The Politics of Knowledge: Challenges and Opportunities for Social Justice in
Higher Education

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Abstract

Social justice is a topic that few in higher education oppose, but university faculty members and academic professionals face structural challenges in their efforts to engage with social justice issues. By exploring four dimensions of the university—institutional mission, academic scholarship, professional identity, and pedagogical approaches—the author argues for a rethinking of how faculty and academic professionals approach these dimensions of their work. The author also identifies other fields of scholarship and practice that can help to address pressing public problems in which social justice issues are of central importance.

Keywords: civic engagement, civic studies, knowledge

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Introduction: Reclaiming Our Larger Sense of Purpose

As university faculty and academic professionals think about civic leadership for social justice and its place in higher education, they are confronted with a daunting task: to engage institutional and cultural expectations that more often than not inhibit the ease and/or ability of university stakeholders to engage in social justice work.[1] Education in which social justice comprises a constitutive element emphasizes the importance of critical awareness and consciousness, two aspects viewed by many social justice theorists and educators as central to empowerment and social action (Bacon, 2015; Freire, 1974, 2000; Longo, 2007; Nganga, 2016, pp. 4-5; Preskill & Brookfield, 2009). Few in academic institutions seeking to educate the next generation of citizens would oppose these themes, although the ways to understand and address such issues are not universal. Further, there are important differences between studying and identifying inequities and situating oneself as an explicit actor in addressing such challenges. As Westheimer and Kahne (2004) maintained:

> At the level of rhetoric, most educators, policymakers, and citizens agree that developing students' capacities and commitments for effective and democratic citizenship is important. When we get specific about what democracy requires and about what kind of…curricula will best promote it, however, much of that consensus falls away. (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 241)

Liberal education should be freeing and emancipatory for the mind, but social justice attends to lived reality, which increasingly bears the wounds of inattention or, worse, intentionality in the various forms of violence or marginalization experienced by diverse populations. Moreover, while colleges and universities have increasingly institutionalized, supported, and rewarded service-learning and other forms of engaged scholarship (Beere, Votruba, & Wells, 2011; O'Meara, 2010; Ward, Buglione, Giles, & Saltmarsh, 2013), institutional norms and practices still hold them back from a deeper engagement with social justice.

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[1] I use the term "academic professionals" to include those who engage in teaching, research, and engagement but who are not explicitly tenure-track faculty members.

With the growth of community engagement in recent decades, the movement has become divorced from some of its roots that have attended more explicitly to social justice.[2] In the words of former Bonner Foundation president and ordained Presbyterian minister Wayne Meisel (2013):

> In the early 1990s, most of the service activities at schools around the country were being run out of chaplains' offices. And so many of the founding directors on participating campuses [with the Bonner Program] were clergy or those who were very public about their faith commitments and the integrity of their spiritual journey. (Meisel, 2013, p. 58)

In Meisel's view, there was a "strong push to secularize the service world at the college level" (p. 58) because faith-based service was categorized and perceived as being "narrow minded and limited" (p. 59) and because federal funding sources such as AmeriCorps were becoming available to help support service and broader engagement efforts. Though less exclusive as a result of disconnecting service and engagement from religious traditions, institutions and individuals lost some of the most compelling language for addressing social justice issues.

Offering a helpful secular and more inclusive framing of Meisel's concern, Hartman (2013) noted that faculty and academic professionals must attend to the issue of shared existence, without rooting that in a specific religious tradition:

> If we wish to nurture democratic life, we must be conscious of the common commitment that that entails and we must always remain acutely aware that the forces of the market and even the state will undermine democracy absent a civil society continuously supporting democratic life and advancing democratic values. (Hartman, 2013, p. 65)

One must concern oneself with others, especially those marginalized by society. In a striking way, a robust conversation has developed in academe about the place and importance of engaged scholarship, while simultaneously higher education institutions have lost the sense of why fundamentally they seek to educate students for active citizenship and why they approach research through an engagement paradigm: people in communities are broken, hurt, marginalized, and forgotten.

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[2] For an overview of the development of the civic engagement movement in recent decades, see Hartley and Saltmarsh (2016).

Ernest Boyer (1990), a monumental figure who helped to usher in the language of "engagement," grounded the then-nascent approach to scholarship as a commitment to expanding how to think about what he identified as the four elements of scholarship: teaching, discovery, application, and integration. More than just offering a framework for thinking about the multiple dimensions of scholarship, however, Boyer spoke to the need for engaged scholarship and the need for collaboration and participation in an interdependent and democratic society comprising diverse populations.

> Now is the time … to build bridges across disciplines, and connect the campus to the larger world…. We need scholars who not only skillfully explore the frontiers of knowledge, but also integrate ideas, connect thought to action, and inspire students. The very complexity of modern life requires more, not less, information; more, not less, participation. If the nation's colleges and universities cannot help students see beyond themselves and better understand the interdependent nature of our world, each new generation's capacity to live responsibly will be dangerously diminished. (Boyer, 1990, p. 77)

In later years, Boyer would continue to speak about the need to rethink higher education and its public role. He concluded a speech before the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1995 by identifying two interrelated levels to this work that enable scholarship to have meaning while also responding to the real challenges people face. As Boyer (1996) put it:

> At one level, the scholarship of engagement means connecting the rich resources of the university to our most pressing social, civic, and ethical problems, to our children, to our schools, to our teachers, and to our cities, just to name the ones I am personally in touch with most frequently. You could name others. Campuses would be viewed by both students and professors not as isolated islands, but as staging grounds for action.
>
> But, at a deeper level, I have this growing conviction that what's also needed is not just more programs, but a larger purpose, a larger sense of mission, a larger clarity of direction in the nation's life as we move toward century twenty-one. Increasingly, I'm convinced that ultimately, the scholarship of engagement also means creating a special climate in which

> the academic and civic cultures communicate more continuously and more creatively with each other, helping to enlarge what anthropologist Clifford Geertz describes as the universe of human discourse and enriching the quality of life for all of us. (Boyer, 1996, pp. 19-20)

This larger sense of purpose refers to a culture shift, asking fundamental "why" and "how" questions in addition to "what." Raising these types of questions invites scholars to consider social, civic, and ethical problems as civic actors themselves, not simply passive, disconnected, or neutral observers. In short, they bring concerns about social justice directly into their work.

As someone who squarely identifies as a participant in the community engagement field and movement within higher education, I believe faculty and academic professionals face challenges of positionality as they relate to the underlying elements of social justice work. There are challenges to incorporating social justice into academic identities, classes, and institutions, but there are also sources from which to draw. A source of inspiration comes from a poem by Marge Piercy, cited in Peters' (2012, p. vii) foreword to a volume exploring university-community partnerships in Appalachia and in the South:

> The pitcher cries for water to carry
>
> and a person for work that is real. (p. vii)

Peters quoted these lines because

> the realness of the work in the stories of community-university partnerships … stands in stark contrast to the artificiality of so much of what we do and experience in both our communities and universities. Carefully staged public meetings, hearings, and forums in communities; scripted role plays; case studies; and lectures in university classrooms—whatever value such activities may sometimes have, they often feel like meaningless rituals without consequence. (Peters, 2012, p. vii)

The university, Peters argued, has struggled with its identity as a neutral institution even while many scholars have argued strongly for the need to retain a distance and detachment from the world. Peters urged faculty and academic professionals to think differently about the perceived neutrality of an institution or an individual: What kind of knowledge does a democratic society need? Peters' answer was "knowledge people can trust" (2012, p. xi).

Hartman, Boyer, Peters, and others have pointed scholars and practitioners in a direction that encourages them to value democratic civic engagement as a means to "[facilitate] an inclusive, collaborative, and deliberative democracy" (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011, p. 2). In the spirit of engaging in work that is real, this article addresses four areas that impact how faculty can lead and work with their institutions, colleagues, and students toward social justice goals: institutional mission, academic scholarship, professional identity, and pedagogical approaches. Without attending to these dimensions of today's higher education environment (at the very least), faculty and academic professionals can easily fail to recognize the interconnectedness of otherwise disparate dimensions of higher education.

Institutional Mission

Colleges and universities have mission statements that capture succinctly their purposes for existing. Institutions with religious or mission-driven foundations have the capacity to leverage statements of faith to serve and partner with those marginalized and in most need (Bringle, Games, & Malloy, 1999; Combs & Schmidt, 2013). For those in public institutions, there are opportunities to ground one's commitment to social justice in rhetoric about serving the broader community—locally and more broadly (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999; Morphew & Hartley, 2006, p. 463; Torres-Harding, Diaz, Schamberger, & Carollo, 2015). Community colleges, regional public universities, land-grant/flagship universities, and liberal arts institutions—religiously affiliated or not—each articulate a commitment to society, however defined, often through the language of service.

As scholars have long noted, however, "service" has many potential definitions, some of which perpetuate approaches and paradigms that reinforce many of the structural challenges that universities aspire to eliminate (Cruz, 1990; Morton, 1995; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011; Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009). One familiar and dominant paradigm is the provision of expertise to various audiences and constituencies beyond the university, what Peters called the "service intellectual tradition" (2010, pp. 24-32). Many institutional documents for promotion and tenure of faculty, for example, struggle to expand definitions of what it means to be a scholar involved in teaching and research that is both robust and publically oriented and engaged (Ellison & Eatman, 2008; Hutchinson, 2011; O'Meara, 2010; O'Meara & Rice, 2005). Institutions may espouse community engagement, but they often struggle to realize and support that rhetoric.

In light of the challenges and opportunities for engaging social justice in higher education, institutional mission is not an immediately apparent enabler or inhibiter; nevertheless, turning to an institution's expressed tenets can serve as a source of inspiration and justification within an academic culture that seeks to approach public problems in specific ways. Particularly, with the increased pervasiveness of neoliberal practices shaping colleges and universities, institutional statements can serve as a buffer against a seemingly inevitable shift in how institutions view themselves and approach their public missions (Alfred, 2016; Giroux, 2008; Orphan & O'Meara, 2016). Realizing institutional missions depends heavily on those at the center of the university—faculty members.

Academic Scholarship: Replicating a Narrow Model and Considering Another Approach

What does it mean to be a scholar? What does it mean to be a scholar committed to addressing public problems, especially with a focus on social justice? Any answer to these questions must acknowledge the context in which scholars have "long been urged to resist calls for civic engagement" and to engage in their work as a kind of "private craft" rather than a civic one (Peters, Jordan, Alter, & Bridger, 2003, p. 75). In 1932, Walter Lippmann gave the Phi Beta Kappa Oration as part of the commencement exercises at Columbia University. Republished in *The Atlantic Monthly* a few months later, "The Scholar in a Troubled World" became a classic statement about the importance of detached scholarship from the "real world." Lippmann wrote about the "uneasiness which perturbs the scholar" because of what he referred to as two different consciences—one concerned about the pressing troubles in the world and one that demanded detachment from it. As Lippmann (1932) wrote:

> He feels that he ought to be doing something about the world's troubles, or at least to be saying something which will help others to do something about them. The world needs ideas: how can he sit silently in his study and with a good conscience go on with his thinking when there is so much that urgently needs to be done? And yet, at the same time he hears the voice of another conscience, the conscience of the scholar, which tells him that as one whose business it is to examine the nature of things, to imagine how they work, and to test continually the proposals of his imagination, he must preserve a quiet indifference to the immediate and a serene attachment to the processes of inquiry and understanding. (Lippmann, 1932, p. 148)

This sense of "quiet indifference" was codified throughout the 20th century with the rise of research universities supported by funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation and bolstered by the widespread embrace of positivism (Boyte, 2000). Taylor (1981) captured the dominant, detached narrative well: "The modern university is in the world; it is forbidden to be also of it" (p. 8). This philosophy of detachment, Boyte (2010) noted, "replaced a philosophy of relationship," and as one faculty member at the University of Minnesota noted in 1997, "over the years … public engagement was seen as less and less legitimate" (Boyte, 2010, pp. xiv-xv). For a land-grant university with roots in community engagement through extension, this type of statement speaks to the power of the detached approach to scholarship that has come to dominate higher education institutions (Cooper, 1999).

When considering the place of social justice in one's scholarly work and commitment, one is confronted by two distinct, contrasting modes of thought, one that offers universality and replicability, and one that offers specificity and uniqueness—the former serving as the gold standard for a range of disciplines (St. John, 2013). As faculty and academic professionals struggle with questions about social justice, they must attend to the benefits of the second, which is often marginalized in academe, as they approach problems not simply as content or methodological experts but also as civic actors.

In similar fashion, Bruner (1986) argued that there are two modes of thought, two ways of knowing the world: One mode is paradigmatic, logico-scientific, or analytic, and the second mode is narrative. Commenting on Bruner's argument, Ganz (2010) noted:

> Cognitively mapping the world, we can discern patterns, test relationships, and hypothesize empirical claims—the domain of analysis. But we can also map the world affectively, coding experience, objects, and symbols as good for us or bad for us, fearful or safe, hopeful or depressing, and so on. (Ganz, 2010, p. 516)

Using the analytic mode, one can answer "how" questions but narratives help us to answer "why."

Lindblom offered a similar framing, presenting two "visions of how societies can best use knowledge for social problem solving" (Lindblom, 1990, p. 213). The first vision puts science at center stage and uses "the results of scientific observation to move in the right direction" (p. 213). Lindblom continued: "Social

science also of course studies and learns how to go where it has learned society ought to go" (1990, p. 214). The alternative model, in Lindblom's words, "remains only partially articulated" and serves as an "aid, refiner, extender, and sometime tester of [lay investigation], always a supplement, never broadly embarked on a program to displace or replace it" (Lindblom, 1990, pp. 215, 216-217). While the scientific model for problem solving suggests that "sufficient analysis can almost certainly find at least one solution" to public problems, the "other model makes no such assumption" (Lindblom, 1990, p. 217).

Further reinforcing the argument laid out by Bruner, Lindblom, and others, Flyvbjerg (2001) argued that the social sciences are not doing all they can when it comes to public problems because they seek to replicate the natural sciences and fail in the process. As Flyvbjerg put it:

> Just as the social sciences have not contributed much to explanatory and predictive theory, neither have the natural sciences contributed to the reflexive analysis and discussion of values and interests, which is the prerequisite for an enlightened political, economic, and cultural development in any society. (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 3)

Flyvbjerg grounded his project in the concept of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, in contrast to analytical and technical forms of knowledge. In the context of issues of social justice, phronesis concerns itself with the lived reality of individuals and communities, focusing on "content-dependent knowledge" by asking the "little questions" and focusing on "thick descriptions" of issues rather than being detached and clinical in studying and understanding people's lives and the challenges they face (Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp. 71, 133). What does this have to do with civic leadership and social justice? A great deal, I argue.

Aside from humanities scholars, the natural science model of research has increasingly become the exemplary, aspirational goal for the social sciences. In thinking not only about research but also about the ways in which they serve as leaders in community settings with a commitment to social justice, faculty and academic professionals must attend to issues of how they approach their relationships with others. Do they create space to form relationships or do they maintain a certain degree of detachment to ensure that their scholarship is valued by academic peers? Further, when do they step in when they recognize injustice—or do they simply document it and allow it to persist? Connecting back to the prior

point about institution mission, scholars must ask what drives them to conduct the research and engagement that they do to begin with. Are they drawing from and connecting to institutional commitments and practices that ask them to engage and serve broader populations? Or are they simply functioning within a dominant paradigm of academe that disconnects scholars from their place (i.e., institution and community) and champions the detached expert as possessing the only "valid form of knowledge" (Boyte, 2015a, p. 19)? There are signs of hope in approaches such as community-based research that foster relational approaches to research, but such methods remain novel in many disciplines (Peters & Avila, 2014; Stoecker, 2008; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003).

The "cult of the expert," to borrow Boyte's phrase, refers to those detached and technocratic champions of the singular authority of scientific and disciplinary knowledge (Boyte, 2009, p. 2). While the readers of this article are not likely to include themselves in this camp, they are likely to have colleagues who fit easily into this classification. Whether they admit it or not, scholars replicate their own hierarchies of value within their departments and fields. They privilege particular methods because of how they help others to understand the world. Yet, as the few examples in this section illuminate, scholarship that engages people as actors and not simply as subjects for analysis offers fundamentally different insights.

Focusing on social justice from a range of potential contexts, faculty and academic professionals can benefit from acknowledging the limitations of certain ways of knowing and the benefits of others. The challenge is that norms within disciplines and the academy as a whole have tremendous influence over the type of scholarship that is valued, rewarded, and, because of both of these, conducted (Fear & Doberneck, 2004; Orphan, 2015; Shaffer, 2012). As Eatman (2015) observed, "there exists a persistent cultural logjam … that … runs against the institutionally normalized ways of knowing within academe" (p. 132).[3] Boyer wrote about the faculty reward system in 1990 and noted that there is "a recognition that the faculty reward system does not match the full range of academic functions and that professors are often caught between competing obligations" (Boyer, 1990, p. 1).

Narrow models and expectations of what counts as scholarship impact not only what scholars do but also how they do it. What they accept within their institutions and the broader world of academe as norms—how things are—directly

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[3] For the full paper referenced by Eatman, see (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009).

impacts the ability to acknowledge and/or embrace social justice as a legitimate concern in an environment that is primarily concerned with creating new knowledge evaluated by peers in specific ways. Tied up with this is the issue of professional identity and how faculty members see themselves as scholars—engaged or otherwise.

Who Should I Be? Professional Identity as a Scholar

Foundational to concerns about the place of social justice work in university settings is a shift in thinking that views university educators and other professionals as civic professionals engaged in public life and not exclusively as individuals utilizing their expertise in technical ways. This can be done by reclaiming a model of professionalism based on what has been referred to as "social trusteeship" (Brint, 1994, pp. 203-205; Sullivan, 2005, p. 9) and acknowledging that such leadership is value-laden (Heifetz, 2010, p. 24). Social trusteeship acknowledges that there are two main aspects of professional practice: "a technical aspect having to do with the competent performance of skilled work, and a social aspect that grounds and guides professionals in an appreciation of the larger public ends they serve" (Peters, 2010, p. 11).

Frequently, professionalism can "lock individuals into a narrow focus upon technical competence ... to the exclusion of all other considerations" (Sullivan, 2005, pp. 30-31). Ideally, however, "professionalism is far more than that"; when work has "ends of social importance, an individual's skills and aspirations acquire value for others" (Sullivan (2005, p. 196). Professionals have expertise, but what makes them civic professionals is the way they employ that knowledge to meet public-regarding ends in a public-regarding way. They embody a manifestation of professionalism that is "both expert and civic" (Sullivan, 2003, p. 10).

Similarly, Dzur (2008) maintained that professionals can serve as facilitators in democratic work by helping citizens gain competence to address issues and to share the tasks of democracy, even though such a move takes away the professional's own power and status. Dzur emphasized the need for a "new normative core of professionalism" (2008, p. 255) comprising task sharing and greater involvement of citizens in addressing public problems. As Fischer (2000), collective citizen participation is "seldom something that simply happens;" it must be "organized, facilitated, and even nurtured." (Fischer, 2000, p. xi) There is an important role for professionals, one that draws on both their expertise as well as

their ability to share responsibility and leadership. Dzur went so far as to say that professionals are the "missing agents" (2008, p. 213) of contemporary democratic thought, especially when speaking about deliberative democracy.

Thinking about themselves as civic professionals can help today's scholars and practitioners recognize that in dealing with complex or "wicked" problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973), they influence the conceptualization of higher education's role in responding to public issues, especially when social justice is an aspirational goal. Utilizing expert knowledge when/if necessary complements a civic orientation. However, the challenge, according to Dzur (2015), is that "democracy is counter normative on today's campus" (Dzur, 2015, p. 53). Universities are potential sites for transformative change— "as both a model of participatory democracy inside and as an agency for transmitting it outside" (Dzur, 2015, p. 54). The challenge, in this context, is that faculty and academic professionals must change themselves in that process, and institutional norms can hold back even the most ardent supporters in such a transformation (Pierce, Neeley, & Budziak, 2008). The work a scholar does must be rigorous and meaningful. University stakeholders must wrestle with what those terms mean and for whom. Yet, they must also consider the environment in which faculty members spend considerable amounts of time: in the classroom.

Pedagogical Approaches: Changing Classroom Culture

To this point, the article has explored institutional identity and mission, challenges related to how scholarship has been conceptualized, and the civic identity of individual faculty members. I will now focus on a, if not *the*, primary environment in which university faculty most visibly engage issues of social justice: the classroom. In recent decades, the entire civic engagement movement (Hartley & Harkavy, 2011; Hartley & Saltmarsh, 2016) and, more specifically, engaged pedagogies such as service-learning have proliferated and become established in a range of disciplines as ways of teaching and learning (Battistoni, 2002; Butin, 2006; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 2009; Plater, 2004; Saltmarsh, 2010; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011; Stanton & Wagner, 2010; Swaner, 2012; Zlotkowski, 2000). Universities have also established centers on campuses and other infrastructure to provide bridging relationships between classrooms and communities, sometimes taking on the brunt of the responsibilities of the relationship between universities and the broader community of which these institutions are a part (Beere et al., 2011; Butin & Seider, 2012; Hoy & Johnson,

2013; Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013a, 2013b). This has led to a new reality: Those in professional and administrative roles help shape the pedagogical experiences of students (Green, Harrison, Reading, & Shaffer, 2016). However, whether through a class or a co-curricular program that transcends a semester-long experience, where does social justice come into play with respect to engaged pedagogies and/or experiences? To what extent do academic professionals speak about understanding inequities, and how much of what they continue to do—decades into the community engagement movement—maintains societal structures and inequities through a perpetuation of a volunteer and service approach to complex public problems? How forcefully are faculty members and other academic professionals willing to push against institutional norms, disciplinary expectations, and students' political and/or ideological views in the name of social justice when it is unclear they will be supported in such an endeavor (Green et al., 2016; Kliewer, 2013)? I will briefly highlight an emerging field that builds on both community engagement and deliberative democracy, offering a hopeful path forward in response to knowledge politics and how to engage social justice issues through dialogue and deliberation.

Deliberative pedagogy helps to broaden how university stakeholders think about engaged pedagogies, especially when considering the intersection of engagement and democratic processes. When they expand their conceptualization of engaged pedagogies to include deliberation, discussion, and/or dialogue, they find scholarly interest in the roles of discourse and engagement in higher education settings (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005; Dedrick, Grattan, & Dienstfrey, 2008; Sara A. Mehltretter Drury, 2015; Isgro & Deal, 2013; Latimer & Hempson, 2012; Lawrence, Justus, Murray, & Brown, 2015; Longo, 2013; Shaffer, 2014, 2016; Shaffer, Longo, Manosevitch, & Thomas, 2017). As Murti (2009) wrote:

> One of my reasons for adopting deliberative dialogue as a pedagogical tool in preference over debates lay in the fact that deliberative dialogue goes beyond these adversarial forms of communication that see their *raison d'être* in the dichotomy of winner/loser. (Murti, 2009, p. 196).[4]

Deliberative dialogue opens up a new possibility for relating with others in contrast to a zero-sum environment. It challenges the dominance of adversarial approaches to interaction and engagement that are commonly found in communication among diverse groups (Carcasson, Black, & Sink, 2010)

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[4] See also Drury, Andre, Goddard, and Wentzel (2016, p. 14).

Deliberative pedagogy offers opportunities for participants in classroom and community settings to discuss with others and to learn from them factual information and value-based views that shape what happens in community settings. Ideally, there is space for those who are impacted by a certain issue to express themselves within the context of a larger group setting and possibly, as a result of such a discussion, to take action.[5] Rather than speak from places of privilege, faculty and academic professionals can help to foster democratic spaces that encourage and support a broader spectrum of people to speak as authentically and openly as possible. However, there are limitations, especially in relation to deliberation and social justice. While dialogue and deliberation are critical elements to the transformation of higher education and society writ large, there are inherent conflicts between deliberative efforts that espouse neutrality for those convening community conversations, for example, and the need to acknowledge differences in power and how that amplifies or diminishes certain voices, perspectives, individuals, and communities (Schoem, 2014; Thomas, 2010).

As one thinks about the intersection between one's pedagogical approaches and the broader social issues that demand interrogation, faculty members and others have the opportunity to explore course content in ways that invite students to engage with those beyond campus whose lives embody the theoretical issues that otherwise remain speculative rather than lived.

Understanding the Challenges and Moving Forward Existing Challenges

The four topics address earlier—institutional mission, academic scholarship, professional identity, and pedagogical approaches—touch on dimensions of higher education that shape how faculty members and academic professionals can understand interrelated elements that shape their identities and encourage them to be more explicitly oriented toward social justice. First, with respect to institutional mission, practitioners can benefit from interrogating foundational documents as well as the contemporary interpretations of what institutions claim to be and do. What does it mean, practically, to respond to broader social issues and to educate students for civic life? What does it mean for promotion and tenure, for example?

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[5] The wedding of public deliberation and action is articulated most strongly by Boyte (2004, 2011, 2015b) and Levine (2013).

Second, of central importance is recognizing the dominant paradigm of "what counts" for research and how it shapes the ways we understand and address public problems. Engaged scholarship has the opportunity to be disruptive to norms and practices. A serious challenge, however, is that with the growth of the field comes a replication of disciplinary structures. The creation of journals, associations, a literature, and field of practice must be reassessed constantly in order to maintain a critical perspective on the higher education landscape that increasingly reflects neoliberal tendencies (Kliewer, 2013; Orphan & O'Meara, 2016; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000).

Third, a social justice-oriented approach to scholarship is wrapped up in the sense of professional identity that connects expertise with a civic orientation. The challenge in connecting back to institutional issues (e.g. promotion and tenure) and scholarship (e.g. employing dominant paradigmatic approaches) is that faculty and academic professionals are educated and inculcated into an institution that still struggles with alternative paths to scholarship (Gilvin, Roberts, & Martin, 2012; Jaeger, Tuchmayer, & Morin, 2014; Orphan, 2015; Shaffer, 2012).

Finally, pedagogy is central to how faculty can shift to a social justice orientation in their classrooms and other learning spaces (Cowden & Singh, 2013; Rendón, 2009). Altering how one teaches not only modifies course content, but it also changes the relationship and dynamic between teacher and student—a fundamental theme in the recent development of deliberative pedagogy (Shaffer, 2014; Shaffer et al., 2017). There are challenges to making social justice the explicit focus of a course, namely because of the ways in which such a focus would pivot away from (perceived) neutrality on social issues, an issue important for both public and private institutions.

Moving Forward

In light of the four institutional elements shaping higher education outlined in this article, I suggest that faculty and academic professionals acknowledge and draw from diverse sources to help make sense of how they can embrace social justice and transform their teaching, research, and sense of identity within their institutions.

First, they must engage in politics and acknowledge their role alongside others as citizens with specific knowledge based on their training and interests—but fundamentally as members of a community. I refer to politics in the tradition of

Mathews (1999, 2014), Boyte (2004, 2015a), Saunders (2005), Levine (2013), and others who focus on politics not only in terms of elections and politicians but also citizen-centered engagement. For universities, the idea of engaging in "politics" runs counter to a dominant paradigm that has often committed to standing outside of social problems (Taylor (1981). That said, there are rich historical and contemporary examples of ways in which a "different kind of politics," to borrow Barker and Brown's (2009) phrase, has been part of higher education's civic mission (Peters, 2006, 2010, 2015; Peters & Hittleman, 2003).

Second, what can help in this process is the adoption of Flyvbjerg's articulation of phronetic social science (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Flyvbjerg, Landman, & Schram, 2012) and its intersection with higher education's commitment to engaging diverse publics in social justice work. One way this is expressed is by university faculty members engaging with wider publics in choice work through deliberative processes. As Mathews (2005) put it:

> The knowledge the public needs can only be produced by the dynamic engagement of citizens with citizens…. The nature of what the public needs to know is different from academic knowledge and so is the process for generating public knowledge…. The Greeks had a better term when they described the outcome of public deliberation as *phronesis* (practical wisdom). Simply put, *phronesis* is knowing how to act, knowing what should be done. (Mathews, 2005, p. 74)

So what does this mean for the faculty member who is accustomed to producing knowledge? Mathews went on: "Providing objective data and relevant information certainly serves the interests of all; so does professional expertise. Yet they cannot substitute for practical wisdom nor are they produced in the way that *phronesis* is" (Mathews, 2005, p. 75). The challenge is to broaden not only one's methodological approach to community issues, but to reposition oneself in relationship with others as civic professionals—using expertise and knowledge in public-regarding ways (Sullivan, 2003, 2005) as co-creators of democracy through public work (Boyte, 2008, 2011).

Deliberative processes become critical to such work because they create opportunities for understanding and wrestling with the tensions that shape public problems. However, as Levine (2013) noted, "Deliberation is most valuable when it is connected to work—when citizens bring their experience of making things into

their discussions, and when they take ideas and values from deliberation back into their work" (Levine, 2013, p. 3). Deliberation must take place alongside action, a reality not lost on those who have long engaged in this type of work (Boyte, 2004, 2011; Levine, 2016; Schoem, 2014).

Third, faculty must broaden their institutional thinking to encompass disciplines and traditions that have engaged social justice explicitly in scholarly ways. For example, adult education can be an important field of scholarship and practice for thinking about community-based education and the (perceived) tension between expertise and detachment with engagement and activism (Brookfield, 2016). This is especially true in relation to issues of power and agency between those in the university and marginalized populations when planning how to engage in such work (Cervero & Wilson, 2001, 2006). The discipline of planning can be fruitful sources through which higher education professionals can think about the obstacles and opportunities that exist as they address social inequities (Forester, 1989, 1999, 2009, 2013). The nascent civic studies movement, framed around the question "What should you and I do?", is yet another intellectual community from which to make meaning of higher education's role in response to social issues (Levine & Soltan, 2014). Academic professionals must be ever-expansive as they think about how to conceptualize higher education's role addressing social justice issues.

Finally, I want to borrow from Levine's afterword to *Publicly Engaged Scholars: Next-Generation Engagement and the Future of Higher Education*, in which he wrote about the need to draw from that book's many contributors and their narratives in order to generate "groundbreaking theory" because "the theories that are already embedded in their narratives must emerge" (Levine, 2016, p. 256). His call for "deeper and more ambitious theory" (p. 249) connects the four themes in this article because of what the academy is charged to do. "Put more forcefully," Levine continued, "we will be unable to address profound social problems until we strengthen our theoretical understanding of society, and that will come from books, data, and seminar rooms as well as from action in communities" (p. 249). As university stakeholders consider the topic of civic leadership and its relations hip with social justice in the context of higher education, they must offer new perspectives and insights into what it means to be part of an academic institution, to conduct research, to develop professional identities, and to create educational environments in classrooms and communities. The beauty of academe is that, at its

best, it is a community open to new insights and new approaches to tackling the most pressing of public problems. At its worse, however, it is detached, exhibiting an artificial sense that scholars and their institutions are not part of the "real world." Faculty members and academic professionals must humble themselves and recognize that they have a role to play, maybe just not the one they thought they would or how they were trained to do so.

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