollenkopf-Pigsley, 2015), including the development of quality assurance in online learning at community colleges.

Community Colleges and Their Ideological Context

As noted previously in Chapter 2 of this study, the evolution of the community college as an institution of higher education in America has been an ideologically-driven process (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Stern, 2010). Driving change in community colleges, these ideologies are part of discourse that influences the greater landscape of P-20 American education, including both P-12 public education and higher education. Because of political, social and economic forces and institutional programs currently active, like concurrent enrollment and transfer policies, any ideology active in shaping the other institutions of American education--like high schools and universities-- inevitably acts upon community colleges. These ideologies are also defining, through discourse and other forces, what community colleges should achieve and how they should make their contributions to American society, and what values the institution should embody.

As part of normative discourses of public education, a "technical rationalist approach to knowledge and its value" has emerged to dominate education practices (Patrick, 2013, p. 2), including those at community colleges. Fairclough (1996) has referred broadly to this phenomenon as the technologicalization of discourse in higher education. In many of these practices, higher education for each individual student is not only defined by its ability to be measured, but it is also structured as a reification of economic capital, rooted in discourses of economic benefit, human capital, and wealth creation. Such models of education portend new ends to a community college education, where learning is constructed as primarily a process of developing an individual's human capital and a process which is self-regulated,

market-knowledgeable, and created for service in the knowledge economy (Tsogas, 2012, p.

381). These technical-rationalist discourses of education at community colleges also

demonstrate how "contemporary practices of economics and discursive patternings of

knowledge and learning interact" (Olssen, 2006, p. 217) in institutions of higher education.

Bylsma (2015) observes that "by focusing on the needs of the market, community colleges

have prioritized economic growth and producing human capital over the social, moral, and

individual growth that historically characterized community colleges' raison d'être and

commitment to higher education for all" (p.7). Now, community college educational

practices and discourses regarding "social, moral and individual growth" exist almost

exclusively within macro-economic frames, and are driven by presumptions regarding the

accumulation of capital in American society and the value of education: wealth creation is

the greatest good that results from community college education, and real education is

measurable through perceived economic profitability.

Furthermore, the constructs of economic rationalism that underlie these wealth-driven

models of public education institutions are representations of class alliances and class power

(Wacquant, 2013), but are not identified as such. The ideological reconfiguration of any

higher education institution, including the community college, into a community wealth

engine depends on a deactivation of democratic functions within these organizations (Giroux,

2016). So that community college education can be decisively defined by capital

accumulation or transfer, the democratic functions being deactivated include the diminution

of shared governance and erosion of status for faculty at community colleges (Levin, Kater,

Roe, & Wagoner, 2003). This reconfiguration enables re-direction of capital flows within

colleges themselves, including from face-to-face instruction into online education, and

creates outlets so that external, often privately-owned organizations can access this capital.

Often, little acknowledgement of the change in democratic functions or the transfer of

resources occurs, given the hidden nature of the discourse conducting this symbolic and

economic violence, but the ideological nature to the discourse, which makes the dominance

of economic rationalism and its symbolic violence possible, is identifiable in its numerous

manifestations—even in a document like the QM Rubric.

　　　For this study's analysis of ideological discourse, related symbolic violence, and the

interplay of individual action within structures, numerous applied methods of CDA are

adopted from van Leuwen (1996, pp. 32-69). These methods include examining texts for

their syntactic exclusion, whose forms include suppression and backgrounding, as well as

many forms of syntactic inclusion. Syntactic inclusion effects the different forms of audience

understanding through various and powerful means such as subjection, genericization and

others, listed in Appendix B. Also, the analysis here of QM discourse in its rubric and greater

context is conducted given the fundamental and "irreducible reflexivity" of "every act of

communication" and how it "simultaneously symbolizes the fact of communication" (Žižek,

2006, p.12). Accordingly, this analysis will observe the QM rubric and related discourse

context for the construction of these discourse forms, explicit and implied agents, and

communication conducted to symbolize the very communique between differently powered

actors in various organizational roles.

Five Dimensions of Ideological Discourse as Exhibited by the QM Rubric

　　　The QM Rubric exhibits discursive features which indicate that it is a text which

functions in and with dominant ideological discourses of community college education, and

specifically, discourses of instrumental and economic rationalism. The analysis below

reveals that when the QM Rubric is subjected to methods of critical discourse analysis, it reveals different syntactic and morphological manifestations, structures, and absences (or voids) within these discourses of dominant instrumental and economic rationalism, as well as associated expressions of power and symbolic violence. The ideological discourse reflects the power of persons and organizational structures operating through the Rubric and the discursive force projected through the institutional hierarchy of community colleges, which reinforces inequities and furthers social relations of domination in community college education. Furthermore, the following CDA analysis reveals various other pedagogical and interpersonal consequences to the discursive power and symbolic violence of QM discourse, and when situated in their context and variations, these outcomes can be defined and schematized.

To present my critical discourse analysis of the QM rubric, I have categorized the findings within five dimensions. Each category corresponds to a CDA method that presented itself as a tool to uncover and identify the particular discursive phenomenon. This study categorizes the ideological discourse evident in the QM Rubric and its context in the following five dimensions:

1. Disembodied instructional processes, which distance the involvement of instructors in online course workings, through syntactic exclusion within the language and hermeneutical structures of the rubric;

2. Corporatized definition of Professionalism, through specification, symbolization, and instrumentalization;

3. Disproportionate Emphasis on Measurable Outcomes and Assessment, projecting instrumental rationalism;

4. Use of the Master signifiers of Quality and Alignment;

5. Requirement for "up-to-date and current materials."

In the following sections, this study will locate and present data supporting the existence of these categories of discourse structures and tendencies as revealed in the QM Rubric and related discourse.

Disembodied instructional processes. What is clear from the very beginning of any reading of the QM Rubric is the rubric's intent to discursively separate instructional processes from instructors. The distance imposed between instructors and the activity of students in online courses is made manifest in the QM Rubric through different exclusionary structures in the discourse, including avoidant prose, a minimalist construction of instructors behind course development, and imposition of a hermeneutic of relevancy (Schutz, 1967)—the implicit underpinnings and vantages that substantiate signifiers, intentions and practices between instructor and student subjectivities--within the circumstances of an online course.

Quality Matters notes on its website that the QM rubric and review process is "designed to certify the quality of online *course design* and online components" (www.qualitymatters.org). The rubric immediately begins questioning course design in General Standard 1 by addressing "the overall design of the course" and its clarity for participants, as perceived by the reviewers. The design and function of online course components are interrogated frequently throughout the rubric, and related questions are part of the application of the concept of alignment within any course review, a concept which will be addressed in much more detail later in this chapter. And yet, neither the likeliest source of the course's design nor the director(s)—my term for instructors and others involved in the construction of a class, including non-instructors like designers and instructional

technologists—of the course are addressed often, or directly, in the Rubric's General

Standards and annotations. Simply put, these agents are not talked about much in the rubric.

Much of the discussion of course reviews is conducted in the passive, without agency or

transitivity in evidence—as if no one designs or teaches online courses—and such passive

structure is consistently adopted throughout; some 213 passive syntactic structures are

present in the rubric, averaging 8.2 passive structures per page, an atypically large quantity

even in formal documents. Whether or not these passive structures directly mention or

address instruction and course dynamics—and a great deal of them do—the impact on the

discourse of the rubric is marked, as it connotes that instructional processes happen without

causality.

Through its pointed use of grammatical structures, the QM Rubric consistently denies

agency to instructors and course designers. The following are underlined examples of

passive structures in the following excerpts from the early part of the rubric: The "General

Standard 1-Course Overview and Introduction" states, "The overall design of the course is

made clear to the student at the beginning of the course": this is a passive structure because

agency, e.g., who is making the design clear to students, is not revealed by the sentence, and

because the agent is grammatically presented as relatively unimportant compared to the

action itself and what is acted upon. Later in General Standard 1 (1.2), the annotation states

"Information is provided to help learners understand the purpose of the course and how the

learning process is structured and carried out, including course schedule, delivery modalities

(online or blended), mode of communication, types of learning activities, and how learning

will be assessed" (p. 1). In General Standard 3, "Course assessments (ways of confirming

learner mastery) are consistent with the course and module learning objectives or

competencies <u>by measuring</u> the accomplishment of those objectives or competencies" (p. 9, underlining mine). Who is doing the providing, structuring, explaining, or measuring, or ensuring the consistency, is clearly meant to be assumed, but through the means of what van Leuwen (1996, p. 33) calls "backgrounding," this agent is denied the simple certainty of grammatically active structures. The effect this consistent and repeated backgrounding of the essential interpersonal facts of pedagogy carries is that the discourse driving the review is one in which the online courses are producing intransitive, uncritical instructors whose utterances and actions in, and potential construction of, the course are de-attributed.

This distancing and de-attribution suggests that what is applicable here is van Leuwen's (1996) concept of syntactic exclusion, and more specifically, backgrounding, within the hermeneutical structure that is the rubric; and that upon repeated interaction with the rubric, this backgrounding necessarily influences and directs the interpretation of reviewers toward the ideological substrata of "student-centered learning." Hannafin and Hannafin (2010) describe how "learners construct meaning uniquely based on personal interactions with society, individuals, and objects; constructivist-inspired learning environments often provide resources for learners to manage their own learning through exploration, hypothesis formation, and student-relevant feedback"; and how, in the instrumentalist core beliefs of this ideology, "the role of technology in student-centered approaches has become increasingly dominant in the efforts of Web-based learning theorists, researchers, and practitioners" (p. 11). Such approaches lend themselves toward the discursive relocation, if not dehumanization, of instruction and instructors to the margins, and these are discursive constructions which can be reflected in the research and pedagogical models offered. van Leuwen describes this process of exclusion as one in which

representations include or exclude social actors to suit their interests and purposes in

relation to the readers for whom they are intended. Some of the exclusions may be

'innocent,' details which readers are assumed to know already, or which are deemed

irrelevant to them; others tie in close to the propaganda strategies (1996, p. 32)

More specifically, van Leuwen (1996) defines backgrounding as one discursive method in

which "the excluded social actors may not be mentioned in relation to a given activity, but

are mentioned elsewhere in the text and we can infer with reasonable…certainty who they

are. They are not so much excluded as deemphasized, pushed into the background" (p. 33).

The sort of de-emphasis that instruction and instructors receive in the QM Rubric is

consistent throughout, and is also reflected in the transitivity system of the document, which

Halliday and Matthiessen (2004, p. 170) claim "construes the world of experience into a

manageable set of process types"—inner and outer experience, material and mental, verbal

and relational. The behavioral system, as evidenced by the rubric, distorts and presents

virtually all behaviors as actions occurring within the functions and circumstances of the

learner, to the exclusion of the experience, understanding, reacting or reflecting of the

instructor.

This alienation of the instructor to the instructional process is not without purpose or

liminal value for the rubric and its corporatized, ideological discourse. Marxist alienation (as

examined by Musto, 2010) and its precise, isolating presence within labor and hierarchical

relations, including the relocation of laborers from their labor, has been examined at length

(Mészáros, 1970), including in education (Mann, 2003a; Mann, 2003b) and online education

in particular (Conrad, 2002; Gray, 1999; Sujo de Montes, Oran, & Willis, 2002). The

presentation of instruction in the rubric with these particular dynamics creates a

hermeneutical structure within which observers and participants see an online course as a

virtual process, machine-driven, or the product of technology, and human participation is

marginalized or minimized in its value; the essential humanness of the participants is given

minimal relevance. Online learning itself invites difficulties for participants to distinguish

between what individual instructors contribute to an online course, what is prefabricated by

the learning management system, and what other participants to the process (instructional

designers, external vendors, etc.) may build into a course; attribution becomes indistinct. But

the consequences of this abstraction—which could be categorized as an inversion of the

"epistemic self-portrait" (Toulmin, 1972, p.2) —in the QM Rubric increase this factor of

abstraction and because instruction is a situation of labor, in which instructors labor, the

abstraction becomes an obfuscation that alienates. The abstraction from the alienating

discourse of the QM Rubric also creates an additional and artificial division between faculty

as individual specialists in domains of knowledge and knowledge production, otherwise

known as disciplinary expertise, and the variety of technical, collaborative and administrative

experience—including dialogics—used to select, present and evoke this knowledge among

students, commonly known as pedagogical/andragogical methodology (Aronowitz & Giroux,

1991).

The QM construction of instructors as inherently alienated from the process of online

instruction occurs across all boundaries within community college instruction itself. The

Rubric's discourse of alienation does not discriminate based on status: full-time, part-time,

tenured, and contingent faculty—all instructors who teach online—are potentially affected by

the way they are constructed by and within the QM Rubric. The QM Rubric's alienated

construction of instructors however, has a possible symbolic and institutional precedent

within community college history: the position of part-time instructors within community colleges. As is commonly acknowledged in higher education research and journalism (AAUP, 1980; CCA, 2014; Kezar & Maxey, 2013; NCTE, 1997), part-time instructors experience abridged rights, lower status, fewer privileges, and job insecurity. Many part-time instructors (and the students of these instructors), as a result of their position at community colleges, endure numerous challenges and difficulties, which can impact their instruction:

> For many part-time faculty, contingent employment goes hand-in-hand with being marginalized within the faculty… their accommodations for meeting with students typically is limited, unclear, or inconsistent. Moreover, part-time faculty have infrequent opportunities to interact with peers about teaching and learning. Perhaps most concerning, they rarely are included in important campus discussions about the kinds of change needed to improve student learning, academic progress, and college completion… [Such] contingency can have consequences that negatively affect student engagement and learning. (CCSE, 2014, p.3)

Furthermore, as the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSE) describes it, one enduring effect of alienated instruction is to make teaching more "transactional" and instructors less likely to employ "high-impact" pedagogical strategies, or "the practices that are most likely to engage students with faculty and staff, with other students, and with the subject matter they are studying" (p.3). To whatever degree these effects occur for face-to-face part-time instructors, the possibility of greater effects of alienation and marginalization occurring for part-time online instructors seems very high; and that the QM Rubric/review only extends, reinforces, or secures such effects in online

courses taught by part-time instructors. Accordingly, the alienated status of part-time

instructors serves as a symbol and potential end of the discourse and processes operating to a

degree in the QM Rubric and review, wherein the instructional mien and faculty are

discursively backgrounded and attenuated at community colleges.

Because a rubric is essentially a syntagmatic model (as opposed to a paradigmatic

model) whose starting point is the first link in the chain of a fundamental schema that unfolds

to classify the agents, qualities and performance of a model, the near-negation of

instructional agency in the opening standard of the Rubric means the review process

immediately constructs online courses using an anti-transitive model, one which backgrounds

pedagogical interaction, and which effectively pushes instructors and instruction to the

margins, and further marginalizes those already on such boundaries (because of their

positionality and subjective identities). Whether the actions in the online course as conveyed

by the text—what Hodge & Kress (1993, p. 164) characterize as "actionals," which constitute

a micro- "version of reality"—are performed by instructors is not essential to the QM Rubric

"reality" of online courses. The "reality," in this case, is that instructors are positioned to be

marginal to an online course and its quality, and are alienated from its impact on students,

though the outcomes determine their perceived efficacy and employability.

Furthermore, the General Standard 1 reference above is one of the few uses of the

term "student" in the rubric, which prefers the term "learner" in its development. The rubric

uses "learner" 32 times; not coincidentally, the term "learner" is highly associated with

certain ideological, marketized concepts of higher education (Patrick, 2013). This discursive

choice reflects a larger reconfiguration of the student into the learner, which has arisen

alongside an increasing focus on the extrinsic rewards of higher education and its status as a

private good, purchased by a customer, who consumes learning (Saunders, 2010). Contrast the QM Rubric's frequent use of the term "learner" in General Standard 1 with its infrequent use of the term "instructor" (—or any agents designing or operating an online course—), which is used only eight times in 28 pages. While it is possible that the review of an online course is an occasion during which the vastly different rate of use of these terms is somehow vital to the development of "quality" in online courses, the effect of such a different degree of presence is marked, and the degree to which it affects the educational exchange goes ignored, or at least unacknowledged. Contrast this with how Biesta (2005, p. 62) characterizes presence in education, as opposed to learning:

> While learning as acquisition is only about getting more and more, learning as responding is about showing who you are and where you stand. It is about what I have called elsewhere a process of "coming into presence." Coming into presence is not something that individuals can do alone and by themselves. To come into presence means to come into presence in a social and intersubjective world, a world we share with others who are not like us. Coming into presence also isn't something that we should understand as the act and the decision of a pre-social individual.

What this learner-centered process promulgated by the QM Rubric inhibits is a clear connection of the teacher to the subjectivity of the student, whose subjectivity is chained to the identity of "learner." Learners consume, not teach or intellectually engage with other students or their instructor; nor can they control the degree of the processes or outcomes, the nature of their social contributions, major variation in the role(s) they play in the course, nor even the interpersonal relationships, as defined by Biesta's "coming into presence." This discursive positioning of the student could impede or entirely prevent the course from being a

vehicle for an instructor to derive a clear understanding of the needs of an individual as a

human being, whose educational need may be to engage in problem posing and critical

engagement with society, not as a consumer and economic agent operating within a model

intrinsically defined by the search for returns on human capital. Thus, both the student and

the instructor who is marginalized in an online course writhe within ideological constraints,

isolation, to assert an identity—or at least an identity not imprisoned within an ideological,

consumeristic template for interaction--as well as to assert or accept pedagogical guidance

akin to Freire's *praxis*, which would in a critical pedagogy otherwise intersubjectively

materialize in their interrelations. To reiterate Biesta's (2005, p. 62) claim, "Coming into

presence is not something that individuals can do alone and by themselves."

To contrast with this discursive exclusion propounded by the QM Rubric, Freire

offers dialogics, or dialogue-based instruction, as an instrument to liberate the dominated

student. Freire's model (1970) promotes the creation of a shared discourse through the use of

cooperation, unity, organization and cultural synthesis, and suggests that populist dialogue is

a necessity to social and personal advancement, as "only dialogue, which requires critical

thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking" (p.90). Furthermore, inhibiting

dialogue of subjects—its own form of violence--dehumanizes those subjects, and supports

the status quo:

> Critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with
>
> the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle for liberation. The content of
>
> that dialogue can and should vary in accordance with historical conditions and the
>
> level at which the oppressed perceive reality. But to substitute monologue, slogans,

and communiques for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the

instruments of domestication (p. 65).

Whatever curricula and discursive forces that seek otherwise are instead creating a

top-down model of greater control. Church (in Canaan & Shumar, 2008, p. 39) describes the

increasing forms of compulsion and de-individualization operating on faculty as an 'audit

culture':

> The programmatic language of instructional design and educational technology
>
> voiced in the framework of collaboration, quality control, and rational administration
>
> and assessment is shifting higher education more rapidly towards an 'audit culture.'
>
> Within the framework of an audit culture, processes of control are established, often
>
> in the name of transparency and consumer protection, that are simply not top-down
>
> command structures where administrators are telling faculty what to do and how to do
>
> it…rather, within an audit culture, mechanisms of self-assessment and review are
>
> established in which a much more neoliberal model of management, the new
>
> managerialism, occurs. Instead of being directly controlled from above, under the
>
> guise of professionalism, methods of accountability are used administratively to
>
> evaluate whether sufficient self-controls are in place to guarantee professional
>
> behavior and conduct to justify the protections of academic freedom.

Accordingly, the discourse of the QM Rubric can be seen as a discursive support for a

system which isolates instructors in an audit culture, which operates within an instrumental

rationalism that accords instructors their "freedoms" and agency only when they comply with

discursive norms enforcing a "false" foregrounding of student experience. The student-

centered model—which in superficial appearance is for their welfare, as it portends more

attention to their "learning needs" —instead, constitutes a form of systemic dominance, demanding the exercise of hierarchical power in linguistic and symbolic form, and creates what Macedo terms broadly as a pedagogy of exclusion and a literacy of power (2006, p. 1). In this kind of instruction—which necessarily includes symbolic violence toward student subjectivities and distances these instructors not only from their students through the online medium but from alternative teaching cultures, with alternative priorities, including, for example, pedagogical models that stress intersubjectivity, coming into presence, and role fluidity (as opposed to merely "flipped" rigid roles), and the joint instructor-student construction and advancement of critical subjectivities—as well as organizational models promoting what I would term a "deep" shared governance.

Corporatized definition of professionalism, through legitimation and instrumentalization. The QM Rubric's operational definition of professionalism includes various components which contribute to its ideological, corporatized orientation toward instruction and education. Like rubrics across the field of education, the QM Rubric carefully divides the information presented to its audience, visually segmenting the document into three columns. In the left column, the General Standard is presented and specified as the reader moves eyes down the page. In the central column, a points value is presented, for purposes of evaluation during the application of the Rubric in the review of online courses. The right column of the Rubric presents the detailed annotations, which explicate and exemplify the meaning of the Standards. All of this would likely be familiar to the participants in a QM review, as the rubric design represents a social practice very familiar to those in higher education: rubric-based evaluation. However, at the base of every page of the Rubric is an additional symbol, one whose continual, page-by-page presence is not typical

practice in academic research: the copyright © mark. Alongside the symbol is the text

"Maryland Online Inc., and "All rights reserved." (My downloaded copy presents this

intellectual property information 28 times.) The orchestration of the copyright mark,

organizational owners, and legalese is a notable, if not intrusive, form of discursive

legitimation to almost any reader of the QM Rubric.

　　　　While copyright information serves broad purposes, including identifying the material

as proprietary and owned solely by the propagating entity, this repeated presentation of the

copyright strikes a hard note (for marginalia) of property rights. The repeated presentation of

this marker is comparable to a brand or other marker of commercial product, and enforces to

its audience at their very approach the ideological assertion of property rights as vital

components to the soundness and value of the model therein. Holt (2002) notes the power of

branding, wherein "consumer culture is organized around the principle of obeisance to the

cultural authority of marketers. People who have internalized the consumer culture implicitly

grant firms the authority to organize their tastes" (p.71). How much consumer culture

informs the online behavior of participants in online learning is an interesting question, but

Horkheimer and Adorno (1944) advance an argument of cultural authority that acknowledges

overlap between forms of cultural production; and QM, through its atypical emphasis of the

copyright and rights over its Rubric-cum-intellectual property, is an organization dedicated to

symbolically asserting within its audience the corporately-owned and corporately-franchised

legitimacy of its work—as part of what Lipman (2011) identifies as "a global neoliberal

thrust toward the commodification of all realms of existence" (par. 9).

　　　　Alongside this corporatized model of property enforcement by the QM Rubric, QM

demonstrates its willingness to employ the rubric as a practice of enforcing social regulations

and expectations for language. In General Standard 1, the QM Rubric surreptitiously positions instructors as tools of enforcement regarding student use of language in online courses. Specifically, QM course reviewers are asked to evaluate the clarity of the course's standards for communication by "learners" in the annotation for 1.3, "Examples of etiquette considerations":

1. Expectations for the tone and civility used in communicating with fellow learners and the instructor, whether the communication is by electronic means or by telephone or face-to-face

2. Expectations for email content, including 'speaking style' requirements (e.g., standard English as opposed to popular abbreviations used online and regional colloquialisms)

3. Spelling and grammar expectations

4. Awareness of and sensitivity to cultural differences

To reinforce etiquette and civility, the instructor may provide a link or reference to the institution's student handbook or code of conduct.

The expectations of this section of the Rubric itself are marked in both their framing of the use of language in the online classroom and their prescriptive assumptions regarding this question, seemingly identifying it as what Edwards (1997, p. 89) calls a "ready-made issue" in discourse. By pointing to "standard English" and "spelling and grammar expectations" without any definition of Standard English, further discussion of linguistic variation, the dynamic nature of language, or the value of subcultural dialects and "regional colloquialisms," the rubric frames course valuation, and quality, within instructor enforcement of dominant cultural expectations of Standard American English, whose

oppressive quality has been well-documented (Goodman, 2015; Lippi-Green, 1997; Torres-Rivera, West-Olatunji, Conwill, Garrett, & Phan, 2008) as well as foundational to corporate processes (Neeley, 2012). Alongside Bourdieu's (1984) address of linguistic variation as reflecting oppressive social structures and hierarchy, CDA offers the specific analytic tool of "recontextualization", which

> may add evaluations to elements of social practice, or to social practices (or parts of them) as a whole. In themselves, such judgments are not legitimations, and they may appear in texts without being further legitimized. Yet they ultimately are always connected with legitimations. (van Leuwen, 2008, p. 21)

In this case, the QM rubric review appears to operate as a practice designed to maintain, through online course design, symbolic boundaries between individuals occupying different social positions with varying linguistic resources and social capital. This maintenance of symbolic boundaries occurs within what Bourdieu calls a "classificatory struggle" of distinction and which amounts to only one of the many modalities through which "symbolic power" is exercised, relying on how the "social order is progressively inscribed in people's minds' through 'cultural products' including systems of education, language, judgements, values, methods of classification and activities of everyday life" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 471). QM Reviews position instructors to enforce such inscription of the social order as manifested in Standard English.

Furthermore, in operating through the review process, the QM Rubric here relies on reviewers' prior understandings of what the terms "civility," and "sensitivity to cultural differences" mean as invoked, and how these potentially divergent concepts are applied and shaped in context. As Kisselburgh and Dutta (2009) note, "subaltern groups challenge

dominant structures and processes within social systems, not only through articulation of

oppositional content, but also by fundamentally challenging the marginalization in dominant

discursive spaces" although

>what constitutes civil communication is fundamentally tied to the goals and
>
>objectives of dominant social actors within the discursive spaces, and to the value
>
>systems embodied by these dominant actors. Consequently, the normative ideal of
>
>civility is a white, middle-class, *corporatized* notion. (p.124, italics by authors)

How the QM Rubric defines civility ultimately connects back to the essential

definition of quality as offered by the QM Rubric—as civility is the baseline necessity for

quality social interaction--and is arguably tied into cultural norms and social positioning,

since the ability to define what is civil, as well as what has quality, is power (Torres-Rivera

2013). Various studies (Smith, 1999; Trimble & Fisher, 1999) have indicated that

individuals with the power to define constructs of knowledge may misrepresent, omit,

amplify and/or expand information to maintain their own supremacy and authority to the

detriment of the disempowered, not to mention expand their organizational reach.

Furthermore, quality can be seen as a master signifier, a concept which will be addressed in

more depth later in this chapter, and which likely extends the power of such a hierarchical

construct to the affective domains of understanding, blending the experience of abreaction

into the power of the constructed, conceptual knowledge. Partly because instrumental

rationalism is associated closely with colonial systems of social power and hierarchy, anti-

colonial and indigenous epistemologies (Brayboy, Castagno, & Maughan, 2008) offer a

profound critique of associated neoliberal instrumental rationalism and market-based

knowledge production. In the imperial context, cultural dominance often results in a

"limiting and reductionist concept of what is quality and what constitutes quality of knowledge" (Torres-Rivera, 2013, p. 1), reflecting the texture and breadth of the power mechanisms of colonialism. But "quality" makes for a small sample of a vast discursive context in which "the dynamics of language in the United States have been used as a vehicle to impose, disseminate and maintain the 'status quo' of the dominant culture" (Torres, 2009, p. 13), although clearly, in online courses at community colleges, QM has assumed that mantle.

Finally, "professionalism" as used in the QM Rubric and applied to instructors in the review process is an undefined concept. Consider the possible variation in working definitions of professionalism at an Ivy League university, versus a small technical college in suburban Chicago, versus a community college in the San Joaquin Valley. In General Standard 1, reviewers are presumed to be able to immediately employ a shared definition of "professionalism," as they are enlisted to evaluate such "professionalism" through one introductory class component typically, but not exclusively, a video posted by the instructor and the "connection" the instructor offers in their self-introduction in the course being reviewed. The annotation of General Standard 1.8 states the preferred outcome:

> The initial introduction creates a sense of connection between the instructor and the learners. It presents the instructor as professional as well as approachable…Expectations of the relationship and communication style between teacher and learner are culturally influenced. Including information about the role of the instructor and how to address the instructor is helpful to learners from all backgrounds. The self-introduction helps learners get to know the instructor and, in addition to the essentials mentioned above, could include:

1. Comments on teaching philosophy

2. A summary of past experience with teaching online courses

3. Personal information such as hobbies, family, travel experiences, etc.

4. A photograph, audio message, or video (including alternative formats to ensure accessibility).

The above approach has no more claim to establishing a "connection" with a student than any other; moreover, the "professionalism" of instructors as part of the process of establishing "connection" with students is being shaped by the context of the QM Rubric and its authoritarian ideological conceptions of what education and the construction and dissemination of knowledge means, and to what ends it should be done. Even academicians mentoring graduate students—budding professionals, if you will—grapple with the politics of professionalism; as Fish (2016) describes it, often, "the current definitions of 'professional' and 'academic' are too narrow and mask an ideological position that is not announcing itself" (para. 15). With the definition of professionalism contested as such, the structure of the rubric, which situates the instructors' identities for each student within the *doxa* of dominant ideology, is driven by current economic imperatives wrapped in the posture of "quality" and "professionalism" offered by the QM review rather than the role of instructors as they might imagine it themselves, or in educational notions completely tied to traditional liberal education, emancipatory or critical pedagogy. As Church (2008) posits:

in the globalized and reterritorialized world that neoliberalism has wrought for more than a quarter century in the increasingly audited and assessed conditions of higher education in the United States, individual identity is tied both to institutional demands,

individual anxieties and imaginative struggles with fashioning a professional self. (p.

43)

This QM Rubric model appears to substitute a model of knowledge exchange rooted

in the "knowledge economy" (Powell & Snellman, 2004), in which students are consumers

and disciplinary knowledge is consumed, instead of exploring human sensibilities and the

pursuit of questions of meaning that arise from students' existence and subjectivities, or the

exchange of ideas about their wellbeing and their conception of what constitutes a

worthwhile life. The enlightened pose struck by the Rubric through its mention of

"culturally influenced" relations between instructor and student offers belies its own attempt

at producing such relations within a hegemonic framework of instrumental rationalism and

educational consumption, wherein success is reduced "to individual merit, and schooling

becomes one more consumer choice where one benefits by choosing wisely" (Hursh &

Martina, 2003, p. 34). Furthermore, the QM Rubric and its definition of professionalism

appears here to be an extension of the "social reality that is identified with an economic value

system that shapes all reality in its own image" (Brancaleone & O'Brien, 2011, p. 502),

including what it means for educators to be professional.

Disproportionate emphasis on measurable outcomes and assessment, imposing

instrumental rationalism. In the annals of critical theory, instrumental rationalism has been

frequently critiqued in Marxist terms (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2002; Kellner, 1989; Lukács,

1968). Instrumental rationalism as part of educational doctrine has been noted by Hauser

(2014) as a process of the systematic limitation of forms of thought, in which everything

needs to be calculated and have formal equivalence and accordingly, how instrumental

reasoning can create a new form of totalitarian thought, limiting human creativity,

individuality, and uniqueness. Market-oriented educational approaches have also been criticized for their reliance upon instrumental rationalism (Giroux, 2005, 2009, 2014a; Hatcher, 2006; Hill, 2005; Hill & Kumar, 2009) —especially in P-12, for the reliance on standardized testing; as Kornblut (quoted in Giroux, 2009, p.35) puts it, "Instead of providing a decent critical education to poor young people, neoliberals and neoconservatives serve them more standardized tests." Patrick (2013, p. 2) claims that "neoliberalism in education policy tends to engender a technical rationalist approach to knowledge and its value," because "Education has been incorporated into an agenda of wealth production at nation state level via discourses relating to the knowledge economy." Mockler (2013) argues that

> regulatory and measurement-oriented performance cultures, often operationalized in the application of professional teaching standards, have had a damaging effect on teacher autonomy and professional identity. In England, the United States and Australia, these standards have formed the basis for accreditation processes with the dual purposes of providing a level of 'quality assurance' and positioning teaching in some way alongside those 'real' professions such as medicine and law. (p. 37)

Knowledge itself is prone to determinism driven by the social relations of production as well as the cultural frameworks of race, gender, and sexuality (McLaren, 2015). Despite these powerful and sometimes determining factors in the shape and application of knowledge, it is most often uncritically looked to as the basis for education even in models of corrupted processes, such as Freire's banking concept. Post-structuralist perspectives on knowledge approach it as it is extremely difficult to define precisely; according to Scarborough and Burrell,

Knowledge is a slippery and elusive concept, and every discipline has its own secret

realization of it. Problems of interpretation haunt every attempt to use the concept

effectively, such as that even basic typologies that talk about, say, formal versus tacit

knowledge (Polanyi, 1967) actually can be quite meaningless in certain contexts.

(1996, p. 178)

Alvesson's (2001) summary is quite pragmatic: "Many authors acknowledge that

knowledge is very difficult to define but treat it nevertheless as a valuable capacity which can

bring about good results" (p. 865). This tentative quality to knowledge, its transmission and

production, invites responsible observers to carefully weigh the value of instrumental

rationalist conceptualizations of educational outcomes and aims—"education for the real

world" —especially those identifiable as outcomes of ideologically-laden policies

commodifying education and the self of the individual student.

Not all educational theory has defined knowledge and related educational outcomes

as measurably monetized and invariably built upon wealth creation. Freire's (1998)

definition of knowledge envisages knowledge construction in education as a multi-faceted

process that relies upon a symmetrical connection of equality and curiosity between

instructor and student:

knowing is a social process, whose individual dimension, however, cannot be

forgotten or even devalued. The process of knowing, which involves the whole

conscious self, feelings, emotions, memory, affects, an epistemologically curious

mind, focused on the object, equally involves other thinking subjects, that is, others

also capable of knowing and curious. This simply means that the relationship called

"thinking" is not enclosed in a relationship "thinking subject - knowable object"

because it extends to other thinking subjects. (p. 92)

In spite of these criticisms and the additional critique they may imply, the QM Rubric

operates in a highly instrumental rationalist mode, with its review process built around

demands for measurable learning outcomes of all components of activities and assessment.

In a variety of materials QM uses to disseminate its econometric approach to online learning,

including its marketing materials, the instrumental rationalist mode of QM is discernable, and

revealed through critical discourse analysis, demonstrates this ideological dimension of the

organization's operations.

This study's first example of QM's instrumental rational mode as evidenced by its

discourse is sourced from the newsletter published by QM in July, 2016 (Quality Matters,

2016). This newsletter includes a section purporting to respond to QM users' concerns about

the two-tier structure of its Rubric (see Appendix C.) The section is titled "Research

Spotlight: Why Is There a Need for Module/Unit Level Learning Objectives", and in a

format comparable to common Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) format, the newsletter

seeks to assuage QM Rubric user concerns. Referring back to the QM Rubric itself and

indirectly emphasizing the centrality of that text to all that is QM, in the first paragraph, the

section conveys that QM's methods have both a design that has endured and a history of

significance:

The need for learning objectives at both the module level and the course level has

been stated in the QM Rubric since its inception. In fact, the **QM Rubric Specific**

Review Standard 2.2 states:

The module/unit learning objectives or competences describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives. (QM Newsletter)

The inclusion of "its inception. In fact," in the above statement syntactically constructs it with a recontextualization (van Leuwen, 2008), a common practice in the discourse of organizations promoting specific practices to a large audience. This maneuver of recontextualization suspends the experience of frustration for the online course designer or instructor of its requirement for two seemingly duplicative sets of objectives, then relocates the reader's experience within the history of the organization, "since its inception," along with a reconfiguring of the question into one of "fact" with the opening of the next sentence. With this recontextualization, the reader is positioned to defer from the reader's own experience to the "Standard" of the Rubric, which asserts the organization's "need" for both levels of "learning objectives" by then directing the reader to terms discursively forming the ideological context for QM's Rubric: " objectives… competencies… outcomes …measurable …consistent." Here is only the first imposition of the "measurable" preoccupation of QM, but it is powerful enough to transform and submerge a reader's objection to the oppressive, and some would say overwhelmingly bureaucratic, practice of building for an online course two sets of hierarchically-organized learning objectives. As van Leuwen states about recontextualization maneuvers:

> Such rearrangements are motivated by the concerns of the recontextualizing practice: the generic structure of the article, with its stages of "drawing the reader in," "explaining the problem," and "providing the solutions in the form of adhortations…", necessitates them. The activities are rearranged to suit the persuasive and hortatory purposes which constitute them as a social practice. (2008, p. 18)

In this case, the QM discourse seeks to rearrange the readers' concerns into compliance by subjugating them within a discursive affirmation of the necessity of the objectives in support of the student as learner, consuming learning as a measurable and economic object. This ideological discursive maneuver positions online pedagogy as an animation of instrumental rationalism.

In this segment of the QM July 2016 newsletter, another example of QM's instrumental rationalism adopts a different tack, but reveals similar ideological characteristics concerning online learning and the Review process. The segment states:

Instructional design emphasizes the need for courses to provide an organizational, sequencing framework to guide students to targeted learning and assigns particular importance to informing learners of the specific chunks of learning that will be the target within a doable time frame (a unit or module). (QM Newsletter)

Not only does this segment emphasize that student acquisition of knowledge will require a designed framework students can have no part in constructing, but its definition of knowledge as existing as a punctuated moment the knower has arrived at—a "target" which must be achieved through the processing of "chunks" in a "doable time frame"—regards the entire learning situation as a consumptive act occurring in a unit of time subject to the constraints of implied but capitalized limits.

It is tempting to claim that the segment of the QM Newsletter from July 2016 offers a sufficient sample of the organization's discursive habits to draw conclusions about QM ideology and instrumental rationalism. However, this study is primarily based on a study of the discourse present in the QM Rubric and how its power acts upon the community college

learning environment through online courses, faculty, and students.   Thus attention must turn to the QM Rubric and the evidence it presents.

Looking at the QM Rubric, and specifically, General Standard 2, the measurable objectives or outcomes (or competencies) are conceptually tied to the central or core concept of alignment, "which ensures that critical course components work together to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning outcomes" (p. 5). The terms "critical" and "work together" are not otherwise defined. Furthermore, the requirement states

> measureable course learning objectives or competencies precisely and clearly
> describe what learners will learn and be able to do if they successfully complete the
> course. Course objectives or competencies describe desired learner mastery using
> terms that are specific and observable enough to be measured by the instructor. (p. 5)

The QM Rubric's demand for such instrumental rationalism may be an example of how "knowledge often creates problems through imprinting a norm of how things should be and indicating a gap between current imperfections and the ideal" (Alvesson, 2001, pp. 865-66). Moreover, it reflects the ongoing penchant of education policy to position individuals as future workers (Down, 2009) and to evaluate all education as a mechanism toward such ends. Boud (1995) suggests that "Assessment acts as a mechanism to control students that is far more pervasive and insidious than most staff would be prepared to acknowledge" (p. 35). Tierney and Rhoads (1995, p. 109) define the anti-democratic tendency within the ideological use of instrumental rationalism, which in this case they identify with the practice of "assessment," as is being integrated throughout higher education:

> Assessment has tried to create abstract standards which all individuals need to meet,
> and these standards revolve around a static conception of knowledge. Rather than a

democratic discourse where all of an institution's citizens are involved in developing

dispositional knowledge, assessment has tried to create a sharper division between

managers and workers and to reinforce norms rather than bring them into question.

Finally, as an acknowledgement of the ideologically dominant position of the

neoliberal instrumental rationalist discourse in higher education, Church (2008) admits that

"most faculty, including myself, have internalized a discourse regarding assessment,

outcomes, instructional design, and professional behavior that aligns them with the processes

of the marketization of knowledge regardless of political persuasion"(pp.42-43).

Use of master signifiers of quality and alignment. In ideological discourse, there is

no necessary relationship between reality and its symbolization (Žižek, 1989). In a succinct

description, Butler (2004) attempts to define a subject's experience of ideological discourse:

Our descriptions do not naturally and immutably refer to things, but - this is the

defining feature of the symbolic order - things in retrospect begin to resemble their

description. Thus, in the analysis of ideology, it is not simply a matter of seeing

which account of reality best matches the 'facts', with the one that is closest being the

least biased and therefore the best. As soon as the facts are determined, we have

already - whether we know it or not - made our choice; we are already within one

ideological system or another. (para. 1)

Examining QM as ideological discourse which operates within an ideological system

means that QM discourse may evidence the presence of master signifiers. Master signifiers

are symbolic tools that engage in the cultural and material transformation of symbols into a

social force, "meanings" —with distinction and contra-distinction—which give sense and

cohesion to other ideological terms. Furthermore, to comprehensively reveal and analyze the

power relationships within any ideological discourse, an understanding of the role of master

signifiers is critical. As Zizek claims:

> what is crucial in any analysis of ideology is to detect, behind the apparently
>
> transcendental meaning of the element holding it together, this tautological,
>
> performative, fundamentally self-referential operation, in which it is not so much
>
> some pre-existing meaning that things refer to as an empty signifier that is
>
> retrospectively seen as what is being referred to. This ideological *point de capiton* or
>
> master-signifier is not some underlying unity but only the difference between
>
> elements, only what its various mentions have in common: the signifier itself as pure
>
> difference. (1989, p. 99)

Hence, for Zizek, master signifiers show hegemony in their constraint and

intelligibility while simultaneously operating with empty and indeterminate meanings.

The Marxist notion of the master signifier is a term which ends the endless chain of

signifiers that make up the lexicon by pointing to itself instead of other signifiers (Butler &

Stephens, 2006). Given the accumulated evidence of the ideological nature of the discourse

of QM and its Rubric and Review process, these definitions and understandings of the master

signifier may apply to the QM notions of "quality" and "alignment." In what follows, I will

individually address each term and its role in the QM Rubric and review process.

Quality as a structure of power. Thoroughly ideological discourses in education,

including the ones which appear to play a role in the QM Rubric, have been identified as

types of authoritarian discourses of mastery that are "dominated by technocratic and

reductive fantasies of the instrumental, competitive, accountable and self-responsibilising

[sic] educational subject" (Clarke, 2012, p. 55). The QM definition and implementation of

"quality" in the QM Rubric and Review reveal it as a construct which depends on the

positioning of the agents, instructors and students, in the ideological field of online learning,

or what Freeden (2010) terms their "structural positioning within a given ideological

morphology" (p. 3), which influences the power and identity they have within pedagogical

interactions. Figure 3 shows a modified version of Fairclough's generic three-dimensional

model for critical discourse analysis, which presents a visual model of the positioning of

faculty in online learning inside the ideological complex of the community college and
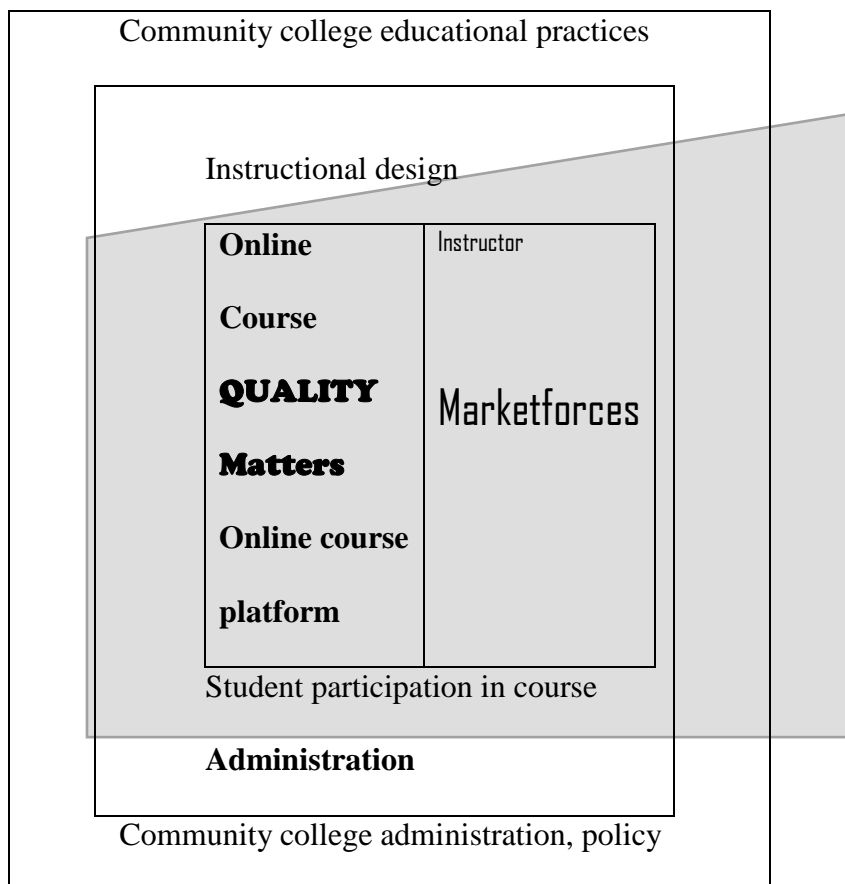
Quality Matters:

Figure 3.

The above diagram visually presents the influence of QM discourse (shaded), including the Rubric, as it cuts across the social, symbolic, organizational and pedagogical fields of online learning at community colleges. The pedagogical presence of QM, functioning alongside and within the social and regulatory context of higher education, is powered by its ideological symmetry as well as its functions of naturalization and motivational compunction. This diagram also indicates how instruction online at community colleges is now thoroughly penetrated by the discourse of QM, which supports a re-definition of higher education courses into a technocratic and transactional process. Also, the diagram endeavors to suggest how neoliberal economic discourses constitute a dominant background discourse for the QM Rubric, and economic concepts gain agency within the QM Rubric and Review, and ultimately within the institution, and classrooms, of the community college. With these discourses controlling the context of online learning at community colleges, the ideological force of QM contributes to what Saunders (2010) identifies as the existing hegemony of a reductionist model of learning rooted in neoliberalism. As QM discourse justifies and quilts understanding of online learning, the discourse contributes to a broader transformation of pedagogical interaction into pedagogical transaction, for which "quality" functions as a master signifier.

Quality is a powerful term, often employed metaphysically, but it also saturates the discourses of commerce. The definition of quality as provided by the *Oxford Dictionaries* is "the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence; general excellence of standard or level of something" (Oxford Dictionaries); sense number two in *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines quality as "a degree

of excellence; grade" (1991, p. 963). These denotations are relative and subjective, as they clearly depend on the one determining what factors to measure and what items are the "other things of a similar kind" (Oxford Dictionaries). Still, in an economic or business sense, makers and sellers rely on the discursive presence of the term quality (sometimes only implied) in transactions of every kind. The discursive power for quality comes not from its omnipresence but instead from its hollowness of discursive purpose outside of persuasion; as Bowbrick notes in an economic study of quality, which identifies 10 conceptual constituents to the term,

> Everybody believes that Quality is a Good Thing, but nobody is terribly clear what they mean by quality. We all use the word in very different senses from time to time, and it is only too easy to switch from one meaning to another and then back again in a single sentence without noticing it. (1992, p.1, capital letters are the author's)

Even from a metaphysical perspective, an exact nature to quality is not easily discerned. Quality is the topic of numerous classical disquisitions from Socrates forward, but the effort to define the term often becomes mired in questions of ontology, epistemology, and hermeneutics. For example, in the work of Nietzsche (1968), who examined quality carefully in *Will to Power*, he concludes by defining quality in relative terms, as "the problem of interpretation: to estimate the quality…that gives meaning to a given phenomenon, or event, and from that to measure the relation of the forces which are present" (quoted in Deleuze, 1983, p. 49). Accordingly, and with a keen eye toward "the forces which are present," we can see that the immateriality of the term quality makes it an exceptionally powerful discursive (hence ideological) tool, as an inexact signifier which can tie together other signifiers in a way best observed *post hoc*, which persons can see after whatever process or

material transaction, and their related experience, has occurred. A QM Review may reach

conclusions about online course quality, but those conclusions are impelled by ideology and

the self-surveillance of neoliberal "professionalism" more than a substantive definition of the

term as applied to the fruits of instruction, including student conscientization and growth

(Freire, 1970). The permeable and delayed semiosis of quality can be seen to make the term

an optimal fit for online learning when applied; teaching and learning, especially in an online

environment, cannot be easily or simply examined in pragmatic, concrete terms, instead

requiring abstractions and ideological force like that of an authoritarian discourse of mastery

and the dominant technocratic and reductive instrumentalism of neoliberal discourse in

higher education. Such is the nature of a master signifier. Butler (2004) writes:

> each master-signifier works not because it is some pre-existing fullness that already
>
> contains all of the meanings attributed to it, but because it is empty, just that place
>
> from which to see the 'equivalence' of other signifiers. It is not some original reserve
>
> that holds all of its significations in advance, but only what is retrospectively
>
> recognized as what is being referred to. (para. 5)

The QM Rubric further expresses its position of power concerning the abstruse nature

of quality in online courses to compel instructors and course designers regarding the type of

language they use to describe course objectives. In the annotation to Standard 2.3, the rubric

directs reviewers to evaluate how the learning objectives or competencies in online courses

are presented, requiring that

> the learning objectives are written in a way that allows learners, including non-native
>
> speakers, to easily grasp their meaning and the learning outcomes expected. The use

of educational or discipline [sic] jargon, unexplained terminology, and unnecessarily

complex language is avoided. (p. 7)

QM could use this same criterion to evaluate their definition of quality as applied to

the construction and nature of online courses, forsaking abstract qualifiers cloaked in

ideological power and technocratic, mechanistic terminology, and instead of defining specific

benefits to instructors and students, without consulting either—the operationalization of

colonialism. This choice is what Kempf defines as "the colonial moment," where such

concepts "become concrete when they are operationalized to confer power and/or

punishment. Colonialization is a process whereby abstract social locations become sites for

concrete oppression. The concrete includes material and nonmaterial elements of existence"

(2009, p. 16).

Another demonstrative example of technocratic, mechanistic terminology used in the

QM Rubric and Review is its use of the term alignment. Alignment is first mentioned in the

QM Rubric on pp. 4-5, where it states (as previously cited in this chapter) that

the concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea that critical course

components work together to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning

outcomes. Measurable course and module /unit learning objectives or competencies

form the basis of alignment in a course.

The *Oxford Dictionaries* define alignment as "Arrangement in a straight line, or in correct or

appropriate relative positions: the act of aligning parts of a machine: the route or course of a

road or railroad; a position of agreement or alliance" (Oxford Dictionaries, underlining in

original). *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines alignment as "the act of

aligning or state of being aligned; esp.: the proper positioning or state of adjustment of parts

(as of a mechanical or electronic device) in relation to each other" (1991, p.70). These definitions by these dictionaries confirm the technological connotations offered by the term and show how "alignment" expresses the neoliberal, mechanistic metaphor of learning that conceptualizes instruction as "input" and student understanding and application as "output." Many observers will recognize this mechanical schema for higher education as akin to Freire's "banking" concept, but with pointed emphasis on economic efficiency and responsive to the needs and interests of external actors like business and government, not those of individuals. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) define metaphor as a mapping between two separate domains where a transfer of and shift in meaning take place. Holmgren (2003) points out how "the choice of one set of metaphors over another directs focus to some aspects of the target while leaving others unnoticed and thus provides the writer with a powerful tool for imposing a certain economic view on the reader" (p. 95). The use of particular types of metaphors to dominate a linguistic space is one form of ideological control; for example, Brown and Quinn offer that economic discourse reveals the ubiquitous use of a mechanistic metaphor, one which portrays the economy as a machine-like system, where human agents network and exchange goods and services; in this, it "suggests a process of exchange in which the only active agent shaping the outcomes is the human subject who works and consumes after being handed a specific assemblage of productive forces" (1999, pp. 135-137). Ideological conceptions pervade and empower master signifiers whenever and wherever they are used, including academic prose and, apparently, academic quality assurance tools.

Requirement for "up-to-date and current materials." In the online environment, which conceptually overlaps with the devices and technology used to create and experience it,

constant change is an assumed, if not verifiable, characteristic of being. This understanding

of technological change is not given the status of information or axiom; it is expressed as a

"law", Moore's law, which is the observation that the number of transistors in a dense

integrated circuit doubles approximately every two years (Moore, 1965). Change, then, has

defined both the development of electronic computing devices and the online environment

used to create and experience that environment, and applying requirements and rules to

sustain this change appears consistent and "natural" to many observers. After all, wouldn't

most teachers support, and feel compelled, to keep their pedagogy and teaching materials

current, especially given the hyper-evolutionary state of online education?

Online learning is particularly in need of such work, according to Hai-Jew (2010),

who claims that updating online courses, including the use of "continuous information

streams"—is a chance to

> examine the essential cultural factors that undergird that curriculum and the purposes
>
> for which it was created. Analyses at that level have great potential to enrich a
>
> curriculum. In addition, curricular updates can introduce important new content, and
>
> may also introduce pedagogical enhancements that can improve the quality of e-
>
> learning. (paragraph 2)

A similar idea of currency for teaching materials is also promoted for face-to-face

classes by many contemporary organizations directing pedagogy in public schools and higher

education (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016).

However, as we learn from Marx, "ideologies appear natural, they seem to be

common sense, and are often invisible and elude criticism. Ruling ideas reproduce dominant

societal interests serving to naturalize, idealize, and legitimate the existing society and its

institutions and values" (Kellner & Durham, 2006, p. xv). Gramsci (1971) modifies this idea

to separate it from strictly class mechanisms, moving it into culture but reinforcing that what

is most natural is often the site of ideology, naturalizing an existing social order at a very

deep level of everyday thoughts and action, but as being neither simply imposed nor

irresistible. Young (2009) argues that ideological support distinguishes the term "knowledge"

itself, as it holds "a public association with ideas such as certainty, reliability and objectivity

and even truth," and that "reference to knowledge therefore provides a kind of authority for

policies that do not have to be justified in other ways. The authority of the term knowledge

is taken over but not the basis of its claims" (p. 194). This description of ideological forms

appears to apply to this "up-to-date and current materials" feature of the QM rubric.

Although the QM Rubric emphasis upon "up-to-date and current materials" initially appears

as a benign feature, a wholly applicable if not objective truth about online instruction, the

inclusion of this requirement—which I will treat here as a single entity--is problematic for its

flaws as a signifier as well as its ideological origin and function.

     A broader context for this requirement in the QM Rubric can help observers discern

the necessity and purpose of such a requirement for ideological maintenance. As Michel

Foucault (1972) wrote about how educational institutions control the access of individuals to

various kinds of discourse:

> we know very well that, in its distribution, in what it permits and what it prevents, it
>
> follows the lines laid down by social differences, conflicts and struggles. Every
>
> educational system is a political means of maintaining or modifying the
>
> appropriateness of discourses with the knowledge and power they bring with them.
>
> (p.46)

Educational practices like the QM Rubric, which build constrained understandings and knowledge subjected to particular ideological discourses, are particularly revealing of power-knowledge relations when placed in global context.

As indicated earlier in this study, the neoliberal drive to perpetuate a new order of thought, conjoined to the neoliberal social project to transform American society into one of the ubiquitous market, relies upon transformations of knowledge into a market-driven product (Powell & Snellman, 2004), necessitating a commodification of education and students as potential laborers in the knowledge economy (Patrick, 2013). According to Davies and Bansel (2007), institutions of higher education are no longer understood as cultural spaces which foster critique and edification through the interaction of teacher and student who construct unique forms of knowledge together, but instead are valued primarily as a distribution point of pre-existing knowledge commodities (also known as learning outcomes) and credentials. In this market-based conception of knowledge, wherein markets provide the most authentic and just distribution of goods and services, and which include planned obsolescence for items as diverse as urban space, state structures, and art, being "up-to-date" is an eligibility condition for any commodity to retain its value in the knowledge economy. Weber (2002) suggests that "obsolescence has become a neoliberal alibi for creative destruction and therefore, an important component in contemporary capital accumulation," including both knowledge capital and economic capital. Presumably, obsolescence must also apply to knowledge of every kind.

The use by the QM Rubric of a requirement for online courses to include "up-to-date and current" materials may represent ideological method, in this case, to enable dominant ideological forces to further penetrate public higher education, to create an ahistorical milieu,

and one which denies the merit of past understanding of disciplinary knowledge or human relations. In a global context, because neoliberalism is an economic worldview only able to seek complete dominance since the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union, requiring that materials reassert the "knowledge" created during that recent time frame increases the likelihood that such material asserts the moral rectitude of markets and commodification. As institutions now being transformed throughout by market-oriented approaches, community colleges represent an opportunity to permeate and consolidate public education as a market activity; and if each corner of each classroom, real or virtual, reflects the ideological dominance of market orientations since 1990, no alternatives will appear possible. Thus, the QM Rubric's requirement that online course materials be "up-to-date and current" may offer support for such ahistoricity, and therefore help reproduce an environment of fragmented and quiescent pedagogy. Disconnecting current educational institutions from their past, even in what is used in the classroom, minimizes awareness of past structural mechanisms (like shared governance) which empowered resistance; it furthers the dissemination of market forces into cultural spaces, like classrooms, once sustained for their public significance and their ability to bridge cultural or generational gaps, not their ability to create economic wealth. Thus, with the support of market-oriented ideology, this requirement for "current and up-to-date" may justify inclusion or exclusion based on the creation date of materials reviewed, and not on their pedagogical function or scholarly foundation, with no mind toward the ahistoricity created.

Finally, the QM Rubric and its requirement that online courses include "up-to-date and current materials" displays the difficulty of faculty resistance within the neoliberal sphere of influence in higher education. Even hypothetical resistance to such criterion as

proffered by the QM Rubric, as one small point of many forms of knowledge commodification and instrumental rationalism, seems unlikely. Community colleges, like the 4-year college and the university, have undergone restructuring in recent decades, and the status of faculty at community colleges is reflective of larger transformations of the faculty role in higher education, where the locus of authority has shifted to administration (Bowen & Toobin, 2016), and where there is increasing strain occurring within the traditional shared governance model (Pierce, 2014). Administrative hierarchies have become larger and more robust, and these hierarchies, perceiving "increasing political and economic pressure" have concluded that "senior administration frequently needs the flexibility to make institutional decisions quickly" (Pierce, 2014, p. 2). Because power is being concentrated in administrative hands, and "more faculty become contingent employees, rather than tenured career professionals enjoying both job security and intellectual autonomy" (Gerber, 2014. p. 2), administrators benefit from occupying faculty who might otherwise resist or organize resistance to policies; and requiring faculty to constantly update their online courses may provide a valuable distraction from larger issues assailing community colleges. Even if administrators and trustees were concerned with maintaining an inclusive governance structure, faculty consumed by teaching demands are far less likely to participate in shared governance of institutions. As Heideman (2014) describes it, "What appears to be happening is less [faculty's] incorporation into neoliberalism than their exclusion from any institutions that would allow them to change it." But, as Foucault (1972) notes, the real task of critical educators "in a society such as ours is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that we can fight fear" (p. 171).

Chapter Summary

The analysis of the QM Rubric categorizes the ideological discourse and power functions evident in the QM Rubric and its context—including demonstrating the effects associated with its positioning of instructors and students—in the following five dimensions:

1. Disembodied instructional processes, which distance the involvement of instructors in online course workings, through syntactic exclusion within the language and hermeneutical structures of the rubric;

2. Corporatized definition of Professionalism, through specification, symbolization, and instrumentalization;

3. Disproportionate Emphasis on Measurable Outcomes and Assessment, extending instrumental rationalism and economic discourse into the online educational context;

4. Use of the Master signifiers of Quality and Alignment;

5. Requirement for "up-to-date and current materials."

This analysis is meant to demonstrate that the QM Rubric and QM Reviews of online courses work through a dominant discourse that is informed by a discernable and powerful ideology. Different examples of QM discourse reveal similar discursive habits and maneuvers in support of ideological ends. Furthermore, the Rubric and Review employ ideological discourse and discursive structures toward influencing the subjectivities and agency of faculty and students and their perceptions of education (and the goals of that education) in the community college classroom, as well as their interactions with administration. That market-oriented discourse within QM Rubric and in QM Reviews asserts distinctly ideological ideals and functions, like online education as entirely and

completely equivalent to face-to-face education; intellectual property rights as essential to quality in education; the distant and transactional role of faculty in higher education; the necessity of instrumental rationalism and market forces to all educational processes, and the reductionist transformation of the pedagogical interaction into a pedagogical transaction; and the commodification of knowledge and students as knowledge workers. Given these ideological functions and precepts, the ideological discourse of the QM Rubric and Review as applied to community college online learning comprises a further penetration toward ideological reconstruction of community colleges into market-oriented institutions, and demonstrates the ideology's use of all forms and functions of education toward creating market hegemony, subversion of democratic ideals, and furthering the dominance of economic and educational structures by economic elites.

The final chapter of this study will examine the context and future of online learning at community colleges. Included in this will be an examination of the consequences of neoliberal discourses changing the functions and practices of the American community college, including the positioning of its faculty and students. The chapter will also succinctly synthesize identifiable impacts of the QM Rubric upon the agency of community college instructors and students. The chapter introduces a model for understanding how neoliberal discourse, operationalized through tools like the QM Rubric, acts upon institutions.   The chapter will weigh the concerns for participatory democracy and social justice, and consider the means of cultural resistance available to instructors at community colleges, in both online and in face-to-face venues; and the chapter will examine, in the current ideological context, if there exists any power and capacity for change in the institution of the community college. The chapter will then derive implications for practice, including consideration of implications

for critical instruction online, and recommendations for research into community colleges

and their discursive and ideological context.

Chapter 5

Results, Model of Symbolic Violence in the Classroom, and Recommendations

To reiterate, the research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. What critical insights does an analysis of the QM rubric reveal about its

discursive structures and their positioning of community college faculty and students in

online coursework**?**

2. How does Quality Matters function as a potential, specific manifestation of new

ideological influences within the institutional context of community colleges, via the

discursive context of online learning? What are its ideological effects on teachers, schools,

and the culture's view of education at community colleges?

3. Is change in the Quality Matters paradigm of online learning and "quality" of

online education warranted? Does power for change exist?

Concluding this dissertation's effort to answer these research questions, the aim of

this chapter is to consider the findings, as presented in Chapter 4, in relation to the

consequences of neoliberal discourses changing the functions and practices of the American

community college, including the positioning of its faculty and students. While this

dissertation has previously developed an historical assessment of the socio-cultural context

for the development and proliferation of the institution of the community college in the

United States, this chapter focuses on contrasting that context to the business-oriented

discursive influences that have emerged as dominant social influences upon community

colleges since the end of the Cold War.

Initially, this chapter broadly assesses how this study of the QM Rubric and online

education at community colleges portends a changing relationship between private enterprise

and community colleges in the United States, before moving to a succinct focus upon the extensive influence that the market-driven discourse of the business community has had upon organizational and educational functions at community colleges. Second, this chapter succinctly synthesizes identifiable impacts of the QM Rubric upon the agency of community college instructors and students. To this end, this chapter focuses on the following:

1) the ideologically-driven debilitation of independent pedagogy and alienation resulting from the commodification of knowledge and ensuing "knowledge markets";

2) discursive structures and their positioning of community college faculty, including the political disempowerment and "othering" of faculty;

3) the distraction and burden of hyper-instrumentalism, as a manifestation of ideological influences within the institutional context of community colleges;

4) the ensuing implications for teaching practices at community colleges, including critical pedagogies;

5) introducing a model for understanding how neoliberal discourse, operationalized through tools like the QM Rubric, acts upon institutions;

6) the concerns for participatory democracy and social justice, and questioning if power for change exists;

7) considering alternatives for community college classrooms and recommendations for further research;

This will be followed with concluding thoughts on ideological discontinuities and community education.

Neoliberal Discourses and Community Colleges

This study hopes to make evident a historical perspective on changes to American community colleges and the discourses and language practices working to influence, if not control, the educational offerings at those colleges. These increasingly pronounced discourses discard the language of socioeconomic mobility, freedom and liberation associated with the comprehensive community college model of education and the concomitant role of being the social, cultural, and economic bridge to baccalaureate education. Alternatively, these discourses define the comprehensive community college model as insufficient (Jenkins, 2015); they speak of global competitiveness (Levin, 2001; Luna, 2007), the completion agenda (Patton, 2012; Phillips & Horowitz, 2014), including formation of the Community College Completion Corps, and workforce development (Scott, 2008); and they have, via practices and tools like the QM Rubric and Review, imposed their corporate-social model upon community colleges, which Levin (2006) characterizes as community college managerialism. As Giroux (2014b) notes about the disempowerment and marginalization of faculty associated with managerialism, with the adoption of corporate management models, administrators at institutions of higher education

> increasingly use and exploit cheap faculty labor while expanding the ranks of their managerial class. Modeled after a savage neoliberal value system in which wealth and power are redistributed upward, a market-oriented class of managers largely has taken over the governing structures of most institutions of higher education in the United States. (para. 1)

That new model of community college administration is oriented toward education consumerism—including the supposed convenience of online courses—and market

fundamentalism, with its econometric valuation of education, and has a focus on the labor

needs of commerce and business. The QM Rubric is one pixel of that picture, which focuses

upon "'student choice', a consumer model of pedagogy, an instrumentalist culture of auditing

practices, and market-driven values" (Giroux, 2014a, p. 58). Although these features may

make these new language practices *bona fide* "unjust discourses," as Ayers describes them

(2005, p.529), these economically driven discourses are now the dominant discourses of

community college programming, having penetrated program development, curriculum, and

community service functions at community colleges. The power of these discourses acts

upon the institutional identity of community colleges, "speaking" their new form into being

(Ball, 1993). Such "speaking" in discourse is also associated with operations of power,

including conditions of economic coercion, the presence of symbolic violence, a

displacement of alternatives, and a negation of options. These discourses are working toward

re-shaping the institution of the American community college toward the means and ends of

wealth creation.

It must be acknowledged that despite community colleges' reputation as

"democracy's college," the colleges have always been a part, albeit a somewhat counter-

hegemonic part, of the American class structure and capitalist social system. For example,

community colleges have long endeavored as educational institutions to provide students

vocational training to help serve the production needs of regional economies and local

businesses; as Leigh describes them, "Community colleges are the principal provider of

training services to adults looking for employment or seeking to retain existing jobs" (2005,

p.3). Community colleges typically welcome any opportunity to develop jobs training

programs and provide skilled workers for the local business sector, the system defines itself

as a source of labor for business, and it appears more than willing to define its educational

services as workforce development (NCSL, 2014, 2016; Scott, 2008). As Ayers states, it

may be that now, more than ever, "insofar as the community college mission is represented

through neoliberal discourse, the community college itself is instrumental in reproducing the

class inequalities associated with advanced capitalism" (2005, p. 528). Community colleges

have always been subject to the ideologies and discourse of the capitalist society in which

they function, and their emancipatory functions have been tempered by, if not indentured to,

their contributions to wealth production.

However, even though vocational programming and jobs-related training have long

been choices offered within the comprehensive community college model of educating

students for their multiple roles in society, that programming and training served not as the

raison d'être for those colleges. Nor did that role for the colleges make them entirely subject

to wealth creation and only supplying skilled, unorganized labor for the local business sector,

which market-oriented discourses now may hold as the optimal functions for community

colleges. Rather, transfer programs, community service, community health, sports, arts, and

cultural programming all broadened the horizon of service for community colleges.

Community colleges sought balance in their different functions—of being the bridge to the

baccalaureate, of educating students for their multiple roles in life, and of preparing them for

work—but the contradictions emerge in the discourses surrounding these functions (Ayers,

2009). As a result, these discourses reflected a chimeric quality and a plinth of

contradictions in the social functions of community colleges, and both the comprehensive

community college and neoliberal workforce preparation models of education remain within

such community colleges, at least to some degree. At these institutions, it appears that social

and administrative power—the economic structures and social relations expressed within and

upon organizations, and that can foster social equity or result in social inequality and

dominance— (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250) —has shifted largely toward the neoliberal model.

That hegemonic power is being exercised upon the faculty, students, curriculum and

classroom operations of community colleges, transforming their social fields into ones

existing for wealth creation.

Neoliberal Discourse and Faculty Position

Given the business sector's long-term influence upon community colleges, as well as

the newly-dominant neoliberal discourses infiltrating curriculum and classroom functions at

those colleges, it is worth considering that by adopting or assenting to neoliberal discourses

and methodologies, the colleges are concluding the process of facilitating asymmetrical

social relations, like market forces can, within their organizational structures. Markets can be

built upon unfree and marginally-free labor, that is, persons acting out of economic

compulsion and a lack of options, fear, and dominance. These markets built upon unfree

labor can presumably include so-called knowledge markets, with processes that disempower

labor to optimize the control of capital over the conditions of production. As Heller (1999)

writes:

> Even in the most competitive capitalist markets, labor may be commodified, but it is
>
> never just a commodity. It is constituted by and through social relations among
>
> classes…Wages [and working conditions] are never simply a function of supply and
>
> demand but reflect the balance of power between capital and labor, a balance that is
>
> shaped by institutional and organizational forces as well as cultural and ideological
>
> ones. (p. 41)

The QM Rubric and other artifacts of discourse examined in this dissertation reveal that neoliberal discourses transforming the conditions of instructional labor and the curriculum at community colleges are doing so toward two ends: 1) as a project to rebuild the organizations upon knowledge market precepts, including hierarchy and a corporate ethos; and 2) to alienate and debilitate (and ultimately subjugate) the autonomous agency of instructors within the classroom, like this study has demonstrated about the QM Rubric. The implications of the QM Rubric analysis strongly suggest that neoliberal discourse exerts force on the structure of organizations as well as the form of their work. In a system of educational organizations, to change the relationship between faculty and the organization also changes the way faculty carries out instruction. In the curtailing of instructor presence, instructor discretion, and independent pedagogical judgment, neoliberal discourse has defined these factors as "problems," "legitimized" certain approaches to those problems, and reconfigured the roles of agents in the community college classroom—as discourse does (Gee, 2001).

Agency and Faculty in the Neoliberal Age

As defined for higher education, agency has numerous definitions and synonyms, including one already offered in this dissertation for application to the operations of discourse: transitivity (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Autonomous decision-making, curriculum design, and academic freedom are concepts tied closely to agency in higher education, though McLaren (2006) extends the concept to include "functional critique" and "constructive action" (2006, p. 194). Agency as connected to practices within teaching, with their ideological implications and echoes in political economy, is noted as ineluctable and essential to the profession (Bourdieu, 1998; Church, 1999). Still, agency in teaching can99 be

seen as vulnerable to domination and coercion of the state and other apparatuses, and some

observers have noted such forms of domination and coercion have been observed as

occurring in higher education in recent decades, and specifically by neoliberalist policies and

practices; Canaan and Shumar (2008) offer that early 21st century higher education should be

"conceptualize[d] as being pressured by a set of neoliberal practices and structures that are

re-shaping institutions and individuals...in the light of neoliberal (and neoconservative)

assumptions of a globalizing knowledge economy" (pp. 3-4, parentheses by the author).

Furthermore, higher education teaching practices are increasingly defined within an

instrumentalist frame and assessed by methods that reveal their operationalization of

institutional dominance both indirectly and directly, through their neglect of democratic

discourse, ignorance of progressive forms of accountability, and their need to "reinforce"

regimes of measurability (Tierney & Rhoads, 1995, p. 110). In sum, agency related to

instruction in higher education has seen observable encroachment by neoliberal practices and

policy structures since the end of the Cold War. Instruction at community colleges can be

expected to be similar.

However, agency is different for community college faculty than at other institutions

of higher education. Because community college faculty are rarely provided any mechanism

to achieve tenure at an institution, employment in instruction at a community college is more

contingent upon classroom performance than any research or community service function

(although at some progressive institutions, the latter is made significant). As Rifkin (2017)

notes:

Community college faculty spend 15 hours or more a week teaching, compared with

10 to 14 hours a week for the majority of their colleagues at baccalaureate and

master's institutions and fewer than 4 hours a week for the majority of faculty at research universities. During those 15 class hours, 67 percent of community college faculty teach from 75 to more than 150 students. Community college faculty register more student contact hours than any other educational sector. (para. 19)

Research is rarely incentivized formally or informally at community colleges— although teaching is (for example, the additional income paid by overload courses) —and large teaching workloads may inhibit faculty from participating in degree programs or other collaborations facilitating research. Agency, then, is articulated by community college faculty primarily through their part in the discourse, acts and practices of instruction, and the institutional valuation of those faculty ostensibly centers upon them. Faculty members engaged in the discourse, acts and practices of instruction do so both collaboratively and as individuals, interpolating their roles within the educational milieu of directions and customs, the institution and its material circumstances, and students. These discourses, discursive practices, actions and correlatives of agency collectively shape practices of instruction.

Not only is instruction central to the agency of community college faculty, but that instruction occurs within a narrow framework of developmental, two-year and general education courses. Introductory and skills-based courses dominate the teaching load of many community college faculty, and when enrolled with the nontraditional, historically disadvantaged, diverse students of community college populations, these teaching situations offer faculty unique challenges in the development of critical curriculum materials with social poignancy for both instructor and student, and which express an awareness of how "power relations correspond to forms of social knowledge that distort understanding and produce what is commonly accepted as 'truth'" (McLaren, 2006, p. 211). Critical pedagogy

at community colleges often means discursively and progressively attributing agency to

students, who can assert their "knowledgeability" while simultaneously being "dominated

subjects," or persons existing in a system of poorly-restrained markets that denies the

inhuman traits within that system; and where critical classrooms present opportunities for

students to "establish the character of the experience of exploitation and alienation prior to

postulating how and in what direction change might or should take place" (Morrow & Brown,

1994, p. 297). Community colleges can offer uniquely concentrated and vital opportunities

for faculty to enact the role of the teacher as public intellectual and to help create classrooms

with a "critical formative culture" (Giroux, 2014a, p. 146) and "citizens who are critical

thinkers capable of putting existing institutions into question so that democracy again

becomes society's movement" (Castoriadis, 1997, p. 10).

     Because of the unique centrality to the classroom and pedagogical agency at

community colleges, the community college front of neoliberalism's war on higher education

(Giroux, 2014a) is firmly and primarily entrenched in the classroom rather than in research,

publications, or community activism. Perhaps not coincidentally, community college

enrollment of the 21st century is ever more diverse, including students co-enrolled at high

schools, whose political processes and discourses are simultaneously overflowing into

community college classrooms and adding additional barricades and dissimulation to

administrative practices restricting faculty agency.

     In response to this contamination by high school politics but also driven by neoliberal

discourses in the policy and budgetary fields, classroom operations at community colleges

are increasingly subject to administrative surveillance and other administrative acts of

dominance and disruption to instructor agency. Those acts of dominance in the classroom

can take a number of forms, including procedural, relational, and qualitative forms, but the

results are similar when backed by economic coercion regarding continued employment. For

example, when instructors are politically challenged by students whose response to

oppositional and critical examination of social formations is resentment and accusations of

political bias, such procedural and qualitative challenges can fuel a usually small but heated

controversy over critically-oriented classroom presentation of "cultural and political

economic processes" (Ayers, 2009, p. 165). Challenges to a faculty member's

professionalism can arise, with accompanying declarations regarding the apolitical nature of

appropriate instruction. This sort of controversy also runs afoul of, or presents a challenge to,

other components of the ideological regime like completion and consumer-centered

education. Complex political entanglements can ensue, but individual instructors at

community colleges face them with fewer options to meet unmet student needs in democratic

and critical ways.

Combined with the above obstacles, faculty at community colleges also face the

stigma that all faculty at institutions of higher education increasingly face. Marginalization

of faculty is increasingly true within American higher education, where media define faculty

members commonly as a drag upon the flexibility of institutions and if not the source of most

problems at institutions, then as obstacles to meaningful reform. In managerial-policy

discourses offered through media outlets, higher education faculty are presented as clueless

political dilettantes who either hold contempt for American society (e.g., Ward Churchill), or

who, at the very least, don't 'live in the real world,' and whose community contributions or

dedication to their profession, their disciplines, and their students, pales in comparison to

what the private sector would create (Gross, 2013). This neoliberal discourse goes beyond

portraying faculty as an unfortunate institutional expense; it de-professionalizes the profession of education and purports to strip its practitioners of both their instructional agency and their status as community leaders, with no standing for their critiques. As Giroux (2014a) notes, academics who try to "function as public intellectuals…are often shut out of the mainstream media or characterized as marginal, unintelligible, and sometimes unpatriotic figures" (p.146). Since such discourse defines instructors as unprofessional, or as ivory tower eccentrics, it follows that their agency to define curriculum or govern the college as an organization should be constrained; and that faculty work, to be of "quality," needs to be validated by external organizations, like QM, which are rooted in the globalized knowledge marketplace, located primarily outside of higher education. In this discursive environment of marginalization, faculty are not valued for their humanity, vitality, as a multi-faceted source of human energy and experience, or their ability to connect with students and participate in collective knowledge construction and elevation of consciousness. Instead, faculty members are de-valued unless they serve as social relays for the neoliberal circuit board of colleges, consultants and corporations, whose combined purpose is the highest expression of the neoliberal social arrangement: wealth generation.

When a faculty member is primarily an instructor and not a researcher, like the faculty at most community colleges, they cannot derive value or status from organizations allied with their employer, for example, through a position at an institute or a "think tank," or as a clinician at a hospital. Few organizational alternatives exist for community college instructors to build and showcase their "value," even if they are willing to allocate their identity within neoliberal higher education structures. The minimum expected is compliance with neoliberal methodologies and prescriptions. The options that exist for community

college faculty, like acquiring federal grants to fund temporary programs and other limited program development, are extremely few in number and value, given that these options are largely government-driven functions and not on their surface seen as market-oriented. Only in extremely rare cases, if ever, can those extracurricular acts or alliances to create institutional value on the neoliberal abacus involve progressive educational reform.

For community college faculty, then, the cumulative impact of disruption in classroom agency by policy and managerial discourses, and the lack of options to build neoliberal value or status, positions those instructors as prone, if not necessarily compliant, to ideological discourse and its symbolic violence. Previous organizational mechanisms that may have mediated the conflicts and bolstered both the subjectivities and positionality of community college faculty, like shared governance, no longer effectively function. If some instructors at community colleges welcomed such managerial changes, they likely do no longer; as Davies, Gottsche and Bansel (2006) have noted about neoliberal transformations to the academic workplace, "Few guessed, as they embraced various aspects of neoliberalism and grumbled about others, the extent to which the systemic transformations…would transform both their subjectivities and their work in a range of detrimental ways" (p. 306).

Changes for Students and the Classroom: The Knowledge Market

Inevitably, a new position for instructors affects the positionality of students and the social relations of the classroom. When neoliberal values are imposed upon community college classrooms, traditional or online, those classrooms' relations are held accountable to a cultural script of education ultimately defined by market-based, profit-oriented economic criteria; in other words, the classroom is meant to become an outlet of the neoliberal knowledge market. Via the backgrounding and transaction-focused neoliberal discourses

including the QM Rubric, richly democratic and inclusive classroom practices endowed with

a cultural and historical context and/or a critical bent are contravened and necessarily

displaced by a market-driven logic that commodifies instruction into information exchange

toward the end of wealth creation. This displacement, defined here as an *ectopism*, is

facilitated partly through neoliberal articulations and their assumed ontological power to

define an accounting process for education, presenting discursive constructs which legitimate

and validate knowledge commodification, knowledge extraction, and knowledge

measurement. Ectopism is a word created from "ectopic", meaning "in an abnormal place or

position" and the Greek word "topoi", meaning "places or sites"; and "-ism," denoting a

"distinctive doctrine, cause, or theory," e.g. Anglicanism, according to *Webster's 9th New

Collegiate Dictionary* (1991). These ectopisms materialize the econometric values of

neoliberalism into the situated interactions of the classroom, and are what empower the

measurability of instruments—one of the cornerstones of QM. Such discursively-constructed,

dominance-based accounting of higher education threatens to transform at least the

community college part of it into a series of alienated transactions and dehumanized

functions, relegating student education to an economically-bounded conception of life.

These changes to community college education are experienced acutely by instructors,

who—while being "backgrounded"—are called upon to negotiate this ideological landscape

as well as perform greater loads of instructional labor than colleagues in other sectors of

higher education (Rifkin, 2017).

  This study has discerned that the QM Rubric's backgrounding of the instructor results

in a discourse with a clipped, distorted presentation of the classroom environment, one in

which virtually all behaviors are constructed as actions occurring within the functions and

circumstances of the learner, and to the exclusion of the humanity, e.g., the experience,

understanding, reacting or reflecting, of the instructor. Discursively backgrounding the

instructor in the name of "centering" the student configures the language practices of the

classroom upon individuality; it changes the frame for the social relations of the classroom

into one formed, at least conceptually, of individual experience. Consequently, this frame

change divorces the knowledge construction occurring in classroom spaces from its social-

historical binding and instead, positions students as optimally vulnerable, defining their work

only as individualized achievement. When individual achievement is either stated outright or

implied by the discourse of the QM Rubric, neoliberal discourse is in operation.

Close examination suggests that an online course valuing and reinforcing the

ideology of individual achievement is not identified as the target result of Rubric directives,

but as is often seen in ideological texts, what is not spoken is what structures the operations

and social relations expressed within the QM Rubric. In General Standard 2.1, the Rubric

declares that "Upon completion of the course (module/unit), learners will be able to

Select…Develop…Demonstrate…Articulate…Collaborate…in ways that relate to course-

specific mastery of content" (p.5). Because such "mastery" and "competencies" are

necessarily individualized behaviors evaluated by instructors to formulate grades, and are

assessed in terms germane only to the individual (because group scores do not go on

transcripts, and groups dissolve the moment the project or course is over), the Rubric need

not declare that courses are stressing the changed behavior or discourse of individual learners.

Groups may be involved, but individuals are whose learning will be measured in a form that

matters. The Rubric even declares that:

"a course may have objectives or competencies or desired outcomes that are not

easily measured, such as increased awareness of, sensitivity to, or interest in certain

issues or subjects, or ability to work as a team member on a group project. Such

objectives or competencies cannot be substituted for measurable objectives or

competencies…In order for the Standard to be met [by the course], a majority [85%)

of the course-level objectives or competencies must be measurable." (p. 5)

The QM Rubric's unspoken expectation here pivots upon what is measured in the course: the

individual student's consumptive learning behavior, and it is only the individual consumption

and achievement that counts.

Individualized achievement is not only a neoliberal mantra—epitomized by Margaret

Thatcher's famous quote, "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and

women, and there are families"—but its dominance as an ideological tool obviates students

into atomized and isolated targets of symbolic violence via ideological tools. Indeed, the

ideological substrata of "student-centered learning" can be seen as discursive mythologizing

to particular ends. Those ends appear to be: 1) to extend the ideological positioning of the

student as consumer, the center of the knowledge transaction, who may not be 'always right'

but occupies a similar position. This position potentially infantilizes students as well as

disempowers them through their self-consciousness regarding their potentially limited

academic experience; and 2) to constrain the freedom of instructors and ensure their

compliance by inflicting an overly reductionistic structure of social dynamics upon the

classroom, the measurement and recording of which, although oversimplified, still presents

an alienating and overwhelming task and displaces other social relations and functions. Such

expression of the dominant influence upon the environment and social processes of the

classroom—and especially in an impoverished online classroom—moves those processes

ever closer to the abbreviated, transactional methods of capitalist undertakings wherein the

meaning of functions is defined more by capital exchange and efficiency than by humanistic,

existential, or critical goals.

The concept of the "magic helper" (Fromm, 1969, p. 173) can be usefully applied to

the QM Rubric and its role in the dominant instrumental, ideological discourse in higher

education, especially surrounding online learning at community colleges. The magic helper is

a tool upon which "people exhibit unconscious dependence on a source of power outside of

themselves, the essential function of which is to protect, help, and develop the individual, to

be with him and never leave him alone" (Rudnytsky, 2015, p. 3). While Fromm looked

primarily toward the application of this magic helper idea to interpersonal relationships, the

QM Rubric's proffered role--to leverage instrumental discourse toward resolution of the

(painful degree of) mediation and perceptual ambiguities present in the online education

arrangement--gives its function and nature extensive similarity to a magic helper. The QM

Rubric and Review attempts to leverage its neoliberal discourse, including specifically the

characteristics of hyper-instrumentalism and breathtaking measurement, as the symbolic

power behind its asserted ability to transform an online course into an aligned and quality

experience for students. The Rubric purports that its application resolves the lack of clarity

(p. 2), addresses the need for technologies and unique communication style of the instructor

(p.3), establishes a connection between student and instructor (p.3), creates a welcoming

learning environment and sense of community (p.4), conjures the precise learning outcomes

of the course (p.5) and a concise and jargon-free "course delivery format" (p.7), and, of

course, alignment of course objectives and assessments (p.10). Behind these claims one can

see the authoritarian shadow of transference and the solicitation of a dependent relationship

upon the authority of the QM Rubric and its neoliberal edifice, whose "quality" and

"alignment" will protect the instructor from her or his essential incompetence and "inability

to bear the isolation and weakness of the self" (Fromm, 1969, p. 177), upon which has been

transferred the transactional online relationship between instructor and student. Quality and

alignment become disguises, draped over the responsibility of the individual and the coercion

of the institution, to destroy the authority of the individual instructor in the complex

pedagogic situation of online learning at community colleges.

One further outcome of this study is how the discourse of the QM Rubric and Review,

when it does present instructors, locates them as the sources of information and authority

meant to promote learner consumption and compliance. This discursive location of

instructors occurs within structures promoting language propriety and productivity-oriented

knowledge metrics, both of which resemble, if not fully constitute, imperial and colonial

methods of cultural reproduction and dominance (see Brayboy, Castagno, & Maughan, 2008;

Fanon, 1963; Kempf, 2009; Said, 1978), and which maintain cultural relations and education

policy based on deficit models imposed upon disadvantaged students, instead of

implementing educational models acknowledging potential historical debt owed to the

unjustly oppressed (Leonardo, 2013). This hierarchical positioning constrains the roles of

instructors and students and is corrosive to agency (Canaan & Shumar, 2008), the

development of power-sharing relations and intersubjectivity between instructors and

students, and conscientization (Freire, 1970) among students themselves. Via their

participation in such online courses, students' experience of social consciousness, the

democratic imagination, and emancipation from domination by American corporate

capitalism and its dehumanizing power—or what Brown (1959) calls "the valuation of things and devaluation of the human body" and the reduction of "the drives of the human being to greed and competition" (pp. 237-238)—can be negatively impacted, if not entirely preempted. Furthermore, this colonial imposition constitutes a denial of existential respect within social practices endemic to colonization (Murphy, 2009).

The analysis of the QM Rubric indicates other effects of the emerging knowledge marketplace in higher education and two-year colleges in particular. One notable impact is how community college faculty are now expected to internalize the vocabulary and subordinate positioning of the capitalist knowledge worker, and similarly police their students' behavior as well as their own using corporate norms of professionalism. It may be a given that in the online classroom, administrative and staff surveillance is a constant and likely greater than any previous form of higher education instruction outside of penal institutions; and that surveillance is a means of maintaining neoliberal norms within classrooms by deeming other views to be "risks." Especially given the positioning of community colleges within academe, where—and as previously mentioned in this study— "two-year college faculty are implicitly marginalized and devalued" (Townsend & Lapaglia, 2000, p. 41), the imposition of surveillance could be expected as a product of class structures, and that instructors are expected to rightfully surrender their agency to these dominant forces. This trend is coincident with such issues in other sectors of public education, wherein the political forces of deprofessionalization have been extremely active, which Foster (2011) describes as "including the breaking [of] teachers' unions, establishing merit pay for teachers, and, in general, deprofessionalizing education, which it believes can now be run on pure business terms, proletarianizing the work force" (par. 32). In effect, this positioning of

instructors as enforcers of corporate culture, language propriety and productivity-oriented knowledge is disfiguring classrooms into retail outlets of the knowledge market, whose pecuniary pixie dust of economic interest relocates the positional identifiers of students out of public and shared social reality of the classroom into the realm of the personal consumer and learner in a knowledge market.

Furthermore, as this study of the QM Rubric has revealed, the attenuation of agency in education by neoliberal discourse occurs through several forms of dominance enacted in knowledge markets, including commodification and planned obsolescence. This dissertation has demonstrated how the QM Rubric and Review pivots upon and promotes knowledge as a commodity and the "learner" concept of knowledge consumption in online classrooms. By commodifying participation and processes within higher education and community colleges in particular, the discourse of the knowledge market extends the valuing power of the "invisible hand" into and upon the formative understandings and independence of classroom participants. In the knowledge market, as it is manifested in the QM Rubric and elsewhere, the learner consumes knowledge, but consumption means limited, ahistorical integration of information, and little rumination or principled rejection; market dynamics rule. Marx (1964) argues that

> …production does not simply produce man as a *commodity*, the *human commodity*, man in the role of *commodity*; it produces him in keeping with this role as a *mentally* and physically *dehumanized* being—Immorality, deformity, and dulling of the workers and the capitalists.. —Its product is the *self-conscious* and *self-acting* commodity…the human commodity. Great advance of Ricardo, Mill, etc., on Smith and Say, to declare the existence of the human being—the greater or lesser human

productivity of the commodity—to be *indifferent* and even *harmful*. (121, emphasis

by the author)

When operating in markets, human beings struggle to retain their humanity. As

Bourdieu observes, different preferences and practices cluster in different sectors of social

space (Bourdieu, 1998b, pp. 4-6); and incommensurate discourses within these spaces cause

individuals to suffer friction (Ayers, 2009). Knowledge markets cause similar tensions and

incompatibilities, and transforming a community college into such a market can re-make the

college into a credentialing production facility, with all of the according obstacles to self- and

community-empowerment and humanistic possibilities. Market rituals and competition for

wealth become all, and competition and self-interest are again "envisioned as universal and

fundamental psychological human characteristics" (Ward, 2012, p. ii).

Moreover, through the well-established market dynamics of planned obsolescence (Slade,

2006), the knowledge market as is manifested in the QM Rubric promotes ahistoricity, de-

emphasizes contextualization, and excludes knowledge that is "obsolete." The knowledge

market constricts the participation of students and instructors away from knowledge

characterized as no longer salient, toward the market's "current results," to maximize its

potential for wealth creation—and perhaps help to position and domesticate the labor needed

by capital. Dehistoricizing knowledge creates an acontextual view of social conditions

(Kincheloe, 2008) and disconnects social forces from individual agency and movement

toward social justice; in short, ahistoricism creates a "one-day world" incapable of

meaningfully accessing the past (and the many crashing failures and inequities of market

economics, for example). Ahistorical knowledge is dominated by spectacle, and mediated by

ideological fabulism (Mickalites, 2012). However, the knowledge market conducts its affairs

as if education in the United States could be separated, untraceably and unnoticeably, from

the historical and social phenomena of race, ethnicity, gender, and class issues without

consequences, although a great body of scholarship indicates otherwise, and despite how

clearly different interests with different educational and social visions vie for control in the

social field of higher education policy (Apple, 2004). For example, race and gender are

interwoven with structures of American schooling: Leonardo (2013) observes how "race still

casts a long, formidable, and intricate shadow on U.S. society writ large and on its schools,

colleges, and universities" (p. ix), and Blount (1996) has argued that historically, public

schooling has controlled both teachers' and students' sexual and gender expression through

heteronormative surveillance and sanction. But de-historicizing the curriculum and building

purpose around wealth generation—creating Marx's *self-commodity*—worsens the power

imbalances within a knowledge market and disables any intent to address inequities; Apple

(2013) notes how, "in very few nations of the world has setting the market loose on schools

and other social institutions led to greater equality" (p. 6). Accordingly, students and

instructors cannot be discursively de-gendered, de-classed, de-raced, and separated from their

abilities and orientations, without alienating and oppressive consequences to all participants

in the educational process.

In related fashion, this dissertation has also offered evidence of how neoliberal

knowledge- market discourse as seen in the QM Rubric is not only interrupting the agency of

students and instructors, it is re-shaping the community college into a different institution

through imposing instrumental rationalism and unending demands for measurement. The

greater discourse of which QM is a particular tool has accelerated the application to

educational processes of marketeering and corporate values, which account educational

content and method as productive processes on the abacus of wealth creation, and which

positions all in the classroom in relation to wealth creation, accumulation, and consolidation,

irrespective. Through this positioning and the associated demands of instrumental

rationalism with its unbounded demand for measurements, this discourse perpetrates a

system of distractions and diversions from the human relations of educational practices. As

Spady (1994) identifies it:

> Outcomes-based education shares many philosophies and approaches being used to
>
> redefine organizational purpose, processes, and effectiveness in the corporate world.
>
> The principles of total quality management, reengineering the organization, systemic
>
> change, corporate excellence, and a host of other organizational improvement
>
> approaches are all compatible with the philosophies of "all can learn and succeed,"
>
> "creating the conditions for all to succeed," and "continuous improvement" inherent
>
> in OBE. (p. 28)

These practices of instrumental rationalism are now omnipresent in education, usually

manifested as standardized assessments and measurements, and have added to educational

efforts countless amounts of bureaucratic record-taking, plan development, objective

identification, record updating, and storage, which through their time demands, divert

instructor efforts away from students. McNeil (2000) concludes: "Standardization reduces

the quality and quantity of what is taught and learned in schools." Further, "over the long

term, standardization creates inequities, *widening* the gap between the quality of education

for poor and minority youth and that of more privileged students" (p. 3, italics in original).

Not only do such instruments constitute a tool of class division, they are a tragic time sink of

human energy and a drain on teacher motivation. Such instruments further devolve the nature

of the teacher-student relationship into a transactional, econometric one based in counting the

knowledge units transferred and measuring the efficiency with which the transfer takes place.

Within that frame, in the effort to improve knowledge-transfer efficiency (or rather, prove the

inefficiency) of public education institutions, millions of terabytes of required

documentation—mostly compiled by teachers—has been foisted upon the educational

processes of public institutions, including community colleges. This study suggests that the

discourse of the QM Rubric is one additional form of instrumental rationalism that has begun

to transform, indeed, deform, the educational topology of the community college from a

higher education institution rooted in democratic impulses—bolstered by the victory of

democracies over totalitarianism in WWII and the Truman Commission of 1947—into a

capitalist training academy for the knowledge marketplace and a source of capital and labor

for private enterprise. Bagnall (1994) suggests that an entire system can morph toward

regrettable stasis, claiming that "outcomes driven education may thus be dehumanizing and

educationally trivializing, encouraging the development of relatively closed, self-serving,

bureaucratic systems of education" (p. 19). Accordingly, it is difficult to reject the conclusion

that American higher education, including community colleges, appears to have been coerced

into discarding the wisdom that freedom equals more than submission to market forces and

accumulated capital.

A Model for the Influence of Neoliberal Discourse upon Community Colleges

Ideology as manifested in discourse and empowered by political forces has a record

of being elusive in its study; as van Dijk (1998) notes, "of all essentially contested and

controversial concepts in the social sciences and the humanities, that of 'ideology' may well

come out near the top of the list" (p.1). Yet neoliberal ideology and the privatization of

public services has had a marked, definable impact on American education in recent decades,

becoming the hegemonic discourse in the field (Saunders, 2010). Community colleges show

significant influence from neoliberal ideology, including their mission statements (Harvey,

2005; Mollenkopf-Pigsley, 2015) and management philosophies (Boyd, 2010), as well as the

teaching by faculty (Levin, 2007) and their service to non-traditional students (Levin, 2014).

Theoretical efforts to address the influence of neoliberalism upon the community college

classroom have yet to offer a model for such influence, so one is posited here. (See Figure 4)

This model attempts to show how symbolic force—omnipresent in all language and

discourse—is constrained by ideology into symbolic violence. The model conveys how

> Symbolic violence is a subtle and invisible mode of domination that prevents
>
> domination from being recognized as such and, therefore, it tends to be socially
>
> accepted without much resistance. It works when subjective structures - the habitus
>
> (the given nature of body build and constitution, the predisposition) - and objective
>
> structures (the external and clearly seen or heard or felt structures) are in accord with
>
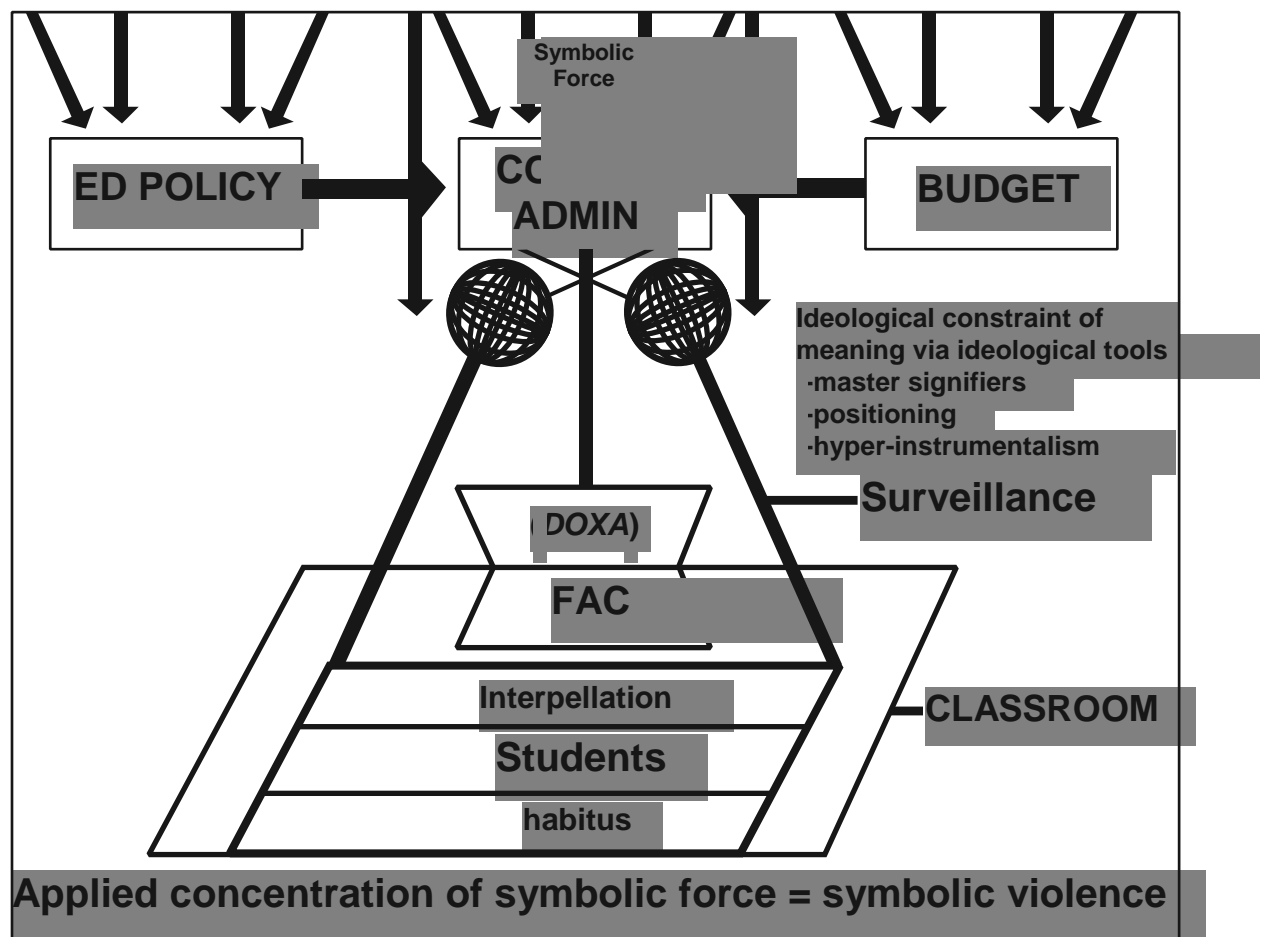> each other. (Hasnain, 2003, para. 12)

Figure 4.

Like any model, the one presented here has limitations as a two-dimensional

representation of a four- or five-dimensional process, as language can exist in multiple

dimensions simultaneously, including time. The model attempts to address how ideological

tools—including discursive positioning, surveillance, hyper-instrumentalism, and master

signifiers—transform symbolic force into symbolic violence and concentrate that violence

upon students and faculty in the classroom. Symbolic violence is symbolic force that

influences agents to act against their own individual or class interest; in this model, it does

not through these tools act upon administrators, regulators or legislators responsible for

budgets and policy. Through its concentrated nature, this symbolic violence acts upon faculty and students by discursive alchemy, creating ectopisms aided by surveillance and material history, displacing or disorganizing non-violent signifiers and related understandings in the classroom. The model shows how symbolic force can be deflected, given new vectors through, around or past faculty. These vectors seek to exert themselves upon students' previously developed *habitus* and postures of interpellation for knowledge development. The model also suggests how the narrowing of discursive options for faculty pressures their existing *doxa* toward the margins of their classroom presence, reconfiguring definitions of faculty professionalism and extending the distorting power of surveillance upon counter-hegemonic pedagogy.

Online courses rely heavily on symbolic content, and structural changes and interventions to the environment can radically alter the experience of, and relations within, a course. Online courses are thus particularly subject to extrinsic classroom modifications, some of which may be instructor-driven, and some of which are not. Symbolic violence as configured within the discourse of measurability and the doctrine of learning outcomes is animated by surveillance and reporting of student performance in the classroom, the administrative gaze that plays "the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere" (Haraway, 1990, p. 88). Often, particular mandates regarding instructor professionalism address the production of classrooms as structures of student performance measurement. However, these are not the only dynamics shaping the online classroom.

In online courses at community colleges, materials and messages generated by college administration are often imbedded by instructional technology or institutional research personnel. Usually directed at students, the messages vary, but include general

announcements, requests to participate in surveys, course evaluations, or special events. An

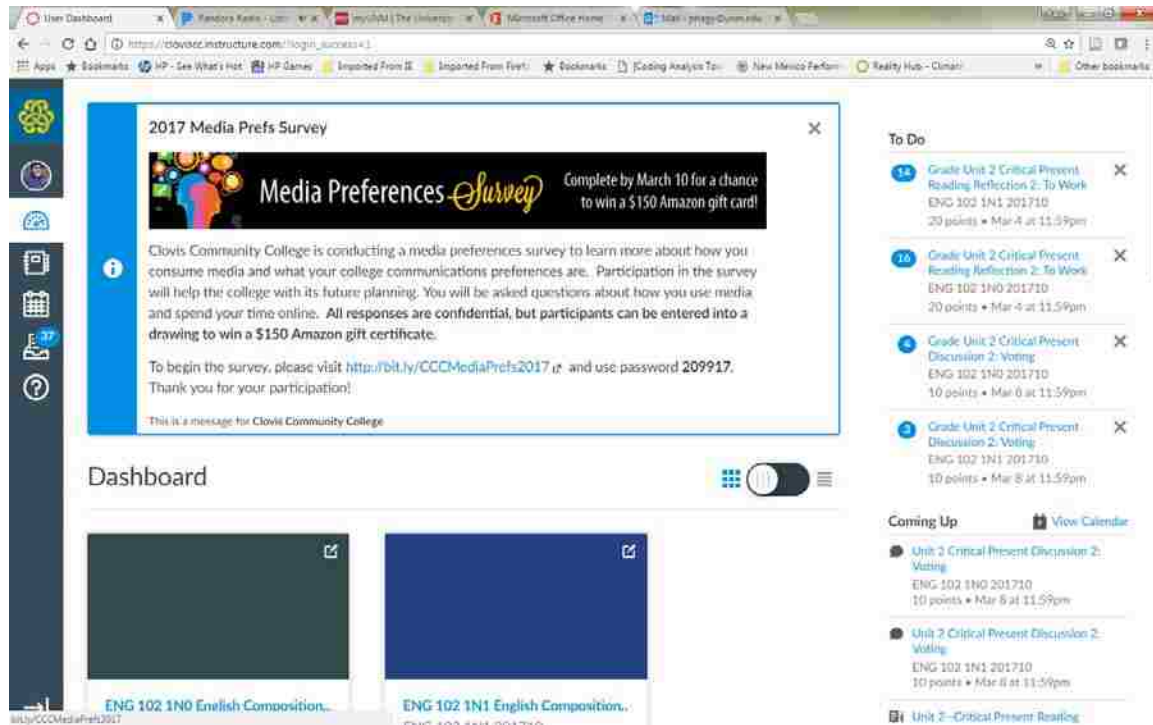example of such planted messages is located in Figure 5.

Figure 5. Example of Canvas Dashboard.

Such announcements are considered by some teaching professionals as "part and

parcel" of teaching work, much like taking roll, a syllabus review, or other classroom

procedures, and would not warrant a second glance from most instructors. However, one

point that these messages can illustrate is that college administration perceives and acts upon

classroom spaces as locations for their signification and the gathering of information for use

by the organization. Furthermore, the utilized space, part of the initial screen all students and

instructors see, constitutes an ideological moment, which has been naturalized as an expected

part of the workings of an online course, and is being harnessed by the administration,

presenting itself as the institution, for the institution's purposes.

One of those purposes appears to be surveillance of online courses. Currently, depending on the enrollment of a given online course at a community college, information concerning that course is now subject to regular reporting and observation by administrators or agents thereof. Specifically, high school dual credit students in the state of New Mexico who participate in online courses offered by community colleges are cause for instructors to report grades to administrators weekly, who then report them to high school counsellors and principals. FERPA, or the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99), is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records, and restricts the dissemination of that information (U.S. Department of Education, 2017), and appears like it might apply to such student grade information; but FERPA does not restrict the internal organizational flows of grade information, nor the cause or situations for which that information is generated. Therefore, FERPA does not apply to the reporting of student grades to school personnel.

Dual credit enrollment at colleges is the product of neoliberal policies implemented nationwide but at the state level. New Mexico's dual credit policy is part of New Mexico's College and Career Readiness legislation, passed in 2007 and required to be implemented "no later than the beginning of the 2008-2009 school year" (New Mexico Public Education Department, 06.30.7.2). Administered by the College and Career Readiness Bureau at the New Mexico Department of Public Education, students are required to achieve college and career readiness by taking dual credit coursework or through an apprenticeship or other structured modality, and the focus of such efforts is for "New Mexico to establish strategies that provide opportunities for all students to choose a clear career pathway resulting in an

industry-recognized certificate or postsecondary attainment" (New Mexico Legislative

Education Study Committee Fact Sheet, p. 1).

The ideological implications of the workforce readiness program are significant, as it

writes into the discourse of education for students a hallowed place for capitalism, as well as

identifying the primary existential space for their actions as the workplace (likely owned and

managed by someone else) instead of the public or personal sphere; it also effectively makes

them adjuncts to the means of production. However, the focus here is not on dual credit

students for their struggles to define themselves outside of the capitalist workplace, but for

the impact of their presence and related policies in the college classroom.

With dual-credit high school students now present in their courses, New Mexico

community college instructors must produce and communicate any record of performance

generated by a given student in a course, and present that record, possibly online, for

administrator review and forwarding to high school personnel. This is the nature of dual-

credit classes, goes the rationale; students receive credit at both the high school and college

level, so personnel at both institutions need to stay apprised of these students' performance.

Thus the process of grade communication for dual-credit students, supported by

administrative dominance and discourses regarding accountability and professionalism, is

imposed on instructors to facilitate the communication of grades. This communication is

sometimes done via an online grade book, which can be regularly and efficiently observed

for particular records. This policy applies to both traditional and online courses.

One result of dual credit coursework is that administrators have interpreted this

reporting requirement in online classes as justifying their unlimited access to those online

sections. At various institutions, through the learning management systems, "Observers" are

electronically inserted into classes in which dual-credit students participate. The observers are identified to instructors as having access only to the grades of the specific students in question.

However, this position of surveillance for online courses has been built into those courses without consulting instructors or students, or seeking their permission. The content of the online course is potentially visible, including discussions and emails, to any agent able to view the course gradebook. Such a presence transforms the classroom space through implied violence (albeit low-register violence) into a reporting apparatus, and voids the expectation of discretion for students and instructor; both are aware that the course workings are now monitored. Given the power of administrative positions—especially at community colleges where faculty are not unionized and essentially have no protections regarding their evaluation and continued employment—the presence of an administrative agent cannot be ignored. As Bourdieu states:

> although it is legitimate to treat social relations – even relations of domination – as symbolic interactions (…) one must not forget that the relations of communication par excellence – linguistic exchanges – are also relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers or their respective groups are actualized."
>
> (Bourdieu, 1991: 37)

Any messages to students from college administration, even the casual announcements described earlier and offered in the course "dashboard," take on a different and notably ideological character when surveillance is conducted in the same classroom. Just as any photographer taking pictures at a political rally or any media member attending a funeral changes the social relations taking place at these events, surveillance in itself is

distorting to classroom dynamics; any instructor who has had her or his teaching observed for the purposes of evaluation would acknowledge this. The impact of surveillance is particularly true to the classrooms of critical pedagogues, whose classrooms often critique and challenge power structures and policies within given social arrangements (like public schooling). As McLaren (2006) offers, "Critical educators argue that knowledge should be analyzed on the basis of whether it is oppressive and exploitative, and not whether it is 'true'" (p. 211).

Additionally, this example of the impact of neoliberal policies shows that the constraints of ideology that bundle and direct the meaning of words, symbolic force, into symbolic violence against students relies on ideological tools to achieve that concentration of force. College administration receives legal mandates and a policy framework from the corporate-state apparatus and discursively channels them into the college itself using the tools of master signifiers— "career" and "readiness" are each terms whose ideological and commodifying nature deconstructs and feeds back upon itself at practically a glance—and social positioning, wherein faculty are compelled to change and accept the new order, and students are the units-of-responsibility being channeled into the "workforce." Hyper-instrumentalism manifests itself in the defined need for constant grade information to flow, despite the lack of tradition at the community college in question for such constant grade monitoring, but legally justifying the establishment of this policy without instructor feedback or consent. (My experience is that faculty resistance to the policy has been nonexistent.) The final and most powerful of the tools is surveillance, which enables this career readiness policy to encroach not only upon the professionalism of the instructor, but to recondition the classroom space into one with continuous administrative presence. In this case, the

surveillance component is sufficiently invidious as to reduce the need for separate symbolic

violence to institute or maintain the policy.

Implications for Teaching Practices at Community Colleges

Given the potential for continued advance of market-based and corporate

discourses—like seen in the QM Rubric at the heart of this study—into American higher

education, along with the economic violence of state budget cutting and other ideologically-

manufactured crises, the expansion of privatization and the wealth-creation agenda further

into community college curricula and classrooms is a near-certainty. The implications of this

metastasis are socially retrogressive. The cankerous expansion will affect both social

relations within those organizations and the effectiveness of those organizations as

institutions of higher education, as well as deprive the community of the variety of

educational options and approaches originating among independent faculty at community

colleges.

The impacts of market-based philosophies within community college employee-

employer relations will influence the nature and quality of instruction at these institutions in a

fashion that asserts the economic power of the institution over its employees. The now

regular budget crises at institutions of higher education take on different dynamics when

market discourse is dominant, as cost-per-student becomes paramount, and the power of

neoliberal discourse makes sure that the focus of the discussions is how the institution(s) and

classrooms must change, and not the revenue raising processes of the state. The common

administrative and legislative solution invokes greater control of the classroom, as such

situations bring up the authoritarian impulses of legislators, regulators and administrators,

especially in non-unionized workplaces, where faculty input may be considered, but it may

not be, or at least not in any substantive way. The classroom realities of human relations and the goal of student emancipation fade from the picture, as budget cutting pressures institutions and delimits the possible options. The greater influence of neoliberal discourse makes it likely that the types of changes adopted will take certain forms: for example, faculty in areas of study not adorned with apprenticeships or other direct channels to the workforce, like the liberal arts and humanities, could see reduced class offerings; "general education" or other prerequisites could be reduced to online offerings only. It is currently standard practice at my institution for classes with smaller enrollments, very often face-to-face sections, to be cancelled in favor of classes with larger enrollments, like online sections; this current policy would require few modifications to achieve an "online only" end. With such changes, community college faculty could face even more diminished or highly mediated roles in their interactions with students, as well as greater loss of governance power and academic freedom, on their way toward potential elimination altogether.

The closing act of this neoliberal tragedy for community colleges has classroom technology, including the use of standardized video-lectures and much-lower-paid classroom facilitators, being adopted to replace face-to-face classes altogether. Why pay for salaries and benefits when subscription rates to quality-guaranteed instruction services will (initially) cost less? As shown in the adoption of learning management systems, many corporate business models increase service costs when they have achieved integration into institutional functions, and when they try to offer additional services. Cost potential notwithstanding, given such an approach, class content will be controlled, and necessarily domesticated, by administrator choices, not faculty; few, if any, oppositional politics would be expressed in the classroom. Faculty's obsolescence at community colleges would then appear among

necessary conclusions, and given the surge of classroom content options in the private sector (and since this study has shown that obsolescence can play a key role in knowledge market dynamics) and additional economic coercion via budget crisis, appears inevitable. The discourse of faculty insolence and remoteness can be tapped once again to support a new definition of faculty in the community college knowledge marketplace: obsolete.

Then comes the exodus. Lost jobs are a part of capitalist reality; commentators offer platitudes about creative destruction; an early retirement buyout is the "generous offer" to most. Replacement of community college faculty by technology could be constructed as "progress," conveyed to the public as leading to lower taxes and greater value for education consumers, and not as an undemocratic power consolidation by private sector advocates and corporations.

Neoliberal discourse has demonstrated the power to drive such profound but undemocratic changes in education when it also impelled the massive increase of online education at community colleges in first decade of the 2000s. Essentially, in the development of online education at community colleges, technology was imposed upon classroom processes without a serious public conversation beforehand about the potential impacts upon the nature of higher education; nor was online teaching and learning given any serious vetting by researchers before being made available to students. The telltale ideological sign is that the discourse concerning online course development at community colleges revealed faculty skepticism but a process moving forward as if the institutions had no choice but to develop, and no arguments against developing, fully online programs regardless of the value, costs or benefits of such programs. As Boyd (2016) notes, "online learning did not come into being because educators found a more effective way to teach, but rather because they were

forced to adapt due to the political and economic interests that pushed and promoted it in their institutions" (p. 169). Neoliberal discourse and its belief systems influenced the actions of all parties involved, creating the impetus for 15 years of vast investment in technology for those colleges, and a large source of revenue for private corporations and vendors. This investment occurred despite some research into online education at community colleges (Smith Jaggars, 2011, 2013, 2014a; 2014b) suggesting its enduring inability to serve all students equitably. Still, those inequities have not stopped online education from becoming one of the major sources of enrollment at community colleges. The business model of cost and convenience, indicative of neoliberal discourse at its most powerful, impelled this decision about how community colleges should educate their students—and if it continues in its dominance, the interests behind this model and the associated discourse will likely make other decisions in the future.

Structure, Agency and Critical Pedagogy

Implications of further encroachment by neoliberal discourse into the classroom at community colleges are daunting for those instructors who employ a critical pedagogy. As McLaren defines it, "Critical pedagogy is fundamentally concerned with understanding the relationship between power and knowledge. The dominant curriculum separates knowledge from the issue of power and treats it in an unabashedly technical manner; knowledge is seen in overwhelmingly instrumental terms as something to be mastered" (2006, p. 209). Practically speaking, the use of various methods of critical pedagogy, including classrooms where students can choose the direction of their studies, rarely can be made workable in an environment of extensive assessment—and vice-versa. Assessment regimes restrain classroom-based inquiry and the establishment of classrooms in which teachers and students

learn together because *inquiry has few certain outcomes*, while assessment is founded upon

certain outcomes. The process for projects as joint inquiries is not regular or highly

predictable, with fits, starts, and stops making for uneven progress, and even some dead-

ends—irregularities which don't align with business-based classroom models pinioned to

outcomes and their assessment regimes. (As quantitative assessment is widely practiced, very

little if any can be conducted spontaneously or on short notice, since quantitative assessment

requires an outlining of variables and definition of how those variables fit within an equation

addressing measured material reality.) Other critical pedagogy techniques like prompting

students to design their own assignments, and to respond with research into the social issues

raised in class, are similarly challenged by the demands for outcomes to both anticipate and

measure. Likewise, setting up dialogues in which students and teachers both learn about

American social issues from each other, as equal, fellow members of a classroom community,

is untenable even in a college setting, as power-sharing is anathema to the neoliberal

classroom, and instructors themselves learning is a misapplication of resources.

Essentially, the means by which the doctrine of outcomes confounds critical

pedagogy demonstrates the ideological rigidity of the doctrine; no methods can exist outside

its purview. Arguably, measurement of outcomes is a pedagogical catechism intended

to restrain classroom-based inquiry and to legislate and control the reach of that inquiry,

which is inappropriate for any educational pursuits, but still worse for higher education.

Similarly, the false sense of purpose and achievement brought about by the measurement

process inhibits the pedagogical imagination, relegating classroom processes to the suburbs

of knowledge. Predestined information consumption, taxonomic fixation and a mania for

classroom process spawns rote pedagogy at its mundane and superficial worst.

Community College Faculty, Agency, and Symbolic Violence

In general reference to schooling in America, McLaren (2006, p. 203) has noted that educational institutions are sites of both domination and liberation, and the findings presented in this dissertation on the discourse of the QM Rubric have suggested that the claim also applies to community colleges, for both faculty and students. The discourse of the QM rubric works to—and I again use van Leuwen's (1996, p. 33) term, "background" —the agency of instructors in the field of their own pedagogy. This language practice of backgrounding affects the roles of instructors and students as a form of symbolic violence. According to Bourdieu (1991), when effected by an institution, the symbolic is a terrible and obscure type of power, a "mysterious alchemy" (1991, p. 233). Such symbolic violence asserts dominance through both the organizational workings of their employers and the corporate discourse of QM, which subsumes the social relations of the classroom and impedes the agency of those within to develop unique pedagogical relations upon criteria other than the circuit of capital. Such reconstituting of the faculty role and the *doxa* of curriculum is disruptive to higher education in all forms, but it is pugnaciously disruptive to the unique historical and social relations of American community college institutions. The rupture is especially destructive given the population of students served, as it is in majority comprised of individuals who have been underserved by public education and hampered by status or circumstance (Cohen & Brawer, 1989; Jenkins, 2003).

Now, through ideological tools and magic helpers of curriculum domination like the QM Rubric and other neoliberal conquests like the erosion of shared governance, community college faculty and students can be seen as experiencing a form of organizational and political "othering" (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012). This position of the "other" simplifies and

expedites actions of political dominance like the economic violence of diminishing state support for higher education, which has resulted in layoffs, reductions in benefits or pay, deteriorating facilities, fewer scholarships, and other degrading of capacity. The subordination of the faculty "other" also has meant their forced accommodation of the expanding presence of private corporate agendas, curriculum concentration, reduction and "standardization," and crass exploitation of greater numbers of adjunct instructors. As one part of this reconstitution of now "othered" faculty at community colleges, the QM Rubric and Review may contribute to both the dissimulation of previous emancipatory aims for community colleges and the attempted push of faculty into political irrelevance.

Concerns for Social Justice and Participatory Democracy

When community college practices are exposed to the discourses of neoliberalism and market fundamentalism, the liberatory and emancipatory functions of those colleges are disrupted. Social justice as defined by Rawls (1971), the United Nations (2006) and Giroux (2013), is a conceptual frame which examines and promotes fair and just relations between individuals and society, including institutions and economic relationships. Education is a key part of social justice, and educators play key roles in the mobilization of student social awareness. When educators themselves experience the diminishment of their role as faculty, this reduces the diversity and authenticity of their instruction, and their ability to exchange with students is necessarily reduced. This disruption is one goal of neoliberal influences on higher education; the eradication of alternative discourses and forms of power is a common product of capitalist belief structures and ideologies, and college classrooms with critical frames—including at community colleges—have been safe spaces for the alternative perspective, sanctuaries for the resistant, and support for groups of the oppressed, while such

spaces in the United States remain. The community college critical pedagogue, as a *refusnik* to the dominant order of discourses, seeks to create such safe spaces—safe for ideas, like the oppositional ideas of marginalized subjectivities, and safe for students, to grow their understanding of discourses and those with hegemony in America. With this spirit, such instructors seek for their classrooms critical knowledge creation, patient dialogue, clear-minded and inspired discussion of social relations, including oppressive relations, and acknowledgement of social responsibilities. Critical classrooms at community colleges can present and function in such ways if the classroom spaces have conditions that "keep the flame of critical pedagogy alight" (Canaan, 2006, p.91). But, given the nature of neoliberal and market-oriented discourses and the fashion in which those discourses increasingly exercise power over the community college classroom, the higher educational process itself—critical pedagogy included—as a project of human development, is seriously impeded, limited to only pre-ordained and mandated results. The promise and strength of American community colleges, namely, their mission of providing equitable higher education to disadvantaged or underserved Americans, can only wane.

If community colleges continue to experience encroachment by market-oriented values, the consequences for American democracy are grave. Thirty years of neoliberal influence upon community colleges has already made them far less capable of serving as models of participatory organizations with democratic impulses, but whatever is left of those impulses will likely be eliminated. The increased administration and hierarchy associated with neoliberal values (and their search for greater control of the classroom) not only further undermines the institutional model of shared governance, it becomes a source of greater costs for colleges, potentially subjecting others at the colleges to greater economic coercion.

Ideally, community colleges exist to serve their communities' lifelong learning needs--while sometimes "emerging as the center of recreational and cultural life in the area" (AACC, 2005, p.3)—and to represent their communities' values, including the promotion of democracy via support of local, state, and national elections. Many community college practitioners believe the community college classrooms to be an ideal setting for critical education and the practices of informed and democratic social critique. Nonetheless, according to Diamond (2014), current threats to social justice and participatory democracy in the United States include the decline in capacity to achieve political compromise, increasing limitations on the right to vote, growing income and wealth disparity and intergenerational socioeconomic immobility related to disparate educational opportunities, and the decrease of government investment in public goods (p. 188). As part of their mission, community colleges are meant to address intergenerational socioeconomic immobility and disparate educational opportunities; perhaps the enervation of the comprehensive community college as an institution is indeed contributing to these threats to American democracy. Certainly, the need for any counteraction to these threats to democracy is real, but the various effects of neoliberal discourse and its workforce development model reduces the efficacy of community colleges to counter those threats.

Alternative Paradigms for Community College Classrooms

QM tools and aligned methods of ideological constraint have the force of dominant discourses behind them. As previously noted in this study, the force of neoliberal discourse and its manifested policies have a coercive nature that may dampen the productivity of alternative paradigm development. Still, community colleges—and specifically, community college faculty—may serve as a source of both critical scholarship and counter-hegemonic

discourse and activism, and seek to overcome the ideological obstacles and discontinuities of discourse in community college work. Scholars like Lamont Hill (2012) have noted how "everyday people are denied access to crucial research knowledge related to education and schooling" (p. 154), indicating that public curiosity is a resource potentially available to support community college faculty efforts to counter the social hegemony of neoliberal discourses and their penetration into community college programming. With an effort at public engagement on a local, regional, and national level, dystopian scenarios like the elimination of faculty altogether at community colleges are preventable, given sufficient weight to balance the political forces, and more voices within public discourse around the mission of these institutions. In considering means and forms of resistance to surveillance, Browne (2015, p. 13) notes the "ways that those who are often subject to surveillance subvert, adopt, endorse, resist, innovate, limit, comply with, and monitor that very surveillance…[amid] a more nuanced understanding of the sometimes discreet and varying ways that surveillance operates." Faculty development, for example, could serve as a source for re-readings and renewed understandings of key critical theory texts, by Bourdieu and Althusser; field-specific texts by a range of educational visionaries, like Dewey, and Freire; and voices active in critical higher education scholarship, like Giroux and McLaren, who argue for teaching an awareness of the failures of global capitalism and neoliberal policies (for example, in McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2005). Appropriation of key terms like entrepreneurism, toward a broader usage in community college programming as discussed in scholarship and public discourse, including use toward educational justice, could serve community colleges and mark them as institutions committed to advancing social justice in their communities. Participation in greater social action by community college faculty,

including additional critical research like this dissertation, can raise awareness among peer faculty at other institutions, both in higher education and public schools, as well as among legislators and administrators (at least theoretically). Identification of the ways that neoliberal discourse undercuts agency may help support faculty action toward the rejection of the wealth creation agenda, with its magical helpers and oppressive obsession with objectives and narrow vision for community college education. "Local control" is also an issue that resonates still within public schooling discourse, and which may be applicable—in some variant—to the community college system. However big the toolbox of resistance is, the most important act is one of recognition; we must recognize, as Weiner (2004) identifies it, that "people are not simply dupes of a system that is impenetrable and beyond change" (p.6).

Critical scholarship, including *praxis* like the design of alternative programs for community college classrooms, could be a meaningful support for counter-hegemonic educational efforts at these institutions. Some introductory research into the conceptual basis for critical pedagogy online (for ex., Kellner, 1998) and beginning inquiries (Boyd, 2016; Carruthers & Friend, 2014) suggest that research has begun and alternative visions are being sought. Examining the viability of alternatives to community college online programs being defined within limited and econometric frames could provide both quantitative and qualitative research opportunities to those critical scholars so inclined. Furthermore, with additional support in the academy, such research opportunities could be tuned to serve as the bases for greater public intellectualism by community college practitioners.

The creation of an entirely new model for community colleges is possible. This new model of community colleges would depend on addressing the caustic consequences to the neoliberal model. Part of this critique depends on explicating the origins of knowledge

market ahistoricism, as seen in the neoliberal workforce training model, and relating curriculum needs and functions to the historical purpose and functions of community colleges. Furthermore, a new model would likely require a revitalized awareness of the value of the institutions in communities and their social development, including the community college social role in the reassertion of democratic values and acknowledgement of social costs paid to the dehumanizing impacts of corporate capital. Education leadership programs at universities could aid in development of the new model by proffering critical teaching methodologies to community college instructors and administrators—ones that counter a top-down, banking-oriented approach to learning and instead, create constructivist, democratic classrooms where students and teachers interact in the collaborative production of knowledge. The new model could emphasize the pursuit of technology for new reasons: because it can serve the pursuit of democracy in social and political liberation, as tools for empowering engaged citizens committed to creating a more equitable and just world in which to live, work, and learn, and as a way to slip the bonds of the epistemological certainty whose cultural frame goes unacknowledged. The power to create this new model only exists if we denizens of higher education use our democratic and pedagogic imaginary and create it.

Appendix A

Quality Matters Rubric 5th Edition

The Quality Matters™ Higher Education Rubric
Fifth Edition, 2014

General Standard 1 – Course Overview and Introduction: The overall design of the course is made clear to the learner at the beginning of the course.		The course overview and introduction set the tone for the course, let learners know what to expect, and provide guidance to ensure learners ge off to a good start.
Standard	**Points**	**Annotation**
.1 Instructions make clear how o get started and where to find various course components.	3	Instructions provide a general course overview, present the schedule of activities, guide the learner to explore the course site, and indicate what t do first, in addition to listing detailed navigational instructions for the whole course. Instructors may choose to incorporate some of this information in the course syllabus. In this case, learners should be directed to the syllabus a the beginning of the course. A useful feature is a "Read Me First" or "Start Here" button or icon on the course home page, linking learners to start-up information. Examples: 1. A course "tour" 2. Clear statements about how to get started in the course 3. A "scavenger hunt" or "syllabus quiz" assignment that leads learners through an exploration of the different parts of the course 4. A table or diagram that depicts the relationship between the online an face-to-face portions of a blended course **Blended Courses:** Instructions in the online classroom make it clear to learners that the course is a blended course, with both online and face-to-face components and activities. Instructions specify the requirements for both the online and face-to-face portions of the course. The introductory information clearly states when and where learners should participate eac week, and a structured set of topics and a schedule are provided for each face-to-face meeting.
.2 Learners are introduced to he purpose and structure of the course.	3	Information is provided to help learners understand the purpose of the course and how the learning process is structured and carried out, including course schedule, delivery modalities (online or blended), mode of communication, types of learning activities, and how learning will be assessed. Such information may be provided or reinforced in the course syllabus or other course documents; or in areas with titles such as "Course Introduction," "Welcome from the Instructor," "Start Here," "Course Schedule," "Course Outline," "Course Map," "Course Calendar," etc.

1

		Blended Courses: The purpose of both the online and face-to-face portions of the course is clearly explained to learners to help them understand how and why both formats are important to the learning process. The course schedule or calendar fully covers both the online and face-to-face portions of the course and clearly specifies the dates, times, and locations of face-to-face class meetings.
		Competency-Based Courses: In addition to the purpose of the competency-based course, the options available to competency-based learners to complete the course are clearly delineated through detailed instructions. Reviewers may look for this information in the course site or linked from the course site to the program website.
.3 Etiquette expectations sometimes called "netiquette") or online discussions, email, and other forms of communication are clearly stated.	2	Expectations for how learners are to communicate online and in the classroom are clearly stated. Since learner behavior is culturally influenced, it is important to be explicit about standards for communication that apply in the course. The substance of etiquette expectations is not to be evaluated.
		Examples of etiquette considerations:
		1. Expectations for the tone and civility used in communicating with fellow learners and the instructor, whether the communication is by electronic means or by telephone or face-to-face
		2. Expectations for email content, including "speaking style" requirements (e.g., standard English as opposed to popular abbreviations used online and regional colloquialisms)
		3. Spelling and grammar expectations
		4. Awareness of and sensitivity to cultural differences
		To reinforce etiquette and civility, the instructor may provide a link or reference to the institution's student handbook or code of conduct.
.4 Course and/or institutional policies with which the learner is expected to comply are clearly stated, or a link to current policies is provided.	2	Policies may be established by the instructor or by the institution.
		Policies may address such matters as student conduct, academic integrity, late submission of assignments, the grade of "Incomplete," withdrawal without penalty, confidentiality in the classroom, student grievances, electronic communication, etc. Confirm that the policies are adequately explained and up-to-date. The substance of policies is not to be evaluated
		Academic integrity and late submission policies are especially important. Reviewers might suggest inclusion of these policies if they are not found in the course.
		Reviewers may look for links to the student handbook or other institution-wide policy publications.
.5 Minimum technology	2	Learners are provided with detailed, clearly worded information regarding

equirements are clearly stated ir structions for use provided.		the technologies they will need throughout the course. The word "technologies" covers a wide range, including hardware, software, subscriptions, and plug-ins. In evaluating whether this Standard is met, confirm that clear instructions are provided for obtaining, installing, and using the technologies. Examples of information to include in a technology requirements statement: 1. If speakers, a microphone, and/or a headset are necessary, the need fc such peripherals is clearly stated. 2. A list of required downloadable resources, including links, is provided. 3. If publisher materials are required, clearly stated instructions for how to obtain and use any required access codes are provided.
.6 Prerequisite knowledge in he discipline and/or any equired competencies are clearly stated.	1	Information about prerequisite knowledge and/or competencies is found within the course, in documents linked to the course, or in supporting material provided to the learner by another means. Look for a link to tha information and/or a reminder of it for the learner. Discipline knowledge prerequisites specify other courses that would enable the learner to meet the requirements.
.7 Minimum technical skills expected of the learner are cl 'y stated.	1	General as well as course-specific technical skills learners must have to succeed in the course are specified. Examples of technical skills might include 1. Using the learning management system 2. Using email with attachments 3. Creating and submitting files in commonly used word processing program formats 4. Copying and pasting 5. Downloading and installing software 6. Using spreadsheet programs 7. Using presentation and graphics programs
.8 The self-introduction by the nstructor is appropriate and is available online.	1	The initial introduction creates a sense of connection between the instructor and the learners. It presents the instructor as professional as well as approachable, and includes the essentials, such as the instructor's name, title, field of expertise, email address, phone number, and times when the instructor is typically online or may be reached by phone. Expectations of the relationship and communication style between teache and learner are culturally influenced. Including information about the ro of the instructor and how to address the instructor is helpful to learners from all backgrounds. The self-introduction helps learners get to know the instructor and, in addition to the essentials mentioned above, could include

		1. Comments on teaching philosophy 2. A summary of past experience with teaching online courses 3. Personal information such as hobbies, family, travel experiences, etc. 4. A photograph, audio message, or video (including alternative formats to ensure accessibility) **Blended Courses:** The instructor's self-introduction is available electronically for learners who missed early face-to-face meetings. **Competency-Based Courses:** The learner's primary faculty or staff contact authors the self-introduction. The roles of instructor, facilitator, coach, mentor, assessor, or other staff who support the competency-based learner are clearly described. More than one self-introduction may be needed if learners are expected to contact different individuals for guidance on different aspects of the course.
.9 Learners are asked to introduce themselves to the class.	1	Learner introductions at the beginning of the class help to create a welcoming learning environment and a sense of community. Learners ar asked to introduce themselves and given guidance on where and how the should do so. In a few situations, such as when a class is very large, learner introductions may not be feasible. Instructors are asked to indicate in the Course Worksheet if there is a reason for not providing an opportunity fo learner introductions. Instructors may ask learners to respond to specific questions (such as why they are taking the course, what are their strategies for success, what concerns they have, what they expect to learn, etc.) or may choose to let the learner decide what to include. Instructors may provide an example c an introduction and/or start the process by introducing themselves. Instructors may give learners the opportunity to represent themselves by text, audio, or visual means. **Blended Courses:** The opportunity for introductions is available electronically for learners who may have missed the opportunity during early face-to-face meetings. Ideally, learner introductions are posted online, for future reference, even if learners have introduced themselves i a face-to-face meeting.
General Standard 2 – Learning Objectives Competencies): Learning objectives or competencies describe what learners will be able to do upon completion of the course.		The learning objectives or competencies establish a foundation upon which the rest of the course is based.
2.1 The course learning	3	**Alignment:** The concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea tha

| objectives, or course/program competencies, describe outcomes that are measurable.

Alignment | | critical course components work together to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning outcomes. Measurable course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies form the basis of alignment in a course. Other elements of the course, including those addressed in Standards 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, and 6.1, contribute to the accomplishment of the learning objectives or competencies.

Measurable course learning objectives or competencies precisely and clearly describe what learners will learn and be able to do if they successfully complete the course. Course objectives or competencies describe desired learner mastery using terms that are specific and observable enough to be measured by the instructor. At some institutions, learning objectives or competencies may be called "learning outcomes."

Examples of measurable objectives or competencies:
Upon completion of the course (module/unit), learners will be able to
1. Select appropriate tax strategies for different financial and personal situations.
2. Develop a comprehensive, individualized wellness action program focused on overcoming a sedentary life-style.
3. Demonstrate correct use of personal protective equipment.
4. Articulate personal attitudes and values related to the use of medical marijuana.
5. Collaborate on a group project by completing designated tasks and offering feedback to team members on their tasks.

In a course in which learners are expected to demonstrate "core competencies," such as analytical skills and/or ability to express themselves effectively in writing or in other forms of communication, the course should include reference to these foundational, core objectives or competencies in addition to objectives or competencies that relate to course-specific mastery of content. For instance, if the institution has a writing-across-the-curriculum requirement, the instructor of a course in economics may be expected to evaluate the effectiveness of learners' writing as well as their mastery of principles of economics. Accordingly, objectives or competencies related to writing effectiveness will be included in the course.

In addition to measurable objectives or competencies, a course may have objectives or competencies or desired outcomes that are not easily measured, such as increased awareness of, sensitivity to, or interest in certain issues or subjects, or ability to work as a team member on a group project. Such objectives or competencies cannot be substituted for measurable objectives or competencies when determining whether Standard 2.1 is met. In order for the Standard to be met, a majority (85%) of the course-level objectives or competencies must be measurable. |

		Special Situations: In some cases (check the Course Worksheet), the course objectives or competencies are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. If the institutionally mandated learning objectives or competencies are not measurable, make note of it in your recommendations. Write specific suggestions for improvement that can be used at the institution level to frame objectives or competencies in terms that are measurable. If the course objectives or competencies are institutionally mandated, then the reviewer may need to consider Standard 2.1 in conjunction with Standard 2.2, as follows: Standard 2.1 is MET under the following circumstances: 1. The course objectives or competencies are measurable, whether set by the institution or by the instructor. 2. The institutionally mandated course objectives or competencies are not measurable, but the faculty-written module/unit objectives or competencies are measurable and aligned with the course objectives or competencies. Standard 2.1 is NOT MET under the following circumstances: 1. There are no stated course objectives or competencies. 2. The course objectives or competencies set by the instructor are not measurable. 3. The institutionally mandated course objectives or competencies are not measurable, and the faculty-written module/unit objectives or competencies are either not measurable or not present. NOTE: *It is not possible to complete the course review if measurable learning objectives or competencies are not present. In such a case, the review is suspended and the team chair consults the instructor to clarify whether or not the matter can be quickly addressed so the review can continue.*
2.2 The module/unit learning objectives or competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies. Alignment	3	**Alignment:** The concept of alignment is intended to convey the idea that critical course components work together to ensure that learners achieve the desired learning outcomes. Measurable module/unit learning objectives or competencies form the basis of alignment in a course because they are consistent with the course-level objectives or competencies (2.1). Objectives or competencies explain how learners will be assessed (3.1). Instructional materials (4.1), activities (5.1), and technologies used in the course (6.1) contribute to the accomplishment of the learning objectives or competencies. Learning objectives or competencies at the module/unit level align with and are more specific than course objectives or competencies. The module/unit learning objectives or competencies describe learner mastery

		in specific, observable terms and in smaller, discrete pieces. The objectives or competencies precisely describe the specific competencies, skills, and knowledge learners are able to master and demonstrate at regular intervals throughout the course. The module/unit objectives or competencies may either implicitly or explicitly be aligned with the course-level objectives or competencies.

Here is an example of a set of module/unit objectives or competencies th: aligns with a course objective or competency:

Course Objective or Competency	Module Objectives or Competencies
Upon completion of this course, learners will demonstrate mastery of rules of punctuation.	1. Learners will write sentences that demonstrate correct use of commas, semicolons, and periods.
	2. Learners will use apostrophes when, and only when, needed.
	3. Learners will use double and single quotation marks correctly in quoted material.

Module or unit objectives or competencies may be written by the instructor or may come from the textbook. Regardless of origin, these objectives or competencies must be prominently stated in the corresponding module or unit so they are available to the learner from within the online classroom. At some institutions learning objectives or competencies may be referred to as "learning outcomes."

NOTE: *It is not possible to complete the course review if measurable learning objectives or competencies are not present. In such a case, the review is suspended and the team chair consults the instructor to clarify whether or not the matter can be quickly addressed so the review can continue.*

!.3 All learning objectives or :ompetencies are stated clearly ind written from the learner's)erspective.	3	The course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies are state clearly and prominently in the online classroom for all course delivery formats. For example, the course-level objectives or competencies are articulated in the course introduction or syllabus, and the module/unit-level objectives or competencies appear in each module/unit.

The learning objectives or competencies are written in a way that allows learners, including non-native speakers, to easily grasp their meaning and the learning outcomes expected. The use of educational or discipline jargon, unexplained terminology, and unnecessarily complex language is avoided.

Blended Courses: In addition to being provided in the face-to-face classroom, the learning objectives or competencies are shared by the |

		instructor in the online classroom.
2. The relationship between earning objectives or competencies and course activities is clearly stated.	3	Learning objectives or competencies are integrated throughout the course and are not just listed in the syllabus. Confirm a relationship exists between the stated learning objectives or competencies and the activities learners are asked to complete. Examples of course components that clarify the relationship: 1. Links from assignments to the relevant course objectives or competencies 2. A numbering system that shows how course activities correspond to learning objectives or competencies 3. A narrative explaining how the course activities enable learners to meet the objectives or competencies As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies in your assessment of this Standard. Reviewers may look for information indicating which learning activities, instructional materials, assignments, and assessments support specific learning objectives or competencies. See Standard 4.2 regarding instructions to learners on how to use the instructional materials to meet the learning objectives or competencies. The relationship between course objectives or competencies and learning activities also is discussed in Standard 5.1.
2.5 The learning objectives or competencies are suited to the level of the course.	3	Expected content mastery is appropriate to the type and level of the course. Taxonomies that describe levels of learning can be helpful in categorizing learning objectives or competencies by level and in enabling reviewers to determine whether the objectives or competencies correspond to the course. For example, a first-year course is likely to include objectives or competencies that are lower in the cognitive realm than those in an upper level course. Objectives or competencies in a lower-level course may use verbs such as "identify," "describe," or "apply," which align with assessments such as multiple-choice quizzes, essay questions in exams, or solving problems. In addition to content-specific objectives or competencies, lower-division courses may address content mastery and core learning skills. Core learning skills, including critical thinking, information literacy, and technology skills, are typically those that transcend an individual course and are integrated across the curriculum. Core learning skills are sometimes called "core competencies." Upper-division and graduate courses may focus on objectives or competencies closely related to the specific discipline. For example, an

		upper-level or graduate course would include objectives or competencies high in the cognitive realm and use verbs such as "differentiate," "design," or "justify," with assessments such as critiques, flow charts, or original research.
		Examine the course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies as a whole to ensure they describe knowledge and skills that correspond to the course level.
		Evaluating content mastery expectations may be difficult for reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Reviewers should apply professional judgment, experience, and their understanding of taxonomie of learning to determine if the stated learning objectives or competencies align with the course level. Reviewers with questions about the alignmer of learning objectives or competencies with the level of the course shoulc consult with the subject matter expert on the review team.
General Standard 3 – Assessment and Measurement: Assessments are integral to the learning process and are designed to evaluate learner progress in achieving the stated learning objectives or mastering the competencies.		Assessment is implemented in a manner that corresponds to the course learning objectives or competencies and not only allows the instructor a broad perspective on the learners' mastery of content but also allows learners to track their learning progress throughout the course.
3.. The assessments measure the stated learning objectives or competencies. Alignment	3	**Alignment:** Course assessments (ways of confirming learner mastery) are consistent with the course and module learning objectives or competencies (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by measuring the accomplishment of those objectives or competencies. Instructional materials (4.1), activities (5.1), and course technologies (6.1) support the learning objectives or competencies and enable learners to meet them. From the types of assessments chosen, it is clear that learners can successfully complete the assessments if they have met the objectives or competencies stated in the course materials and learning activities. As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit objectives or competencies in your review of assessments. Examples of learning objective or competency-assessment alignment: 1. A problem analysis demonstrates critical thinking skills. 2. A multiple-choice quiz verifies vocabulary knowledge. 3. A composition shows writing skills. 4. A video of a learner presentation in a foreign language shows mastery of the language. 5. Participation in a game reveals learner skill levels in critical thinking, analytical thinking, or decision-making.

		Examples of lack of alignment between learning objectives or competencies and assessments: 1. The objective or competency is to be able to "write a persuasive essay," but the assessment is a multiple-choice test. 2. The objective or competency is to "create a body of work that illustrates your photographic vision," but the assessment is a 25-page thesis about contemporary photographers. Some assessments may be geared toward meeting outcomes other than those stated in the course; for example, a course may have a writing component as part of an institution-wide writing-across- the-curriculum requirement. In that case, the reviewer should suggest including in the course the objectives or competencies that reflect the institution-wide requirement, if those objectives or competencies are not already included **Special Situations:** In some cases (check the Course Worksheet), the course objectives or competencies are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For suc cases, consider the module/unit objectives or competencies to assess whether the course meets Standard 3.1. **Competency-Based Courses:** Learners have flexibility in preparing for assessment of competencies, as they may have acquired competencies in work environment or through life experience, independent study, etc.
3.2 The course grading policy s stated clearly.	3	A clear, written statement fully explains how the course grades are calculated. The points, percentages, and weights for each component of the course grade are clearly stated. The relationship(s) between points, percentages, weights, and letter grades are explained. The instructor's policy on late submissions is clearly stated. Review the clarity of the explanation and presentation to the learner, not the simplicity or complexity of a given grading system itself. Even a relatively complex grading system can be made easy to understand. Look for some or all of the following: 1. A list of all activities, tests, etc., that will determine the final grade 2. An explanation of the relationship between the final course letter grade and the learner's accumulated points and/or percentages 3. An explanation of the relationship between points and percentages, if both are used 4. A clearly stated policy on point deductions for assignments submitted late **Competency-Based Courses:** The grading pattern may be different fron that used in traditionally graded courses, and grading polity is equally

		essential to describe in competency-based courses. Competency-based grades may rely exclusively on demonstration of mastery of the stated competencies, which may occur within the course or in a separate proces external to the course. Grades may be in the form of a transcript listing competencies attained.
3.3 Specific and descriptive criteria are provided for the evaluation of learners' work and are tied to the course grading policy.	3	Learners are provided with a clear and complete description of the criteri that will be used to evaluate their work and participation in the course. These criteria are stated upfront at the beginning of the course. The description or statement of criteria provides learners with clear guidance on the instructor's expectations and on the required components of coursework and participation. The criteria give learners the information they need to understand how a grade on an assignment or activity will be calculated. As a reviewer, confirm that the criteria used to evaluate learners' performance aligns with the course objectives or competencies. Note, however, that you are not asked to look for and evaluate the instructor's specific feedback to learners in Standard 3.3. Your focus is the design of the course, not the delivery of the course. Examples of what to look for: 1. Evidence that the instructor has stated the criteria for evaluation of al graded work. Criteria may be in the form of a detailed checklist, rubric, or other instrument for identifying the various levels of learne mastery. 2. A description of the how learners' participation in discussions will be graded, including the number of required postings per week; the criteria for evaluating the originality and quality of learners' comments and their responsiveness to classmates' comments; and the grade or credit learners can expect for varying levels of performance. **Competency-Based Courses**: A description makes clear in specific terms the levels of mastery required to demonstrate the defined competencies.
3.4 The assessment instruments selected are sequenced, varied, and suited to the learner work being assessed.	2	Multiple assessment strategies are used in both the online and face-to-fac settings, including alternative assessments that require learners to apply what they learn and to think critically. In traditional assessments, such as those that use multiple choice, true-false, or matching, learners are asked to select a response from different options, and tests often are self-scoring. In alternative assessments, also commonly called performance or authentic assessments, learners are asked to develop an answer in response to a prompt or stimulus, which is graded by the instructor. Such assessments may include interviews, journals, portfolios,

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		observations, demonstrations, performance tasks, and exhibits.
		Assessments are varied in order to provide multiple ways for learners to demonstrate mastery, and to accommodate diverse learners.
		The assessments are sequenced so as to promote the learning process and to build on previously mastered knowledge and skills gained in this cour and prerequisite courses. Assessments are paced to give learners adequa time to achieve mastery and complete the work in a thoughtful manner.
		Examples that meet the Standard:

Examples that meet the Standard:
1. A series of assessments that progress from the definition of terms, to short paper explaining the relationship between various theoretical concepts, to a term paper that includes the application of theoretical concepts and critical analysis of a journal article
2. Multiple types of assessment that enable the instructor to become familiar with an individual learner's work and that discourage "proxy cheating" (someone other than the learner completing and submitting work)

Examples that MAY NOT meet the Standard:
1. The assessments consist of only multiple-choice tests.
2. The first assessment requires learners to locate research materials, while library research skills and methods are not covered until later in the course.
3. No assessments are administered during the first 12 weeks of the semester, and an essay, term paper, and final exam are due during the 13th, 14th, and 15th weeks, respectively.
4. Discussion board posts are assessed on the basis of frequency or word count instead of on criteria related to the course objectives or competencies.

Circumstances affecting some graduate courses: The grade may be entirely based on a major assignment due at the end of the term. In this case, benchmarks for progress are provided during the term, with feedback from the instructor.

Examples of benchmark assignments might include submission of
1. An outline or project plan
2. A bibliography
3. A précis of the paper or project
4. One or more preliminary drafts

Competency-Based Courses: Assessment of competencies may not follow the pattern of assessment in traditional courses. As a reviewer, focus on whether the assessment instruments credibly establish that the

		learner has demonstrated the competency.
3.5 The course provides learners with multiple opportunities to track their learning progress.	2	Learning is more effective if learners receive frequent, substantive, and timely feedback. The feedback may come from the instructor directly, from assignments and assessments that have feedback built into them, or even from other learners. Look for examples of self-check quizzes and activities, as well as other types of practice opportunities that provide timely feedback. Such assignments may be voluntary and/or allow multiple attempts. Examples: 1. Writing assignments that allow for the submission of a draft for instructor comment and suggestions for improvement 2. Self-mastery tests that include informative feedback with each answer choice 3. Interactive games and simulations that have feedback built in 4. Self-scoring practice quizzes 5. Practice written assignments 6. Peer reviews and critiques 7. Model papers or essays provided for learners' viewing 8. Sample answers or answer keys provided for learners' viewing 9. Portfolios with a self-evaluation component, journals, and reflection papers
General Standard 4 – n. structional Materials: Instructional materials enable learners to achieve stated learning objectives or competencies.		The focus of this Standard is on supporting the course objectives and competencies, rather than on qualitative judgments about the instructional materials.
4.1 The instructional materials contribute to the achievement of the stated course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies. Alignment	3	**Alignment:** The instructional materials used in the course align with the course and module learning objectives or competencies (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by contributing to the achievement of those objectives or competencies and by integrating effectively with the tools (6.1), assessments (3.1), and activities (5.1) selected for the course. Instructional materials may include but are not limited to textbooks, publisher- or instructor-created resources, multimedia, and websites. The materials align with the learning objectives or competencies in a clear and direct way and provide the information and resources learners need to achieve the stated learning objectives or competencies. As a reviewer, consider both the course and module/unit learning objectives or competencies in your assessment of the course's adherence to this standard. Decisions on this Standard may be difficult for reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Consult with the team subject matter expert

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<td>(SME) and use professional judgment to determine if the instructional materials support the learning objectives or competencies.

Reviewers are encouraged to consult a digital version of the textbook, if available, as many publishers provide electronic access. In evaluating the course against this Standard, reviewers will work closely with the SME c the team.

NOTE: If the instructional materials are solely or mostly from publisher review team members must be provided with access to all digital publisher materials to assess whether Standard 4.1 is met.

In some advanced undergraduate courses and graduate courses, no textbook(s) are assigned. Reviewers will need to consider bibliographies and webliographies provided by the instructor, or, in some cases, developed by learners themselves, following guidelines provided by the instructor. As reviewers, focus on the alignment of the instructional materials with the learning objectives or competencies and assessments rather than attempt to evaluate the content. If the learning objectives or competencies are judged to be suited to the level of the course (Standard 2.5), it is assumed instructional materials that support these objectives or competencies are also suited to the level of the course.

Special Situations: In some cases (check the Course Worksheet), the course objectives or competencies are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For such cases, consider instead the module/unit objectives or competencies in determining whether the course meets Standard 4.1.</td>
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<td>4.2 Both the purpose of instructional materials and how the materials are to be used for learning activities are clearly explained.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Learners are provided with an explanation of how the instructional materials, resources, technologies, and learning activities are used in the course, and how each will help them achieve the stated learning objective or help them prepare to demonstrate course competencies.

Examples:
1. Links to external websites indicate the purpose of the links or are completely self-evident.
2. The function of interactive games or exercises is clearly explained or is completely self-evident.

The purpose of all instructional materials (books and other publications, videos, multimedia, software or interactive elements, etc.) used in the course is clearly explained to learners. Reviewers confirm that instructional materials such as simulations or interactive media are integrated well enough to be useful to the learner.

An example would be a course that requires learners to use the following</td>
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		materials: a textbook divided into chapters, video segments ordered by topics, a website or simulation activities organized around specific skills, and an internal or external website that has an opening menu consisting o "practice quizzes," "images," and "audio examples." In such a course, consider whether the order in which learners should use these varied materials is clearly indicated, as well as how each is related to the learnir objectives or competencies and activities, and how the materials are related to one another.
		In advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in which learners are expected to find their own learning materials, the instructor posts guidelines that assist the learner in identifying relevant materials and in distinguishing between core and supplementary materials and between scholarly and non-scholarly sources for academic writing. Reviewers determine whether these guidelines satisfy the Standard.
		Blended Courses: Instructions make clear which materials are to be use in the face-to-face classroom and which are specific to the online portion of the course.
1.3 All instructional materials used in the course are appropriately cited.	2	Sources for materials used in the course are clearly identified and cited. This requirement applies to instructor-created materials, publisher materials, textbooks, images, graphic materials, tables, videos, audios, websites, and other forms of multimedia. Citations for instructional materials model the practices learners are expected to follow for documenting references. At minimum, a citation includes the author or owner name; date of publication; resource title, if supplied; and URL or source.
		When an extensive body of material comes from a single source (e.g., instructional materials from a publisher), a single citation statement suffices. Reviewers might look for citation information in a list of materials, in the course syllabus, or in another course document.
1.4 The instructional materials are current.	2	The instructional materials represent up-to-date thinking and practice in the discipline. For example, an introductory computer course might include information on recent trends in data storage; an English writing course might discuss the purpose of Internet research; a chemistry course might include computerized models to demonstrate chemical operations.
		Decisions on whether the course meets this Standard may be difficult for reviewers whose expertise is not in the course discipline. Consult with tl team subject matter expert (SME) and use professional judgment to determine if the materials are current.
		Older works considered "seminal" may meet Standard 4.4. The SME on the team verifies that a work is seminal in the discipline.
1.5 A variety of instructional	2	The course presents a variety of relevant instructional materials that may

naterials is used in the course.		include textbooks and other publications, instructor-created resources, websites, and multimedia. Typically, a course includes multiple sources rather than material from a single author. In some disciplines, it may be appropriate to have all materials from a single author. In reviewing instructional materials, look for evidence that learners have options for how they consume content, e.g., reading, viewing a video, listening to a podcast. If the only instructional material provided is a textbook, the Standard may not be met. Decisions on this Standard may be difficult for reviewers whose expertis is not in the course discipline. Consult with the team subject matter expe and use professional judgment to determine whether a sufficient variety (materials is used.
1.6 The distinction between equired and optional materials s clearly explained.	1	Clear explanations are provided to learners regarding which materials an resources are required and which are optional. Instructors are expected to clearly indicate which materials learners must acquire and use to complete course activities and assignments. Optional resources are identified as such. For example, extra videos or resources included for enrichment purposes and not required for course completion are labeled as "optional." Designations about required and optional materials appear in the syllabus class schedule, or instructions for learning activities and are available from the start of the course. **Competency-Based Courses:** In competency-based courses, all materials may be optional. The introduction specifies which materials ar activities are required, supplemental, or optional.
General Standard 5 – Course Activities and Learner Interaction: Course activities facilitate and support learner interaction and engagement.		Course components that promote active learning contribute to the learnin process and to learner persistence.
5.1 The learning activities promote the achievement of the tated learning objectives or competencies. Alignment	3	**Alignment:** The purpose of learning activities is to facilitate the learner': achievement of the stated objectives or competencies. Learning activitie align with the course and module objectives or competencies, as well as with assessments, instructional materials, and course technologies (see Standards 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, and 6.1), by engaging learners in activities that promote mastery of the stated learning objectives or competencies. The review team is expected to review all learning activities in the cours A strategy for accomplishing the review may be to divide the activities among the review team members and reconvene to share findings. Ensu

		that the activities support the learning objectives or competencies and assessments.

Examples of alignment between activities and objectives or competencie
1. The objective or competency requires that learners deliver a persuasive speech. Activities include choosing an appropriate topic for the speech, creating an outline, and taping a practice of the speecl delivery.
2. The objective or competency is "Prepare each budget within a master budget and explain the importance of each in the overall budgeting process." The learners review information about this objective or competency in their texts, watch videos of case studies where the different budgets are used, review informational websites about creating the different budgets, create the different budgets as practice activities, and develop a case study for a fictitious company explainir what would happen if each budget is not included in the master budget.

Examples of a mismatch between activities and objectives or competencies:
1. The objective or competency requires learners to deliver a persuasive speech, but the activities in the course do not include practice of that skill.
2. The objective or competency is "Prepare each budget within a master budget and explain the importance of each in the overall budgeting process." The learners review information about this objective or competency in their texts and observe budgets worked out by the instructor, but they themselves produce only one of the several budgets.

Special Situations: Reference Standard 2.1. The course objectives or competencies may be institutionally mandated and not measurable, and the instructor does not have the authority to change them. In this case, assess whether the learning activities promote the achievement of the module/unit-level learning objectives or competencies to determine if Standard 5.1 is met. |
| 5.2 Learning activities provide opportunities for interaction that support active learning. | 3 | Activities encourage learners' engagement through different types of interaction as appropriate to the course. Interactions are designed as activities to support the course objectives or competencies and may vary with the discipline, purpose, and level of the course. Look for the purpos of the interactions and not just the number of opportunities for interactioi

Types of interaction include learner-instructor, learner-content, and learner-learner. Active learning involves learners engaging by "doing" something, such as discovering, processing, or applying concepts and information. Active learning entails guiding learners to increasing levels |

		of responsibility for their own learning.
		Activities for learner-instructor interaction might include an assignment project submitted for instructor feedback; learner-instructor discussion in a synchronous session or an asynchronous discussion board exchange; or a frequently-asked-questions (FAQ) discussion forum moderated by the instructor.
		Activities for learner-content interaction might include assigned reading from a textbook, article, or online resource; assigned completion of a workbook or online exercise; or a learning-how-to-learn activity.
		Activities for learner-learner interaction might include assigned collaborative activities such as group discussions; small-group projects; group problem-solving assignments; or peer critiques.
		Look for opportunities for learner-instructor interaction, learner-content interaction, and, if appropriate to the course, learner-learner interaction. Refer to the Course Worksheet to determine whether or not opportunities for learner-learner interaction are appropriate to the course.
		Note: Reviewers' evaluations of the types of interactions designed into the activities are based on the nature of the course and not on personal preferences. Learning environments usually are broader than a single course and may include informal networks that are beyond the scope of a QM review.
		Blended Courses: In courses that use both online and face-to-face settings, the learning activities that occur in these two settings are connected by a common thread or theme and are mutually reinforcing. The connection and reinforcement are made clear to learners. For example, the different parts of a particular activity might be sequenced in an alternating way in online and face-to-face meetings of the course.
		Competency-Based Courses: In competency-based courses, the interaction with the instructor, facilitator, coach, mentor, or assessor may take different forms. Learner-learner interaction in discussion forums is encouraged but may be limited by the differential pace of individual learners; and other forms of learner-learner interaction may be impractical, as learners prepare in different ways for assessment of their competencies. Communication through program-level, learner-learner forums is a viable alternative to course-based forums.
5.3 The instructor's plan for classroom response time and feedback on assignments is clearly stated.	3	Frequent feedback from the instructor increases learners' sense of engagement in a course. Learners are better able to manage their course activities when they know upfront when to expect feedback from the instructor. The course provides clear information about when learners

		will receive instructor responses to emails and discussion postings, feedback on assignments, and grades. This information typically appears in the course syllabus. If it is necessary to alter the response-time standards during the course, the adjustment is clearly communicated to learners. Note to reviewers: You are not evaluating the instructor's plan; you are primarily ensuring the instructor has provided a plan. If you have suggestions for how to improve the plan, you might include them in your recommendations; but the suggestions should not affect your decision about whether the Standard is met. **Competency-Based Courses**: Interaction with the instructor, facilitator, coach, mentor, or assessor may take different forms. The course introduction indicates the various forms of faculty and staff support available to the learner and explains when learners can expect to receive feedback.
5.4 The requirements for learner interaction are clearly stated.	2	A clear explanation of the requirements for learner interaction helps learners plan and manage their class participation and is important for promoting learners' active involvement in the course. The statement of requirements also provides a basis for the instructor to evaluate learner participation. The more specifically the expectations are explained, the easier it is for the learner to meet the expectations. Clearly explaining the role of the instructor and expectations for interactions with the instructor and with other learners is especially helpful to learners from cultures in which deference to the instructor is customary and who may need encouragement to "speak up." Look for a clear, prominently placed statement of the instructor's expectations for learner participation in required course interactions (frequency, length, timeliness, etc.). Typically, expectations for learner participation are stated in the course information page or syllabus. These requirements may specify the nature of the required participation and expectations for frequency and quality of the learner's interactions. More specific, task-related performance expectations may be included in the individual task description. The instructor may also provide rubrics detailing how learner interactions are evaluated, including reading and responding to the instructor's and classmates' posts.
General Standard 6 – Course Technology: Course technologies support learners' achievement of course objectives or competencies.		The technologies enabling the various course components facilitate rather than impede the learning process.

.1 The tools used in the course ... rt the learning objectives or competencies.	3	**Alignment:** The tools selected for the course align with the course and module objectives or competencies (see Standards 2.1 and 2.2) by effectively supporting the course's assessment instruments (3.1), instructional materials (4.1), and learning activities (5.1).
Alignment		Tools are functional software that provide areas for interaction in the course; they may be included in the learning management system (LMS) or external to the LMS.
		Examples of tools are discussion boards, chat rooms, grade book, social media, games, whiteboard, wikis, blogs, virtual classrooms, web conferencing, etc.
		Specific tools are not required for this Standard to be met. Tools that are used support the learning objectives or competencies and fit the learning activities.
		Clear information and instructions are provided regarding how the tools support the learning objectives or competencies. Technology is not used simply for its own sake. For example, a course might require posting to discussion forum, but it may not be clear how the discussions support a learning objective or competency.
		Special Situations: In some cases (check the Course Worksheet), the course objectives or competencies are institutionally mandated, and the individual instructor does not have the authority to change them. For suc cases, consider instead the module/unit objectives or competencies to assess whether Standard 6.1 is met.
.2 Course tools promote earner engagement and active earning.	3	Tools used in the course help learners actively engage in the learning process rather than passively absorb information. Selected tools help the learner actively engage in the course by facilitating interactions with the instructor, course materials, and other learners.
		Examples of tools that support engagement and active learning: 1. Interactive, real-time software, such as real-time collaborative tools, webinars, and virtual worlds 2. Software that facilitates interactions and collaborations, such as share documents or wikis 3. Animations, simulations, and games that require learner input 4. Discussion tools with automatic notification or a "read/unread" tracking feature 5. Automated self-check exercises requiring learner responses
.3 Technologies required in he course are readily obtainable.	2	All required technologies are easily obtainable, through download, purchase at the bookstore, or another means. The word "technologies" covers a wide range, including hardware, software, subscriptions, and plug-ins.

The hardware and peripherals necessary to complete all course activities are obtainable. Peripherals include webcams, microphones, etc. If specific peripheral devices are needed for course completion, instruction: are provided on how to obtain the peripheral devices.

The software chosen for the course is easily obtainable via download and available on a variety of hardware platforms (Windows, MacOS, etc.) If software is platform-specific, an equivalent software package is available for learners not using that platform. Examples of software include word processors, spreadsheets, presentation software, statistical analysis software, equation editors, web authoring tools, audio/video editing tools programming software, etc. Learners are able to obtain online tools and plug-ins, such as Acrobat Reader, Flash, Java, media players, MP3 players, wikis, social media, etc.

When web-based technologies are used, including learning management systems, information is provided regarding the availability of the tools or mobile devices (smartphones and tablets). For technologies that require subscriptions, instructions are provided on how to obtain the subscriptior including information on acquisition of access codes and user identification requirements.

Look for evidence that guidance is provided to learners on compatible alternatives to platform-specific peripherals, software packages, and othe web-based technologies.

Examples of information to provide:
1. If the software runs on both Mac and PC
2. If the institution has an application server that allows learners to use the software online
3. Which features of the learning management system are accessible on mobile device. (For instance, learners are allowed to participate in discussion boards from a mobile device, but quizzes and tests cannot be taken on a mobile device.)

Examples of how to help ensure learner access:
1. Links are provided to required peripherals to be purchased from the college bookstore or other source.
2. Links are provided that allow learners access to necessary course documents.
3. Instructions are provided on how to access materials available throug subscriptions to online journals or databases. When feasible, links ar also provided.
4. For textbooks, CDs, and DVDs, information provided includes the title, author, publisher, ISBN number, copyright date, and details on

		where copies can be obtained.
5.4 The course technologies are current.	1	New technologies continuously appear on the market. Confirm that course technology is up-to-date. Look for evidence of appropriate incorporation of tools such as social media, mobile technologies, games, simulations, wikis, blogs, podcasts, and virtual worlds in the course's online and technology-supported design. Courses not recently developed may need to be updated. Examples of current technology that may be used in support of the course objectives or competencies to enhance learning: 1. Synchronous web conference tools used for orientation, group projects, tutoring, test reviews, etc. 2. A mobile application that learners use to identify plants in a botany course 3. A wiki used for group collaboration 4. Blogs used for student journals 5. A simulation that demonstrates something not feasible to demonstrate in the physical world, such as a process or procedure that takes place inside a hazardous or inaccessible place 6. A simulation replicating laboratory activities that allows manipulations of objects on the screen similar to hands-on lab experiences 7. Web-based voice tools used by English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instructors and learners to practice pronunciation, vocabulary, etc. The course design takes advantage of tools in the learning management system, incorporating features that support learning objectives and competencies (see 6.1 regarding learning objectives or competencies). As a reviewer, keep in mind that the tools available to an instructor may vary greatly from institution to institution and are sometimes limited by the access and support provided by the institution.
5.5 Links are provided to privacy policies for all external tools required in the course.	1	Tools used in the course, whether included in the learning management system (LMS), integrated with the LMS, or external to the LMS, include links to the privacy policies provided by the creator of the tool. If the learner is required to create an account with a username and password to access a tool, the privacy policy is available for learners to read and use t safeguard their accounts. As a reviewer, look for tools that are external to the LMS and links to privacy policies for those tools. For example, links are provided to the privacy policies of social media and third-party websites being used. Check the Course Worksheet for information relevant to this standard.
General Standard 7 – Learner Support: The course facilitates learner access to institutional		It is important to ensure online learners know they have access to and are encouraged to use the services that support learners at the institution. In the Learner Support Standard, four different kinds of support services are

upport services essential to er ir success.		addressed: technical support, accessibility support, academic services support, and student services support.
'.1 The course instructions articulate or link to a clear description of the technical support offered and how to obtain it.	3	Technical support for learners differs from institution to institution and includes such information as how to log in; how to use the tools and features of the learning management system; and how to get help desk support. Technical support does not include help with course content or assignments or academic or support services (see Standards 7.3 and 7.4). Look for evidence that learners have access to technical support services from within the course or the learning management system. The purpose is not to review the adequacy of those services at an institutional level bu rather to determine if technical support services are provided for learners and that the course contains information about the services and how to access them. Examples of information about technical support: 1. A clear description of the technical support services provided by the institution, including a link to a technical support website 2. An email link to the institution's technical support center or help desk 3. A phone number for the institution's technical support center or help desk 4. Clearly worded directions for obtaining support for externally provided resources (e.g., publisher-supplied online materials and activities and third-party, vendor-provided software, materials, and activities) 5. Links to tutorials or other resources providing instructions on how to use the tools and features of the learning management system and other course technologies 6. A link to "frequently asked questions"
'.2 Course instructions articulate or link to the nstitution's accessibility policies ind services.	3	Accessibility policies or accommodation statements state that services an accommodations are available for learners with disabilities and inform th learner how such services may be obtained. To meet this Standard, the course may include 1. A link to the institution's accessibility policy, if a policy exists 2. A statement that informs the learner how to obtain an institution's disability support services, if such services exist; for example, a telephone number or link for the disability services office If the institution does not have an applicable disability policy or disabilit services, the instructor may provide a policy that will be adhered to in the course to assure that learners with disabilities will be accommodated.
'.3 Course instructions articulate or link to an explanation of how the nstitution's academic support	2	Academic support services and resources, and the scope of what they entail, differ from institution to institution. For the purposes of review, academic support services and resources may include an online orientation; access to library resources; a readiness assessment or survey;

ervices and resources can help ea⋯rs succeed in the course in⋯ow learners can obtain hem.		testing services; tutoring; non-native language services; writing and/or math centers; tutorials or other forms of guidance on conducting research writing papers, citing sources, using an online writing lab, and using course-specific technology; supplemental instruction programs; and teaching assistants. Look for evidence that learners have access to academic support services and resources from within the course or the learning management system The purpose is not to review the adequacy of these services and resource on an institutional level but rather to determine if academic support services and resources are provided for learners and if the course contain information about the services and how to access them. Examples of features that connect learners with academic support services: 1. Links to academic support services and how to obtain these services (e.g., location of testing center and/or proctored test sites, hours of operation, phone numbers and email addresses for key personnel) 2. Links to online orientations or demo courses 3. A link to the library, including information on how to gain access to library materials and databases, and how to contact a librarian 4. A link to tutorials or guides on conducting research, writing papers, and citing sources
7.4 Course instructions in⋯ate or link to an explanation of how the nstitution's student services and esources can help learners ucceed and how learners can obtain them.	1	Student services and resources differ from institution to institution. For the purposes of this review, support services and resources include advising, registration, financial aid, student or campus life, counseling, career services, online workshops, and student organizations. Look for evidence that learners have access to support services from within the course or the learning management system. The purpose is no to review the adequacy of the services on an institutional level but rather to determine if information about support services and how to obtain ther is provided in the course. The course may provide the following: 1. A clear description of support services and how to obtain them (including email addresses and phone numbers for key personnel) 2. Guidance on when and how learners may obtain a particular support service or resource (for example, when and how to meet with an academic advisor)
General Standard 8 – Accessibility and Usability: The course design reflects a commitment to accessibility and usability for all learners.		The course design reflects a commitment to accessibility, so that all learners can access all course content and activities, and to usability, so that all learners can easily navigate and interact with course components.
8.1 Course navigation	3	Navigation refers to the process of planning, controlling, and recording

acilitates ease of use.		the movement of a learner from one place to another in the online course Navigation throughout the course is consistent, logical, and efficient. Confirm that the course's navigation strategies facilitate ease of movement through the course and course activities.
		As a reviewer, also consider the ownership of the design of course navigation features. Some navigation devices—"next" and "previous" links, for example—are in the learning management system and cannot b modified. The Course Worksheet provides information about navigation features that cannot be changed. Other navigation devices—hypertext links, icons, and window functions, for example—may be within the control of the instructor.
		Examples of strategies that facilitate ease of use: 1. Consistent layout and design are employed throughout, making content, instructional materials, tools, and media easy to locate from anywhere in the course. Design elements are used repetitively, increasing predictability and intuitiveness. 2. Course pages have links, files, and icons that are labeled with easy-to understand, self-describing, and meaningful names. Icons used as links also have HTML tags or an accompanying text link. 3. The course design enables learners to easily locate where they are within the course and to easily return to the home page from any location. 4. Tables are used to organize data and have appropriate table headers. Data cells are associated with their appropriate headers, making it ea: for learners to navigate and understand the data. 5. The hierarchy of material in a page or document is clearly indicated through heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.). A table of contents can be included that allows learners to move easily throughout documents.
3.2 Information is provided about the accessibility of all echnologies required in the course.	3	Learners with disabilities have access to information on the accessibility of the learning management system and all additional required technologies.
		For this Standard to be met, the course includes links to the accessibility statements for all required technologies. If an accessibility statement doe: not exist for a particular technology, a statement is included that explains that the accessibility statement does not exist.
		Examples of technologies that might be required in an online course: 1. A learning management system, including integrated third-party software 2. Presentation software 3. A web-conferencing tool 4. A polling tool

		5. A lecture-capture system 6. One or more media players 7. A document-sharing system 8. Social media tools Examples of where the accessibility statements may be located within the course: 1. Course syllabus 2. Page on required technology software 3. Page on resources
8.3 The course provides alternative means of access to course materials in formats that meet the needs of diverse learners.	2	The course provides alternatives to all non-text content so that all learner have access to equivalent information. The Standard is met if the equivalent textual representations are located c linked within the course. In instances where alternative formats are provided, the general accuracy of the alternate content is verified. For example, if captions are provided for a video, the reviewer can view som of the captions to confirm that the captions correctly represent the audio content. Examples of non-text content and options for equivalent textual representation: 1. Video and animations are captioned, or text transcripts are readily available. If the audio content corresponds with the visual content in way that conveys meaning (e.g., a video demonstrating how to operat a Bunsen burner in a chemistry lab), captions provide an equivalent experience. If the audio content does not correspond with visual content (e.g., a visual of an instructor providing a lecture without visual aids), then a text transcript is sufficient. 2. Visual information, including images, graphs, and tables, are described via an alt-tag, long description, caption, or audio description. 3. Tables are set up with headings for columns and rows. 4. Document or HTML titles, headings, etc., are formatted using styles found in the word processing software (such as Word) style gallery; they do not merely utilize a larger or bold or italic font. 5. PDFs that contain text are not merely image scans; any text containec in PDFs is selectable and searchable. 6. Colors alone are not relied on to convey meaning. The meaning is also conveyed in another way that does not require perceiving different colors. When alternative formats are provided, verify the general accuracy of the alternate content. Verification is important because not all attempts to provide alternate formats meet the goal of providing equivalent access fo diverse learners.

3.4 The course design ac···ates readability.	2	Course design elements maximize usability by facilitating readability and minimizing distractions. For this Standard to be met, course content is clearly presented so that learners can easily read and interpret it. Examples of strategies that facilitate readability and minimize distraction 1. Similar content is grouped together; headings are used to indicate change of topic. 2. Font style and size are selected to maximize on-screen legibility; simpler fonts are chosen over more ornate fonts, and the number of font families is limited to one or two. 3. White space or negative space is used around content to help increase comprehension and reduce eye fatigue that occurs with large blocks of text. 4. Content is formatted to serve specific instructional purposes. For example, format and text color are used purposefully to communicate key points, group like items, and emphasize relevant relationships. 5. Text is clearly distinguishable from the background, with thought given to color choice and providing sufficient contrast. In all course materials, editing and proofreading errors (spelling, grammar, punctuation, word choice, syntax) are minimal.
3.5 Course multimedia ac ate ease of use.	2	Course elements maximize usability by ensuring multimedia used as a vehicle for content or feedback (e.g., images, audio, animation, video, an interactive components) are easy to use, intelligible, and inter-operationa across devices. For this Standard to be met, course multimedia are easy to view, operate, and interpret. Examples of strategies that ensure the usability of multimedia: 1. Graphics and animations are used to enhance instructional materials and illustrate ideas without causing distractions. 2. Images are appropriately sized and can be viewed in their entirety without scrolling. 3. Audio quality is clear. 4. A video window can be resized; resolution is sufficient for comprehension. 5. Long videos (videos longer than 15 to 20 minutes) are broken into shorter segments and/or are searchable. 6. Movement through presentations can be controlled. 7. Video is viewable in a smooth stream without frequent interruptions. Note that some videos must be of high quality in order for content to be clearly understood. An example would be a video demonstrating sign language, in which learners need to be able to accurately discern

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			hand shapes and movement.
			Interactive elements integral to the content are cross-platform (PC, Mac) and cross-browser, or guidance is provided about the best browser to use

Appendix B

Features of Critical Discourse Analysis

specification; individualization and assimilation, collectivization, association and indetermination; nomination, functionalization and classification; overdetermination, including inversion, symbolization, connotation, and distillation; and various forms of abstraction and objectivation, including spatialization, utterance autonomization, instrumentalization and somatization

Appendix C

Research Spotlight: Why Is There a Need for Module/Unit-Level Learning Objectives?

This is a recurring question subscribers, doing course reviews, ask our research team. The need for learning objectives at both the module level and the course level has been stated in the QM Rubric since its inception. In fact, the **QM Rubric Specific Review Standard 2.2** states:

The module/unit learning objectives or competencies describe outcomes that are measurable and consistent with the course-level objectives.

Still, if you have ever developed specific and measurable learning objectives for an online or blended course and wondered if you should include module/unit-level learning objectives, you are not alone.

Instructional design principles and cognitive science research support the use of learning objectives, in general, and specifically at the module/unit level:
"[. . .] it is important for learning goals to be interpreted by students in order for them to be useful in guiding student learning."[1]

Why module-level objectives:

• Instructional design emphasizes the need for courses to provide an organizational, sequencing framework to guide students to targeted learning and assigns particular importance to informing learners of the specific chunks of learning that will be the target within a doable time frame (a unit or module).[2]
• Cognitive science indicates that unit/module-level learning objectives, written in learners' language prior to the content delivery help draw attention to the expected outcomes at the completion of the unit/module.[3]

Why course-level objectives:

• "How students organize knowledge influences how they learn and apply what they know."[4]
• "[F]2f, online, and blended learning instructional recommendations include defining clear course objectives, which are the foundation for the course activities, assignments, and assessments."[5]

In the same way that modules are the building blocks of a course, module-level objectives and course-level objectives work together: "[M]odule-level objectives build toward the overall objectives for the course"[6] And, both module-level and course-level learning objectives contribute to a quality course.

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