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Uneven commercialization : contradiction and conflict in the identity and practices of American universities / Daniel Lee Kleinman ; Robert Osley-Thomas

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Abstract

In this paper, drawing on magazines read by US academic leaders, we explore the spread of commercial language into the world of higher education. We ask whether commercial codes are taken for granted, considered routine, and common sense in academic settings. We develop a multidimensional approach, considering two practices, strategic planning and patenting, and two identities, consumer and product, which come from the world of commerce. We ask: to what extent does the university community considered commercial developments legitimate or illegitimate? In what ways has the legitimacy of commercial developments changed over time, and to what degree are different commercial developments embraced or rejected? Our analysis suggests that the commercialization of US higher education is a complicated, uneven, contradictory, contested, and multifaceted process, rather than a single monolithic outcome state. We find that the extent to which commercial practices and identities are viewed as legitimate varies across time, by institutional type, and by an actor's social position. We also find that different commercial developments received

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different amounts of opposition. We use our analysis to contribute to recent thinking in the 'new institutionalism' in organizational analysis and to ground our thoughts about political efforts to preserve certain qualities of higher education. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)