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INTRODUCTION

Seeing through the Academy

This book has three primary aims. The first is to offer insight into the mechanics of knowledge production at the arts-and-sciences cores of US research universities. Scholarly understanding of how universities transform money and intellect into knowledge remains limited. At present we have only rudimentary measures of knowledge production's inputs: tuition and fees, government subsidies, philanthropic gifts, and the academic credentials of students and faculty. Output measures are equally coarse: counts of degrees conferred; dissertations, articles, and books completed; patents secured; dollars returned on particular inventions. As for the black box of knowledge production in between: very little. Scholars have only recently made serious attempts to specify and quantify all the components that knowledge production at any great university daily entails: the myriad conversations among students and faculty, the workshops and seminars and working lunches, the chance meetings and office-door gossip sessions, the daily grinds of reading and reviewing and grading that somehow sum to publishable ideas and the occasional history-shaping insight. Basic questions about academic knowledge production remain open. How do universities absorb information from their human inputs and their larger environments? Does academic innovation have a general alchemy or does it vary qualitatively across knowledge domains? How is the knowledge work at the core of universities linked with patron preferences and world affairs? This book offers novel insight into how such questions can be asked and answered.

The second aim is to contribute to the understanding of universities as special mechanisms for seeing the world. Scholars have long recognized that universities are ideal sites to observe social change. The pace of racial integration and the dynamics of gender and sexual relations are examples of important social processes that are both refracted and more clearly understood through their expression in higher education. How universities organize knowledge about the

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rest of the world also offers important lessons. Institutes on "oriental" civilizations, research projects grounded in modernization theory, study abroad programs offered at particular sites in particular ways—all of these can be leveraged for insight into how academics and their patrons make sense of the world and their changing relation to it across generations.

The third aim is to forward a theory of how US universities themselves change. Universities are peculiar organizations in that they look backward and forward simultaneously. By going to work in lovely old buildings, donning medieval gowns on summer feast days, and issuing paper diplomas written in dead languages, university leaders rehearse their fealty to valued pasts. Yet these same people also are forever building for the future. They continually renovate their academic homes as knowledge grows, as technologies for producing and consuming knowledge evolve, and as the parties that pay for it all shift their predilections and priorities. The largest purpose of this book is to paint a picture of how US research universities manage to reorganize themselves continually while retaining stable identities over time.

Seeing the World is an empirical investigation of the organization of programs devoted to the study of world regions, particularly the Middle East and its neighboring geographies, on US research university campuses in the years following 9/11. It emerges out of a long process of thinking and consultations at the Social Science Research Council (SSRC). Starting in the mid-1990s, the SSRC began reconsidering its international programs in light of the end of the Cold War and accumulating intellectual critiques of the area studies model. In 2000 the SSRC received a small grant from the Ford Foundation to rethink the Program on the Middle East and North Africa, specifically. The 9/11 attacks gave the initiative urgency, not least because of public and political polemic directed at Middle East studies programs. Momentum was brought to the initiative by a 2003 call for proposals issued by the US Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education International Research and Studies Program, which specifically sought research to "improve and strengthen instruction in modern foreign languages, area studies, and other international fields." The call prioritized "Studies assessing the outcomes and effectiveness of programs authorized under Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965," as well as work focused on "the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia."[1]

First among us to respond to that call was Seteney Shami, who at the time was heading the Middle East and Russia/Eurasia portfolios of SSRC. Her original proposal to the Department of Education

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focused on Middle East Studies regarding three challenges facing the field: a paradigmatic one, posed by the advancement of global integration and the rise of the globalization paradigm; a disciplinary one, marked by ongoing scholarly debate about the value of contextual knowledge in the social sciences and a seeming withdrawal of economists, political scientists, and sociologists from regionally focused scholarship; and a public one in the post-9/11 period, which had increased the workload of centers and created "a sense of heightened responsibility and accountability."[2]

Shami found an ideal lead researcher in Cynthia Miller-Idriss, a sociologist and ethnographer then at New York University, who had developed expertise in various scholarly literatures on nationalism and identity to inform her study of right-wing extremism in post-reunification Germany.[3] Miller-Idriss designed a qualitative-comparative strategy for investigating how universities receiving Title VI grants organize regional scholarship.

The project's earliest questions focused on how area studies centers were responding to increasingly prominent calls for interdisciplinarity and globalization in the US academy. Shami and Miller-Idriss were aware that area studies programs were peopled more heavily by historians and humanists than disciplinary social scientists. They wanted to understand why area studies centers had not generated more inquiries on contemporary political, social, cultural, and economic developments in their target regions. They also wanted to know how area studies programs were finding their niches while administrators' embrace of the "global" idea was rapidly accelerating.

SSRC's founding role in area studies and the imprimatur of Title VI funding brought privileged access to many articulate lights in the American academic firmament. From 2005 to 2009 Shami and Miller-Idriss oversaw the work of a team of SSRC staff researchers, doctoral students, and consulting faculty to build interview, survey, and focus group instruments; finalize site selection; specify interview respondents; conduct site visits; gather data from Department of Education archives; transcribe audio recordings and field notes; and conduct preliminary analyses of incoming evidence.

By the time data collection was coming to a close, the team recognized its potential to inform conversations about the US academy well beyond the domain of area studies. For this they enlisted Mitchell Stevens to join the effort. Having just finished an organizational ethnography of selective college admissions and a critical review of higher education scholarship in the social sciences, Stevens brought complementary expertise.[4] Together we came to view this project as an opportunity to specify the organizational mechanics linking

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patrons' priorities with the core academic business of US higher education. Together we developed the analytic strategy and data coding scheme that enabled us to find our way to the argument here. More broadly, the project has produced numerous outputs in the form of internal reports and white papers, articles in peer-reviewed journals, and book manuscripts.[5] The first part of the project, focusing on Middle East studies, culminated in a volume edited by Shami and Miller-Idriss entitled *Middle East Studies for the New Millennium: Infrastructures of Knowledge*.[6] As the writing that would become *Seeing the World* developed ever further into an inquiry about higher education and organizational change, Stevens assumed lead authorship.

From the wealth and variety of evidence assembled for the larger SSRC inquiry, this book relies largely on interviews with faculty and administrators at eight of the project's twelve research universities. We limited our scope of inquiry here to these eight schools because we had highly similar interview samples from each of them. These eight include both public and private universities, either of moderate or very large size relative to the organizational population, and they are located throughout the continental United States. All of them are highly regarded research institutions with multiple centers funded by Title VI. At each of the eight schools, we interviewed the following:

Area studies center directors. These positions are typically held as additional appointments by faculty whose primary, tenured appointments are in a disciplinary department of humanities or social sciences.

Area studies center associate directors. These positions are typically defined as administrative appointments and are occupied by staff who hold an advanced degree (often but not always the PhD) in a field of study somehow related to the region. These are the people who maintain day-to-day center activities. Their duties include scheduling courses, managing master's programs, maintaining websites, hosting events and visitors, writing grant proposals, and administering funds for travel and language training that are hallmark assets of Title VI programs.

Chairs of disciplinary departments of economics, political science, and sociology. Because our project had always been focused on the place of the social sciences in regional inquiry, we specifically sought the perspective of these senior leaders of disciplinary programs.

Deans or vice provosts of international/global affairs. Five of our eight case universities had high-level administrative appointees charged with encouraging and coordinating international activity. These interviews enabled us to get a sense of how university leaders were envisioning their schools' relationships with the rest of the world more broadly.

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Various members of our team investigated the field evidence collected through the site visits as well as a large stock of archival material, all of which has influenced our thinking. We limit our analysis here to transcribed interviews—seventy-three in number, with a total of eighty people—partly to constrain the cacophony that accompanies any large qualitative inquiry. But we also wanted to make fullest use of the great richness of the interview material. Our respondents make their livings making sense of complicated things. As scholars they are trained to find order in piles of numerical data, immense archives, and long historical traditions. As administrators they survive and flourish in labyrinthine university bureaucracies. And because they are steeped in a wide variety of intellectual fields, they often see the world quite differently from one another. Many of our respondents had invested a great deal of their professional lives navigating the scholarly and organizational terrains of our investigation, and they had a lot to say. We try to honor that fact in these pages by letting their often witty, occasionally angry, and consistently thoughtful insights have their day.

Interviews were almost always conducted face to face, on site at a location of the respondents' choosing, usually in their offices.[7] We asked center directors and associate directors to talk about their units' organizational structure and mission and geographic and thematic scope. We also asked about their specific relationships with university central administration and with disciplinary departments and schools across campus. Through these conversations we tried to understand center autonomy around finances, staffing, curriculum, and student enrollments as well as major constraints on autonomy. We asked social science department chairs to explain whether and how graduate students balanced disciplinary training with regional specialization, and what kinds of resources were available for those who wished to do so. We asked senior international officers about changes in campus climate and culture around the idea of "the global" in recent years and whether those changes had any impact on centers.

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Participation in the study was voluntary and we promised both individual and institutional anonymity to respondents. Although none of the authors conducted interviews themselves (we relied on the great skills of Elizabeth Anderson Worden, Nick Gozik, and Anthony Koliha for that), we came to know the interview material very intimately through multiple rounds of transcription checking and coding that took place from 2011 to 2014. Stanford doctoral student Jesse Foster was part of our team from 2011 to 2013, making

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substantial contributions to our coding scheme. NYU doctoral student Jon Friedman contributed extensive analytic assistance from 2011 right up to the book's completion. This has been a deeply collective project through and through.

Here is a brief sketch of what follows. Chapter 1 offers a schematic description of the three major ways in which US universities have conceived of the rest of the world throughout their history. Members of the US academy have long held cosmopolitan ambitions, but those have been refracted through very different ways of making sense of others and of the perceived location of the United States in the global order. As US academic planners inscribe successive visions of the world onto universities through practical administrative decisions, they contribute to a complex intramural ecosystem. Fresh capacity is built alongside established units, new functions are layered on top of inherited ones, and universities overall become more complicated mechanisms for producing knowledge as they move through time.

In Chapter 2 we consider the creation of "area studies" as we came to study them as creatures of the Cold War. Area studies were components of the scientific/intellectual movement of modernization theory, whose elite academic progenitors secured steady federal patronage for the production of social knowledge that might inform US foreign policy worldwide. Although the grand ambitions of the modernization project were hardly realized, among its more durable legacies were academic units specifically purposed with the production of applied and/or policy-relevant social knowledge throughout the US academy.

Chapter 3 describes the general organizational architecture for producing knowledge at the arts-and-sciences cores of research universities. The basic design is simple, comprising a binary division of academic units into departments that enjoy tenured faculty appointments, doctoral training programs, and the privilege of self-governance, and not-departments that vary widely in size and form. Not-departments go by many names: *institute, center, program, forum,* and *project* are currently common monikers. The number and variety of not-departments and the ease of creating more of them are the source of much of the organizational complexity and dynamism of US universities.

Chapter 4 details the cooperation routines that bind academic subunits together. On every campus we studied, strong norms about the importance of co-sponsorship enabled departments and not-departments alike to pool resources in pursuit of shared goals. This culture of joint ventures is especially important for not-departments,

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whose budgets, prestige, and durability are typically more precarious than those of units enjoying department status. The combination of stable departments, flexible not-departments, and widely shared techniques for cooperation between them is central to the knowledge production machinery of US universities.

In Chapter 5 we consider why the nation's discipline-based social scientists so consistently neglect the study of world regions beyond the United States. Here we listen especially closely to academic chairs of economics, political science, and sociology departments, who explain how status rewards accrue much more predictably to doctoral students working on heartland disciplinary problems and to the departments training such students. Because the heartland problems are overwhelmingly defined in the context of countries bordering the northern Atlantic Ocean, discipline-based prestige and hiring processes systematically produce regional parochialism in economics, political science, and sociology.

We conclude by showing how the rise of "global" discourse in the US academy has coevolved with fundamental changes in academic patronage, university prestige systems, and the international political economy. America's great research institutions are now only partly servants of the US nation-state. This fact has very large implications for those who make their careers producing scholarly knowledge.

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