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1. The Neoliberal Logic of Service-Learning

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Abstract: This article investigates the ways in which service-learning manifests within our neoliberal clime, suggesting that service-learning amounts to a foil for neoliberalism, allowing neoliberal political and economic changes while masking their damaging effects. Neoliberalism shifts the relationship between the public and the private, structures higher education, and promotes a façade of community-based university partnerships while facilitating a pervasive regime of control. This article demonstrates that service-learning amounts to an enigma of neoliberalism, making possible the privatization of the public and the individualizing of social problems while masking evidence of market-based societal control. Neoliberal service-learning distances service from teaching and learning, allows market forces to shape university-community partnerships, and privatizes the public through dispossession by accumulation.

Keywords: neoliberalism, service-learning, higher education

In 2015, three million college students—representing more than a quarter of undergraduates across the United States—volunteered 286 million hours. College student volunteers served a median 34 hours over the course of the year.[1] This contribution of time and effort amounts across 1,120 colleges and universities to a \$9.7 billion industry.[2] Collegians serve through first-year

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[1]   "College Students: Trends and Highlights Overview," Corporation for National and Community Service, 2016, https://www.nationalservice.gov/vcla/demographic/college-students.

[2]   "Creating a Culture of Assessment: 2012 Annual Membership Survey," Campus Compact, April 2013, http://www.compact.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Campus-Compact-2012-Statistics.pdf, 5.

experience programs, campus ministries, and student organizations. For many of the students volunteering during their collegiate tenure, their service is part of the formal curriculum. Known as service-learning, the pedagogy is now employed at scale due to its promise as a tool of civic engagement and subject matter acquisition.[3]

Service-learning amounts to:

> A credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.[4]

Proponents argue that service-learning promotes lifelong volunteerism and civic engagement,[5] enhances subject matter application,[6] and increases retention and graduation rates,[7] all factors which encourage faculty to integrate service-learning across disciplines. The pedagogy appears aligned with a higher education that "should provide the conditions for people to involve themselves in the deepest problems of society, to acquire the knowledge, skills and ethical responsibility" requisite for investigation of and response to society's vexing problems.[8] When subject matter knowledge might be best learned via a voluntary exercise meeting community-identified needs, service-learning

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[3] "Mission & Vision," Campus Compact, 2018, https://compact.org/who-we-are/mission-and-vision/; Janet Eyler and Dwight E. Giles, *Where's the Learning in Service Learning?* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999); Joseph Kahne and Joel Westheimer, "In the Service of What?: The Politics of Service Learning," *Phi Delta Kappan* (1996), http://www.civicsurvey.org/sites/default/files/publications/In%20the%20Service%20of%20What.pdf; George D. Kuh, *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter* (Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2008).

[4] Robert G. Bringle and Julie A. Hatcher, "Implementing Service Learning in Higher Education," *The Journal of Higher Education* 67, no. 2 (1996): 222.

[5] John Saltmarsh, "The Civic Promise of Service Learning," *Liberal Education* 91, no. 2 (2005), 50-55.

[6] Robert G. Bringle, "Hybrid High-Impact Pedagogies: Integrating Service-Learning with Three Other High Impact Pedagogies," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 24, no. 1 (2017), 49-63; Eyler and Giles, *Where's the Learning.*

[7] Kuh, *High-Impact Educational Practices.*

[8] Henry A. Giroux, "Youth, Higher Education, and the Crisis of Public Time: Educated Hope and the Possibility of a Democratic Future," in *The New Henry Giroux Reader: The Role of the Public Intellectual in a Time of Tyranny,* ed. Jennifer A. Sandlin and Jake Burdick (Gorham, ME: Myers Education Press, 2003), 254–255.

educators believe the practice encourages a ripple effect benefiting students, graduates, and communities.[9]

Despite the apparent benefits of service-learning, this article investigates the ways in which service-learning manifests within our neoliberal clime. Service-learning amounts to a foil for neoliberalism, allowing neoliberal political and economic changes while masking their damaging effects. Neoliberalism shifts the relationship between the public and the private, structures higher education, and promotes a façade of community-based university partnerships while facilitating a pervasive regime of control. This article demonstrates that service-learning amounts to an enigma of neoliberalism, making possible the privatization of the public and the individualizing of social problems while masking evidence of market-based societal control. Service-learning provides an influx of visible volunteers meeting community needs while promoting goodwill for local colleges and universities. However, service-learning exists for the private good of student education and remains confined to the short-term timeline of the academic semester. Thus, service-learning acts in accordance with neoliberalism by filling gaps left by the retreating state, limiting the impact (for the short-term) and necessary critique of neoliberalism's harm.

Neoliberalism

In order to understand the usefulness of service-learning to neoliberalism, it is first necessary to understand the political and economic context in which neoliberalism thrives. Thus, we must begin in the 1980s, when up-and-coming Democratic politicians asserted a new liberalism which valued privatization, market-based fixes, and venture philanthropy as a response to observed problems in the public sphere. Seeking to distinguish themselves from their Great Society predecessors and electorally compete amid a conservative resurgence, the neoliberals "wanted to dis-embed liberalism and return it to less regulated trade and markets."[10] By co-opting the conservative economic policies of the Reagan era while maintaining a commitment to social liberalism, the neoliberals began cultivating a new political order. Their early efforts resulted in passage of the North American Free Trade Act and the repeal of

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[9]   Anne Colby, Thomas Ehrlich, Elizabeth Beaumont, and Jason Stephens, *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

[10] Sonya Douglass Horsford, Janelle T. Scott, and Gary L. Anderson, *The Politics of Education Policy in an Era of Inequality: Possibilities for Democratic Schooling* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 24.

Great Depression–era legislation monitoring banking and finance. In 1992, the neoliberals achieved the ultimate electoral triumph by electing one of their own, Bill Clinton, as President of the United States.

Thirty years later, neoliberalism is now the current paradigm guiding Western economic, political, cultural, and social thought. A paradigm represents "a package of claims about the world, methods for gathering and analyzing data, and habits of scientific thought and action."[11] Paradigms make possible the commonsensical; broad assumptions of the common good and the needs of the citizenry are now agreed upon by conservatives and liberals alike. Barring a revolution in social thought, there is no escaping neoliberalism. Neoliberalism operates at both an individual and a structural level, for it is the framework upon which all "normal" assumptions rest.[12] By this I mean that neoliberalism sets the conditions of possibility for our time and space. Neoliberalism "saturat[es]" the everyday and "intru[des]" upon our community and knowledge landscape.[13] Culturally, "neoliberalism has changed how we teach, lead, and live our lives."[14] We may resist neoliberalism, but we cannot operate outside its bounds. Thus, it is critical to understand the tenets of neoliberalism, so that we might observe its influence in service-learning pedagogy. The remainder of this section will explore principles of neoliberalism, including the privatization of the public and the manufacturing of crises, which prime service-learning for usefulness to current market-university-community relations.

The Privatization of the Public

The public represents the precondition of inclusion; "public means that everyone can make use of it, it is of no-one, it is no one's property, no one can appropriate it for herself exclusively."[15] Yet neoliberalism's signature is the narrowing of the public and corresponding distancing from the private. Pauline Lipman refers to neoliberalism as the "privatization of social goods and withdrawal of government from provision for social welfare on the premise that competitive

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[11] Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 76.

[12] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

[13] Gaile S. Canella, "Introduction," in *Critical Qualitative Inquiry: Foundations and Futures*, ed. Gaile S. Cannella, Michelle Salazar Pérez, and Penny A. Pasque (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2015), 8.

[14] Horsford, Scott, and Anderson, *The Politics of Education Policy,* 25.

[15] Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelien, "Only Love for the Truth Can Save Us: Truth-Telling at the (World)university?," in *Why Foucault: New Directions in Educational Research,* ed. Michael A. Peters and Tina (A.C.) Besley (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 155.

markets are more effective and efficient."[16] Examples of the neoliberal takeover of public problems, spaces, and solutions in higher education include the valuing of research beyond teaching and service, emerging partnerships between military contractors and university researchers, attacks on academic freedom, the curtailing of the humanities, and donor input in faculty hiring decisions.[17] Corporate partnerships, meanwhile, endow prestige professorships, finance curricula, and encourage symbiosis in the production and training of undergraduate students, so that there now exists a "creeping vocationalization and subordination of learning to the dictates of the market."[18] Roderick Ferguson argues that market dynamics have long influenced American higher education; however, he insists that the current "infiltration of administrative regimes into virtually all sectors of university life—both large and small, both structural and corporeal—is propelled by unprecedented social and economic processes."[19] Public in name perhaps, higher education now caters to a commodification of academia wherein the exploration of democracy, ethical citizenship, and community needs represent a mere afterthought.

Manufacturing Crises

In lieu, the marketplace flexes authority by taking and taming the public space of academia to its economic ends. Neoliberalism profits not from an emergence of new capital but by consolidating public resources into private hands, a practice of "accumulation by dispossession" characterized by "privatization

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[16] Pauline Lipman, *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 6.

[17] Sheila Slaughter and Larry Leslie, *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 5; "Partnership Creates Connections," PennState, April 16, 2018, https://www.psu.edu/feature/2018/04/16/partnership-creates-connections; Steven Salaita, "My Life as a Cautionary Tale," *The Chronicle Review*, August 28, 2019, https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/08282019-salaita-academic-freedom; Takamitsu Sawa, "Humanities Under Attack," *The Japan Times*, August 23, 2015, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2015/08/23/commentary/japan-commentary/humanities-attack/#.XW1_yZNKiYU; Marjorie Valbrun, "Letting the Donor Decide," Inside Higher Ed, October 8, 2018, insidehighered.com/news/2018/10/08/professors-question-big-donation-saint-louis-university-because-conditions-attached.

[18] Henry A. Giroux, "Vocationalizing Higher Education: Schooling and the Politics of Corporate Culture," In *The New Henry Giroux Reader: The Role of the Public Intellectual in a Time of Tyranny,* ed. Jennifer A. Sandlin and Jake Burdick (Gorham, ME: Myers Education Press, 2003), 239–240.

[19] Roderick A. Ferguson, "Administering Sexuality; or, the Will to Institutionality," *Radical History Review* 100 (Winter 2008): 159–160.

and commodification" and "the management and manipulation of crises."[20] Historically and geographically, neoliberalism operates as a "distinctive form of globalization" wherein "a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit."[21] The public, its needs, and its services succumb to plunder while corporations profit.

While higher education remains one of the final bastions of public life, neoliberalism courts institutions once devoted to dialogic citizenship and critical thinking as trophy "handmaidens to corporate culture."[22] Colleges and universities are now run on a top-down model akin to businesses, wherein university presidents are recruited as turnaround managers, selected for their business acumen, and expected to restructure and stabilize with no moment to spare.[23] Shared governance between faculty and administration becomes a relic, as faculty are de-professionalized and academic labor is devalued.[24] State appropriations of taxpayer funds stretch thinner, as institutions rely more heavily on tuition dollars to make ends meet.[25] Students, meanwhile, are price gouged by student loans, so that only the children of elites may afford higher education without binding themselves to spiraling debt.[26] These are the crises that neoliberalism inculcates and corporations are only too eager to control and resolve, yet the process spawns new crises.[27]

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[20] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 159.

[21] Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism,* 156; Noam Chomsky, "The Tragedy of Haiti," in *The Haiti Files: Decoding the Crisis,* ed. J. Ridgeway (Washington, DC: Essential Books, 1994), 7.

[22] Giroux, "Vocationalizing Higher Education," 239.

[23] Nicolaus Mills, "The Corporatization of Higher Education," *Dissent Magazine* (Fall 2012), https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/the-corporatization-of-higher-education.

[24] Evelyn Morales Vazquez and John S. Levin, "The Tyranny of Neoliberalism in the American Academic Profession," American Association of University Professors, January–February 2018, https://www.aaup.org/article/tyranny-neoliberalism-american-academic-profession#.XW2J6JNKiYU.

[25] "Federal and State Funding of Higher Education: A Changing Landscape," The PEW Charitable Trust, June 2015, https://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/assets/2015/06/federal_state_funding_higher_education_final.pdf.

[26] G. Thomas Goodnight, David Hingstman, and Sandy Green, "The Student Debt Bubble: Neoliberalism, the University, and Income Inequality," *Journal of Cultural Economy* 8, no. 1 (2015), 1-26.

[27] Aaron M. Kuntz, "Critical and Poststructural Forms of Inquiry: Social Justice through Productive Critique," in *Critical Qualitative Inquiry: Foundations and Futures*, ed. Gaile S. Cannella, Michelle Salazar Pérez, and Penny A. Pasque (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2015).

Neoliberal Service-Learning

University response to community need is in keeping with the tripartite functions of the university as "the knowledge society: The production of knowledge (research), the transmission of knowledge (education), and the additional training and regional development (service)."[28] The three are meant to synchronously produce a better world. This is, after all, the heart of the Wisconsin Idea that the University of Wisconsin must apply its research to teaching and serving all Wisconsinites.[29] It is also this tandem vision that led Woodrow Wilson as president of Princeton University[30] to proclaim for higher education a responsibility to graduate scholars and researchers who were also productive citizens bent upon improving their communities.

In contrast to this vision, neoliberal service-learning aligns student civic engagement and assumptions of citizenship with the state's interests, so that students willingly "bear the costs of caring for a community" abandoned by the retreating state.[31] Service-learning directs social problems to universities rather than the affected public.[32] The hope is that universities will facilitate community problem solving by applying expertise and human capital. This promise makes commonsensical the state's retreat[33] given that research, teaching, and service are directed toward complicated social problems. Yet service-learning often propels neoliberalism precisely because service is distanced from learning, market forces guide university-community partnerships, and student volunteerism allows for the privatization of the public and dispossession by accumulation. Each of these concerns will be discussed in turn in order to understand why service-learning—despite its commitments

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[28] Simons and Masschelien, "Only Love for the Truth Can Save Us," 143.

[29] Paul D. Carrington and Erika King, "Law and the Wisconsin Idea," *Journal of Legal Education* 47, no. 3 (1997).

[30] Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton for the Nation's Service," Princeton University Press, October 25, 1902, http://infoshare1.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbsc/mudd/online_ex/wilsonline/4dn8nsvc.html.

[31] Mary-Beth Raddon and Barbara Harrison, "Is Service-Learning the Kind Face of the Neo-Liberal University?" *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 45, no. 2 (2015), 141.

[32] Sarah M. Brackmann, "Community Engagement in a Neoliberal Paradigm," *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* 19, no. 4 (2015).

[33] Dion Dennis, "The Shepherd, the Marketer, and the Actuary: Education-Based Service-Learning and Civic Engagement as Neoliberal Governmentalities," in *A Foucault for the 21st Century: Governmentality, Biopolitics, and Discipline in the New Millennium*, ed. Sam Binkley and Jorge Capetillo (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 158–159.

to civic education and university-community partnerships—thrives within neoliberalism.

Service Is Removed from Teaching and Learning

Service-learning done for the sake of practicing service exchanges volunteerism for credit but fails to root service in scholarship. In its ideal form, service-learning meets a community need because doing so best fulfills a course goal. However, students' service hours are too often distanced from course goals and student learning outcomes. Course goals are retrofitted onto service experiences rather than student learning needs informing whether and what service occurs. The learning done via service-learning is too often confined to a supplement to be handled by the community partner rather than an integral part of the course itself. The need to cover course content drives this habit of glossing over the learning done in the service-learning experience.

Service-learning as a technology of learning is additive, meaning that the community experience does not intuitively connect to subject matter discussions in the classroom. Service itself requires examination as an explicit course goal. Yet limitations on faculty time impede efforts to be fully present in students' community experiences and know what needs unpacking in the classroom. Students service hours are scheduled based on community needs and students' commitments. For example, in 2017 the author studied a service-learning course involving students serving as IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistants (VITA) across Alabama.[34] For three months of the semester, students prepared taxes at VITA sites around the state, most of which were open eight hours a day, six days a week. The community partner needed all the help available, and students loved the flexibility of setting their schedules. From a teaching and learning perspective, though, the faculty member cannot be present in the messy everyday of students learning by fulfilling the time-sensitive community need for free tax preparation. Faculty must depend upon students to signal when mis-educative experiences require reckoning. The danger here is that the connections between subject matter and service are presumed obvious and are not interrogated in a routine and rigorous way.

This concern is amplified when faculty avoid explicit reckoning with the scholarship of service, need, citizenship, and responsibility, in favor of their disciplinary background. Tania Michell, David Donahue, and Courtney Young-Law investigate this phenomenon in an undergraduate sociology of

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[34] Megan Snider Bailey, "Why 'Where' Matters: Exploring the Role of Space in Service-Learning," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 24, no. 1 (2017), 38-48.

education course wherein students volunteer at a local elementary school as part of their course experience. They observe that the absence of frank discussions about race meant that the course reified white supremacy.[35] Faculty must model difficult conversations about community needs and service throughout the course, yet this is often uncomfortable for faculty when the conversations required are outside their disciplinary training.

Another way that service can be understood as removed from teaching and learning is by recognizing the pedagogy as a proxy for teaching citizenship. Matthew Crenson and Benjamin Ginsburg argue that service-learning supplanted education about advocacy, teamwork, and electoral involvement in favor of an individualized assumption of citizenship and duty that is in keeping with neoliberalism:

> Traditional civic education tried to teach students that they could help to govern the country along with their fellow citizens just as they govern their classrooms, teams, and schools with their fellow students. Service learning imparts a fundamentally different set of lessons about citizenship. Citizenship is no longer about the collective activity of governing. Students are urged to produce the public services that a voting public once demanded from its government, frequently services that government has abandoned or is not prepared to pay for. Lessons in services have supplanted training for sovereignty.[36]

When volunteerism is the default mechanism for teaching and learning citizenship, students learn that community problems may be left for outsider intervention, even though outsiders provide services for reasons other than a personal and communal stake.[37] The volume of service-learning means that students practice citizenship as volunteerism but do not learn other forms of citizenship including stakeholder dialogue, civil deliberation, and political action.

Market Forces Shape University-Community Partnerships

Service-learning's ascendance dovetails with neoliberal market-university-community relations. Universities cater to employers and donors[38] by providing

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35 Tania D. Mitchell, David M. Donohue, and Courtney Young-Law, "Service-Learning as a Pedagogy of Whiteness," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 45, no. 4 (2012), 612-629.

36 Matthew A. Crenson and Benjamin Ginsburg, *Downsizing Democracy: How America Sidelined Its Citizens and Privatized Its Public* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 6.

37 Kahne and Westheimer, "In Service of What?"

38 Brandon W. Kliewer, "Why the Civic Engagement Movement Cannot Achieve Democratic and Justice Aims," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 19, no. 2 (2013), 72-79.

service-learning opportunities for students, which promise to produce gradu-
ates learned in real-world skills and desiring to invest in their communities as
individual citizens. For example, Raji Swaminathan interviewed community
partner supervisors about their experience with students in a service-learning
course.[39] The community partners supervising service-learning students artic-
ulated a responsibility to train youth for preparation in the neoliberal econ-
omy. He cites one community partner supervisor who said:

> I thought it was a great idea to allow kids to get the hands-on experience, which
> I think very often they don't have when they go to an interview and go to work
> in a real community. … I know in the process of hiring people, getting people
> who normally have minimal skills or low skills and how hard that is. So I want-
> ed to give them the opportunity to get the skills and be prepared for the "real
> world."[40]

Practicing job skills in a community setting fulfills market needs for job candi-
dates adept in time management, cultural competency, and productivity while
also checking the "prior experience required" box common to job applica-
tions in our neoliberal clime.

Thus it is no surprise that corporate terminology including "problem
solving" and "global citizenship" pepper the justifications for including
service-learning in the undergraduate curriculum, which promises the cura-
tion of graduates suited for the twenty-first century marketplace.[41] Students
must consider their education for its entrepreneurial value;[42] thus, they view
service-learning classes as opportunities to gain "a competitive advantage by
helping them develop and perform self-reflection and personal morality, as
well as by stimulating entrepreneurial desires to remake both the self and the
social."[43] Service-learning partnerships prepare students for competitiveness
in our capitalist economy. In other words, market forces drive the university-
community partnerships that service-learning practices.

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[39] Raji Swaminathan, "Educating for the 'Real World': The Hidden Curriculum of
     Community Service-Learning," *Equity and Excellence in Education* 40, no. 2 (2007),
     134-143.
[40] Ibid., 137.
[41] "Learning through Engagement: Service-Learning," College of Coastal Georgia,
     2012, http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2012%20track%20a%20qeps/College%20of%20
     Coastal%20Georgia%20QEP%20Executive%20Summary.pdf, para. 3.
[42] Laura Servage, "The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and the Neo-Liberalization
     of Higher Education: Constructing the 'Entrepreneurial Learner,'" *Canadian Journal
     of Higher Education* 39, no. 2 (2009): 35.
[43] Raddon and Harrison, "Is Service-Learning the Kind Face," 145.

Another way that university-community partnerships might be thought of as market-university-community partnerships is in considering funding sources. Corporations partner with universities and communities in order to garner goodwill, while deflecting responsibility for community problems. This happens through competitive grant programs for limited funding and endowments. For example, the State Farm Companies Foundation funds "service-learning programs that provide students opportunities to connect and apply learning skills from the classroom to address unmet needs that exist in their community" as part of their promise to "make it our business to be like a good neighbor, helping to build safer, stronger, and better educated communities across the United States."[44] Despite the rhetoric, State Farm is not "a good neighbor" but a Fortune 500 company with assets valued at $16.9 billion.[45] State Farm does not fund service-learning simply because community-identified needs are best met in a way that amplifies learning of course goals; instead, State Farm spends $5 million per year funding "service-learning initiative[s] to address issues important to State Farm."[46]

In a request for proposals specific to Florida schools, State Farm articulated the following expectations of the favorable grantee:

> Successful applicants use service learning as a strategy to reach specific academic and behavioral goals for students. Such goals could include raising student academic performance, increasing FCAT scores in specific areas, improving attendance, reducing conflict, fostering career exploration, enhancing school/community collaboration, or as a prevention and intervention strategy for at-risk students.
>
> Activities should directly address identified needs for those serving and served, and apply needed skills and behaviors. For example, having 10th graders who test poorly in reading compose and produce brochures about building code requirements and strategies for disaster mitigation can help educate both the students and the homeowners who receive the brochures.[47]

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[44] "Good Neighbor Citizenship® Company Grants," State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2019, https://www.statefarm.com/about-us/community-involvement/community-grants/good-neighbor-citizenship-grants.

[45] "Company Overview: Fast Facts," State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company, 2019, https://www.statefarm.com/about-us/company-overview/company-profile/fast-facts.

[46] "State Farm Youth Advisory Board Announces Service-Learning Grant Program," America's Promise Alliance, August 15, 2008, https://www.americaspromise.org/news/state-farm-youth-advisory-board-announces-service-learning-grant-program.

[47] "State Farm Florida Service-Learning and Home Safety Initiative Request for Proposals (RFP)," Florida Department of Education, 2005, https://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Rendition-6339/unknown#bmk1.

For State Farm, funding service-learning means intervening in community problems that affect their financial bottom line—disaster preparedness, driver safety, youth driver decision making—in a way that garners good will for the company. Neither a deficit approach to student learning nor the development and dispersal of disaster preparedness brochures address the root causes that make Floridians vulnerable to hurricanes—building codes, poverty, climate change, inadequate transportation, etc. Nor does this service-learning project represent the very best way to fulfill reading course goals. Instead, the service-learning project is funded because corporate sponsorship of learning amounts to a "good deed" or "kind face" veneer for State Farm to continue amassing capital.[48] Corporate grants for service-learning cloak neoliberalism in social responsibility, masking the pattern of harm done, while amplifying surveillance and control.

Service-Learning Benefits Privatization and Dispossession by Accumulation

Service-learning functions as a pedagogical tool employed to teach students; it does not fulfill ministerial duties of producing knowledge or training communities. Service-learning allows for a retreating state by providing a direct service response that muffles and delays the call for policy intervention.[49] Consider, for example, that the rituals of service-learning—characterized by the semester timeframe for introducing students to community problems, teaching students to solve the problems, and allowing students to reflect on their learning experience before moving to other courses and learning experiences (all of which happens in less than sixteen weeks only to restart with a new class of students after a short end-of-semester break)—allow for an ongoing presence of student volunteers contributing direct service in communities as a vehicle for student learning. The neoliberal divestment in social services means that this constant stream of student volunteers become essential personnel to community nonprofit agencies.

For example, Andrea Vernon and Lenoar Foster's multi-case qualitative research study about nonprofit partner perspectives of college student service-learning suggests that many nonprofits are only able to meet community needs with the constant support of college student volunteers in

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48 Raddon and Harrison, "Is Service-Learning the Kind Face," 141.
49 Novella Z. Keith, "Community Service Learning in the Face of Globalization: Rethinking Theory and Practice," *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 11, no. 2 (2005), 5-24.

service-learning classes. One nonprofit director revealed that the continued presence of college student volunteers each semester:

> Was nice for me because I was … basically trying to do it all myself. And, I was able to give some programs to a college student and let them make the schedule and make the calls and recruit in the school so it freed me up time-wise just 'cause it's an after-school program and I was running around with my head cut off there for a while trying to do it all.[50]

Another nonprofit director speaking to Vernon and Foster even admitted that she simply shuts down many community services whenever the local college is not in session, as the breadth of community needs cannot be met in the absence of student volunteers.[51] It is all too typical that students amount to contract workers for nonprofits operating in college towns, filling civic voids on the path toward course credit.

Nelda Pearson, who served on the faculty at Radford University while also serving as executive director for a local nonprofit, notes:

> Community placements often invest heavily in developing student service-learners as competent staff members on whom they can rely. This means that there is a steep learning curve for the first three to five weeks of the semester, and then there is about five to seven weeks of really good work, with two to five weeks of disengagement at the end of the semester. Faculty are used to a semester calendar and feel it as natural. On the other hand, community programs need staff every week all week long, not just when it fits the university calendar.[52]

Community agencies must spend limited time and resources developing projects to interest student volunteers, training new volunteers for short-term efforts, supervising college students, and adapting when the students do not fulfill partner needs.[53] As volunteers, students control a community need and the short-term response. Yet this response only addresses the immediate crisis before the volunteer while also spinning off new crises, as communities lose self-determination with no guarantee that the problem students respond to will be investigated, researched, or intervened upon in any meaningful

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[50] Andrea Vernon and Lenoar Foster, "Nonprofit Agency Perspectives of Higher Education Service Learning and Volunteerism," *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing* 10, no. 2 (2002): 217.

[51] Vernon and Foster, "Nonprofit Agency Perspectives," 217.

[52] Nelda K. Pearson, "Moving from Placement to Community Partner: A Three-Hatted View," *The Journal of Public Affairs* 6, no. Suppl. 1 (2002): 193.

[53] John W. Eby, "Why Service-Learning Is Bad," *Service Learning*, General 27 (1998): 5, http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slceslgen/27.

way. Neoliberalism continues unchecked by public outrage precisely because service-learning temporarily masks the vacuum left by the retreating state and the dissolution of community obligation.

Educators engaging students in service-learning cannot guarantee communities are better off for their students' presence but only that there will be continuous student learning about social problems. Such routinized student involvement in community problems may meet student learning outcomes, but it provides neither knowledge production about community problems nor community training to solve such problems. The effect is a conspicuous and routinized response to community crises without any lasting critique or push back against the conditions that makes such crises possible.

This danger multiplies because service-learning suppresses recognition of community problems, privatization of the public, and divestment of the university's teaching-research-service mission. Outsourcing students to fill voids left by the retreating state solves nothing but appears to respond. Service-learning masks the harm neoliberalism does to the public by:

> Giving the impression that [college student volunteers] are filling the vacuum created by a retreating state. And they are, but in a materially inconsequential way. Their real contribution is that they defuse political anger and dole out as aid or benevolence what people ought to have by right. They alter the public psyche. They turn people into dependent victims and blunt the edges of resistance.[54]

Service-learning provides, in the short-term, services that were once public rights. Doing so cushions the immediate damage of neoliberalism, allowing neoliberalism to flourish unnoticed by the public as assumptions of need and citizenship as individual response come to be seen as commonsensical. The service-learning response to the privatization of the public and the dispossession by accumulation masks control, providing a veneer, which glosses over the harshest aspects of capitalism and allows neoliberalism to remain unchecked.

Conclusion

Dan Butin suggests, "Service-learning speaks to our sense of duty and fairness in the world: Those who can supporting those who cannot, giving opportunities to those left behind."[55] Yet service-learning exists within neoliberalism,

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54   Arundhadti Roy, "The NGO-ization of Resistance," Massalijin, September 4, 2014, http://massalijn.nl/new/the-ngo-ization-of-resistance/.

55   Dan W. Butin, "The Limits of Service-Learning in Higher Education," *The Review of Higher Education* 29, no. 4 (2006): vii.

and the pedagogy articulates a neoliberal assumption of citizenship, need, and response. In this neoliberal paradigm, service is removed from teaching and learning, market forces shape university-community partnerships, and service and learning in community benefit privatization and dispossession by accumulation. Whatever the intent or promise of service-learning, the outcomes benefit private interests. The question is whether service-learning educators will name the damage that their pedagogy supports.

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2. *Convening Publics? Co-Produced Research in the Entrepreneurial University*

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Abstract: The public role of the university is today subject to intense debate, with significant concern that the contemporary university in its entrepreneurial form comes into structural conflict with the wider interests of both students and publics beyond its walls.[1] New ideas of the public university, both normative and dystopian, are being articulated in the research literature[2] but there is a need for empirical inquiry into the novel forms of the university that may be being built through the everyday practices of academics.[3] Drawing on theories of publics as dynamic and assembled around matters of concern/care,[4] this paper asks whether the growing practice of collaborative

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[1] John Holmwood, "The University, Democracy and the Public Sphere," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 38, no. 7 (October 3, 2017): 927–942, https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2016.1220286.

[2] Carolina Guzmán-Valenzuela, "Unfolding the Meaning of Public(s) in Universities: Toward the Transformative University," *Higher Education* 71, no. 5 (May 2016): 667–79, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9929-z. Ronald Barnett, "The Coming of the Ecological University," *Oxford Review of Education* 37, no. 4 (August 1, 2011): 439–55, https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2011.595550.

[3] Maarten Simons, "The 'Renaissance of the University' in the European Knowledge Society: An Exploration of Principled and Governmental Approaches," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 26, no. 5 (October 4, 2007): 433–47, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-007-9054-2.

[4] Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (January 2004): 225–248, https://doi.org/10.1086/421123. Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, "Matters of Care in

and co-produced research is contributing to the development of a new form of public university. The paper is based on a six-year participant observation of a major UK program of collaborative research that aimed to "connect communities with research." Based on 100 interviews and a survey of 309 participants, the paper argues that the publics that are being convened by this program have the potential both to immunize the university against more disruptive and sustained reflection on its public and societal role, and at the same time, to nurture new hybrid forms of public university that are embodied in academic and civil society identities rather than institutions. It concludes by arguing that the new public university might be understood as a place where multiple publics are convened and where the radical latent potential of the institution lies in putting these different publics into dialogue.

Introduction

The public role of the university is subject to ongoing negotiation, taking distinctive forms across different periods, countries and economic and political regimes.[5] The nature of this "public" role is shaped variously by: the financing, ownership and governance structure of a university; its educational mission, in particular its entry and access arrangements; its commitment to research for public or commercial benefit; and its capacity to create a "public sphere" or conscience for critical inquiry independent of state and market.[6] Today, the debate over this public role is intensifying in the context of increased marketization, positional competition and academic capitalism and in response to urgent demands for the university to play a more active role in addressing global challenges such as climate change. There is concern, however, that the contemporary university in its entrepreneurial form[7] may

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Technoscience: Assembling Neglected Things," *Social Studies of Science* 41, no. 1 (February 2011): 85–106, https://doi.org/10.1177/0306312710380301. Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein, "The Public and Its University: Beyond Learning for Civic Employability?," *European Educational Research Journal* 8, no. 2 (June 2009): 204–217, https://doi.org/10.2304/eerj.2009.8.2.204.

[5]   Simon Marginson, "Putting 'Public' Back into the Public University," *Thesis Eleven* 84, no. 1 (February 1, 2006): 44–59, https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513606060519.

[6]   See Guzmán-Valenzuela, "Unfolding the Meaning of Public(s) in Universities." for a discussion of the different public roles of the university.

[7]   Simon Marginson, "Putting 'Public' Back into the Public University," *Thesis Eleven* 84, no. 1 (February 1, 2006): 44–59, https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513606060519.

be becoming more public harm than public good.[8] Indeed, the interests of universities acting as corporate entities are coming into structural conflict with the wider interests of both students and the publics beyond their walls.[9]

In response, both nostalgic and normative visions of a new public university have been mooted: such as Collini's defense of the autonomous university driven by limitless inquiry;[10] Barnett's utopian concept of the ecological university working alongside social actors to create a better world;[11] and Guzman-Valenzuela's call for a "transformative" university[12] characterized by reflexivity about its public role.[13] Such proposals, however, tend to lack, as Biesta et al argue,[14] sustained empirical inquiry into how the lived reality of the public university is currently being contested and reimagined on a day-to-day basis. As such, they may not identify the novel or hybrid[15] forms of "publicness" that are emerging through changing practices of teaching and research.

One site in which the concept of the "public" university is subject to intense negotiation on the ground today is in the research arena, specifically in the relationships that are being required and forged between academics and "publics" in the design and conduct of research. In the European Research Area, for example, the practice of "Responsible Research and Innovation" is proposed as a means of building a new relationship between academics and society, in which scientists are variously understood to be responding to "*public values and concerns*," "*bridging gaps between science, research and innovation communities and society at large*," and addressing "*societal needs and interests.*"[16] In the United Kingdom, the Economic and Social Research Council's definition of high-quality research makes the case that "*active*

[8]   Stuart Tannock, "Learning to Plunder: Global Education, Global Inequality and the Global City," *Policy Futures in Education* 8, no. 1 (March 2010): 82–98, https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2010.8.1.82.

[9]   Holmwood, "The University, Democracy and the Public Sphere."

[10] Collini, Stefan, *What Are Universities For?* (London: Penguin, 2012).

[11] Barnett, "The Coming of the Ecological University."

[12] Guzmán-Valenzuela, "Unfolding the Meaning of Public(s) in Universities."

[13] See also Simon Marginson, "Public/Private in Higher Education: A Synthesis of Economic and Political Approaches," *Studies in Higher Education* 43, no. 2 (February 2018): 322–337, https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2016.1168797.

[14] Gert Biesta et al., "What Is the Public Role of the University? A Proposal for a Public Research Agenda," *European Educational Research Journal* 8, no. 2 (June 2009): 249–254, https://doi.org/10.2304/eerj.2009.8.2.249.

[15] Simons, "The 'Renaissance of the University' in the European Knowledge Society."

[16] See, for example, the long list of EU funded Nanotechnology projects that are setting out to promote "public engagement" in the research process: http://gonano-project.eu/projects-about-citizens-engagement/.

two-way dialogue and collaboration between social scientists and potential users throughout the research process and beyond is crucial."[17]

What is not yet understood, however, is whether such engagement between science and society, or between academics and "publics" in the research process is leading to the creation of new forms of democratic knowledge production capable of underpinning a new form of public university.[18] Or whether such activities act as a form of "immunization"[19] *against* unwanted interference in the core business of university work. In other words, does it serve as a useful inoculation against the potential incursions of unruly publics into the world of increasingly entrepreneurial universities accountable more to business interests than to wider society.[20]

This paper takes this question as its focus and explores the implications of collaborative or "publicly engaged" research for the development of new forms of "public" university. It discusses, on the basis of a detailed ethnographic study, the example of the UK Research Council's Connected Communities Programme. This program, which ran from 2010 to 2018, constituted a £40m+ investment in over 300 "collaborative" research projects across the United Kingdom. The paper asks how this program convened publics, what characterized those publics, and the potential of the research practices exemplified in the program to generate new forms of public university today.

Convening Publics

The "public" imagined in the idea of a public university has been variously understood as: the population of a given country or region represented by the state (as in the governmental tradition of European research universities[21]); the people participating in practices of encounter and dialogue that emerge

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[17] See ESRC strategic plan: *http://www.esrc.ac.uk/strategicplan/impact/default.aspx*, accessed July 2018.

[18] David Watson, Robert Hollister, Susan E. Stroud, and Elizabeth Babcock, *The Engaged University: International Perspectives on Civic Engagement* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011). See also Richard Watermeyer, "Challenges for University Engagement in the UK: Towards a Public Academe?" *Higher Education Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (2011): 386–410.

[19] Simons and Masschelein, "The Public and Its University."

[20] Jenny Andersson and Erik Westholm, "Closing the Future: Environmental Research and the Management of Conflicting Future Value Orders," *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, August 16, 2018, 016224391879126, https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243918791263.

[21] Simons, "The 'Renaissance of the University' in the European Knowledge Society."

beyond state and market interference (as in the concept of the public sphere[22]); as what Collini refers to as those "mythical beasts" the "tax payers"[23] who are invoked by governments as publics to whom universities should be accountable; or simply the body of people who are defined in the negative by *not being inside* the university, in other words, the profane or lay "others" who are distinguished from the priestly caste[24] of the academy (as in much of the literature on "public engagement").

This variety of interpretations points to the fact that a "public" does not exist ready formed to be "engaged with" as a single body and to whom a university can be answerable. Instead, scholarship deriving both from Dewey and from Science and Technology Studies suggests that publics are better understood as plural and dynamic; as being summoned into being; as gatherings of people, things, objects and ideas convened around a matter of concern.[25] In this perspective, a public is understood as being brought into existence to address unacknowledged issues, this acts as a prompt for learning and the discovery of new information, which in turn brings new actors into the debate. Such publics are often but not exclusively formed by controversy[26] and are understood, in these traditions, to include heterogeneous actors—people and artifacts, processes and ideas.[27]

Drawing on these traditions, Simons and Masschelein argue that a process of convening such publics should be understood as precisely the practice that would justify the conception of a university *as* public university:

> [the university is] a place and time where research and teaching can be linked in very specific practices that actually gather humans and things, students and research objects, and constitute a local public exposed to matters of concern. From this viewpoint, *the public university thus is a place where people and things gather to create a public*. [my italics][28]

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[22] Holmwood, *The University, Democracy and the Public Sphere*. Holmwood draws on Habermas' theorization of the public sphere in Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (with an introduction by Thomas McCarthy). (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

[23] Collini, Stefan, *What Are Universities For?* (London: Penguin, 2012).

[24] Nigel Thrift, "The University of Life," *New Literary History* 47, no. 2–3 (2016): 399–417, https://doi.org/10.1353/nlh.2016.0020.

[25] Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?"

[26] Michel Callon, Pierre Lascoumes, and Yannick Barthe, *Acting in an Uncertain World: An Essay on Technical Democracy*, Inside Technology (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

[27] Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?"

[28] Simons and Masschelein, "The Public and Its University," 214.

Simons and Masschelein make this argument in relation to the educational mission of the university, and to the role of the teacher as initiator of such processes. But this conception of a public university might be equally applied to research practices.[29] If we seek to understand the implications of calls for co-produced research in the European Research Area we might, therefore, ask: "what is the nature of the publics that are assembled through these research processes?" and "what matters of concern initiate such gatherings?"

More recently, feminist scholarship, specifically the work of de la Bellacasa, has further developed this theorization of publics as dynamic and assembled by arguing that to identify something as a matter of concern around which a public convenes, must mean also to identify it as a matter of *care*. From this perspective, understanding how publics are convened is also a question of asking: "who is caring for this matter, who needs to be cared for in this situation and what can be done to care for this matter in future?" [30] Such a focus draws attention to the affective and ethical practices involved in convening publics.

In the rest of this paper, therefore, I draw on these ideas in order to interrogate how publics are being constituted by the development of collaborative research partnerships between universities and communities outside their walls. I am interested in who and what is assembled in these processes, what matters of concern and care are identified and by whom, and what insights this may offer us into how the "public university" is being produced through such "collaborative" research practices.

Research Design

The paper takes as its focus a major research program led by the United Kingdom's Arts and Humanities Research Council on behalf of all of the UK's Research Councils. The *Connected Communities Programme* is a ten-year investment in collaborative research activities which has funded 327 projects since 2010. These range from smaller six-month scoping projects (under £100k) to five-year large grants (up to £2m). The projects represent a highly diverse and sometimes competing set of collaborative research

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[29]   Arguably, Simons and Masschelein's conception of convening publics through education is one that reconnects the research and teaching practice of university teachers and conceives of education as a process of inquiry through the constitution of publics. My focus, however, is on those practices that are conceived primarily through the lens of research and scholarship rather than through teaching. There is, of course, important overlap between these two perspectives that would merit further inquiry.

[30]   de la Bellacasa, "Matters of Care in Technoscience," 93.

traditions that include: action research, history from below, participatory arts, co-production, responsible innovation, participatory action research, community arts, feminist and critical disability studies.[31] Projects in the program are equally diverse, having been selected through both open calls and a series of thematic invitations on the topics of environment, health, creative citizenship, diversity and dissent, and co-production. As such they include everything from philosophically informed inquiries with anglers into the utopian community nature of fishing, to collaborations between academics, citizen journalists and national regulatory bodies to understand hyper-local journalism. They include community-led inquiries into the untold stories of the children, women and minority ethnic soldiers of the first world war, as well as partnerships between local authorities, medical practitioners and artists addressing issues of dementia care. They have engaged academics from disciplines across the arts, humanities and social sciences (as well as some engineers and health practitioners) and partners as diverse as youth workers, national ministries, local charities and internationally recognized cultural organizations. The universities involved in the projects reflect the familiar weighting toward research-intensive universities of much high-status research funding in the United Kingdom;[32] importantly, however, a number of post-1992 institutions with long track records in community engagement were also strongly represented in the program funding.

Of particular significance to this paper, this research program can be understood as perhaps the first in the United Kingdom to be bound together not so much by a substantive topic area (the question of research into "community" after all, invites a broad range of focal areas, approaches and disciplines), but by a methodological commitment to building knowledge in partnership between universities and publics. As the program itself proposed, its underpinning assumption was that "*By connecting research expertise, knowledge, understanding, and approaches from across the research base with the knowledge, experience and assets of communities, the Programme generates new research insights and meaningful legacies for communities.*"[33]

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[31] Keri Facer and K Pahl, *Valuing Interdisciplinary Collaborative Research: Beyond Impact* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2017), 5–15.

[32] Claire E Alexander, Jason Arday, and Runnymede Trust, Aiming Higher: Race, Inequality and Diversity in the Academy, 2015.

[33] Quote taken from the Connected Communities Festival Brochure, 2014, available here: https://ahrc.ukri.org/research/fundedthemesandprogrammes/crosscouncil-programmes/connectedcommunities/visionandoverview/ (last accessed May 29, 2019).

Understanding the research practices, relationships and institutional changes that emerged in this program, therefore, may help to develop our understanding of the way that universities are able (or not) to convene publics today through such collaborative research practices. The analysis in this paper is based on sustained participant observation in the program as well as more formal reflective data collection processes. The participant observation was conducted in my role as one of two Leadership Fellows for the Connected Communities Programme from 2012 to 2018. Alongside this, over two years, Dr. Bryony Enright and I conducted semistructured reflective interviews, surveys and workshops with program participants. This paper is therefore based upon:

- **Fieldnotes and program documentation**, including funding calls, applications and meeting records from participant observation in the program as leadership fellow from 2012 to 2018.
- **In-depth interviews with 70 academics and 30 "community partners"** who were participants in the Connected Communities Programme. Interviews were semistructured and lasted on average for an hour. Sampling was purposive in order to ensure diversity in participation. Academic interviewees included Principal Investigators, Co-investigators, research assistants sampled from across the program to ensure diversity in research topic, disciplinary focus, geographical location and institutional affiliation, as well as an even spread of experience and a gender balance. Community interviewees included longstanding stable cultural organizations as well as freelance artists and community activists. Sampling was opportunistic for community interviewees. Notably, not all community partners had time to be interviewed. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The interview schedule focused on participants' biography, the development and activities of the project they were participating in, their values and beliefs about research and their reflections on the legacy of the projects.
- **An online survey** that was distributed to Principal Investigators for circulation to all project teams addressing the same topics as the interview schedules. This led to 309 completed responses.
- **Year-long detailed case studies of two projects** selected for their commitment to "deep" co-production and proximity for day-to-day observation. The case studies comprised participation in project team meetings, informal conversations and formal interviews with project participants, site visits to research activities, attendance at workshops and at public performances and exhibitions from the projects.

> Project meetings and formal interviews with team members were digitally recorded and transcribed, all other activities were recorded in fieldnotes. The case studies were conducted in the period 2014–2016, but informal observation continued to 2018.
>
> - **Two workshops** held in 2015, one with 40 individuals from independent research organizations participating in the program, such as museums and galleries; one with 59 community partners drawn from community action and heritage sectors. The focus of the workshops was on lessons learned about collaboration between universities and partners. Workshop materials were digitally captured for later analysis, all plenary discussions were recorded through fieldnotes.

The data generated are multimodal: as well as written transcripts of interviews and fieldnotes, they also include photographs of exhibitions, performances and events, copies of print materials and artifacts generated by projects, as well as websites and online materials. This gathering of multimodal data reflects the idea that publics are constituted not only by the people who are convened, but also by, around and through material and technological actors. The analysis for this paper was "iterative-inductive";[34] in other words, it was both theoretically driven, taking key elements of Simons, Masschelein and Bellacasa's analyses as sensitizing concepts, and inductively generated, looking for themes and instances in the data that might emerge to shed light on the idea of the public university. The discussion here is organized around two questions that draw attention respectively to: the convening power of the program as a whole; and the convening practices of individual projects around matters of care.

Who Constitutes the Publics of the Connected Communities Programme?

The constituting of a public relates both to the question of *who* convenes a public around a matter of concern, and to the question of who and what constitutes (makes up) that public. In other words: who or what defines the matter of concern and who and what is assembled?

At the level of the funding program, the identification of the matter of concern—"community"—was initially framed by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Far from being a popular democratic initiative associated with an unaddressed concern (as per Dewey's definition of public formation),

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[34] Karen O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods* (London: Routledge, 2005/2012), 1–28.

the program was in fact launched shortly after a new conservative-liberal democrat coalition government was elected. The conservative party's campaign slogan had invoked the idea of a "big society" in which communities, newly invigorated by a climate of economic austerity, would take on the roles of a receding state. At initial workshops for the Connected Communities program, however, to which predominantly academics were invited, the association of "community" with a governmental and university-led agenda was strongly contested. Academics with a track record of participatory and action research actively challenged the authority of the research council to frame a program researching community without the involvement of communities themselves, specifically questioning whether a definition of "community" as matter of concern could be led from within the academy. In so doing, they reframed the concept of "community" from a cozily hegemonic term to a controversial topic, subject to competing interpretations, requiring debate, different voices and actors, and different spaces and practices of inquiry. In so doing, the question "who researches community and how" itself became a matter of concern for the program.

These early criticisms and this matter of concern led to new actors being assembled around the program. By its final years, half of the participants in the workshops (organized to develop new research proposals in response to funding calls) were individuals working outside universities; two stage funding models where "community partners" and academics were intended to work together to develop initial ideas for joint research proposals had been initiated; and grant applications were assessed by panels including community partners, against criteria of community participation in the leadership and shaping of project proposals. What is notable about this shift is that a small number of academics drawing on long experience and deep intellectual traditions[35] were successful in redirecting the processes of a multi-million-pound funding program and in redrawing the boundaries of who constituted the public concerned with this inquiry. One of the participants in that early workshop recounts some of the changes that took place:

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[35] The practices of collaborative research have deep philosophical, methodological and ethical foundations upon which participants in the programme were able to draw. See, for example, Olav Eikeland, "Action Research—Applied Research, Intervention Research, Collaborative Research, Practitioner Research, or Praxis Research?," *International Journal of Action Research*, no. 8 (2012): 9–44, Michelle Fine, "Just Methods in Revolting Times," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 13, no. 4 (October 1, 2016): 347–365, Sarah Banks et al., "Everyday Ethics in Community-Based Participatory Research," *Contemporary Social Science* 8, no. 3 (November 1, 2013): 263–277.

there was a big debate at that [workshop] about how could you pay them [community partners], what could you pay them, why couldn't they be Co-Is. So as time has gone by it's become much more the norm and AHRC is now not only allowing some of that, but actually enforcing some of that. It is interesting. (Stephanie, Senior Professor, PI on large grant)

The publics convened to collaborate on the research therefore now came to include new actors: they included groups and organizations without the economic resources to supply the usual "funding in kind" typically needed as a passport to participation in public research; they encompassed communities and groups who needed small pots of money for travel, for child care, for food to allow them to join research projects; they encompassed institutional strategies for meeting Home Office requirements on who was eligible to "work" in the United Kingdom, enabling those of more ambivalent citizenship or in more precarious forms of employment to participate. Such processes of public formation also aligned and mobilized wider actors within university systems—new online forms, new passport photocopying systems, new petty cash payment procedures, new HR and finance processes.[36] One researcher on the program describes the sorts of material and organizational practices that convening such publics entailed:

So we've got an event […] for example where we're bringing all our young people in from the different projects together... we have to be crystal clear about the budget... I've got to pay for a carer's shift, somebody to go and accompany the young adults with learning disabilities because they can't go on their own… But then … he wants to go, and I said "well I don't have a budget to pay you to go […] Can you afford to get the bus to the bus stop?" "Right no, okay. How are we giving you your bus pass?" (Bernadette, Senior Professor, PI on large grant)

New and demonstrably more economically diverse publics were therefore convened as part of the day-to-day practices of these projects, compared with the publics imagined by such programs before.

Despite this, however, many of the publics convened in and through the program and its projects also had characteristics that reflected the make-up of the university demographic in the UK, particularly in relation to ethnicity, educational capital and economic resource. One community researcher and activist, for example, commenting on the absence of Black and Minority Ethnic participants in research development workshops argued that these

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36   Katherine Dunleavy, Michael Noble, and Heidi Andrews, "The Emergence of the Publicly Engaged Research Manager," *Research for All* 3, no. 1 (February 21, 2019): 105–124.

events were "*codified by whiteness*" leading to a "*fetishisation of ethnicity.*"[37] Others who successfully received funding, experienced participation in these "publics" as moments of alienation and exclusion:

> Walking into these Connected Communities spaces to find ourselves alone, feeling marginalised, sticking out like sore thumbs, so often being that bit younger, many of us Black people—often the only Black people in the room. We often wondered why we were there … to meet Connected Communities Programme targets? To perform 'community' for the majority of non-community participants? At its very worst we felt like performing monkeys, the "exotic other."[38]

Another youth worker, who played an active role in a number of projects, argued that the design and promotion of program workshops necessarily privileged those organizations with high levels of academic capital, resource and existing social ties with the university: "*it was the low hanging fruit that they got—they got the ones that were already around the peripheries of academia. […] these are groups in the main that would perhaps have known about universities or have had some connection with universities previously*" (Community Partner, Youth Worker). This echoes the findings of the CONSIDER project, which studied all seven European Union Framework Programme projects involving civil society and identified that 50% of the Civil Society Organisation partners involved in collaboration themselves had PhDs and over 60% were participating in other research projects[39]. Equally, 50% of the community partners who completed surveys for the Connected Communities program had themselves worked in or with universities before.

In seeking to make connections beyond these existing networks, a pattern emerged in which community partners who became connected to the program as formal collaborators tended to play a mediating role between the university and the "wider public." It would, for example, commonly be the partnering civil society organization—such as the local arts organization, cultural institution, community group or charity—who in fact convened a wider "grassroots" public around the matter of concern, rather than

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[37] David Bryan, Katherine Dunleavy, Keri Facer, Charles Forsdick, Omar Kahn, Mhemooda Malek, Karen Salt, and Kristy Warren, *Common Cause Research: Building Research Collaborations Between Universities and Black and Minority Ethnic Communities* (Bristol: Connected Communities, 2018), 43.

[38] Refugee Youth Report to the Arts and Humanities Research Council, quoted in Facer and Enright, *Creating Living Knowledge*, 61.

[39] Martine Revel, Emilie Spruyt, and Thomas Soubiran, *Civil Society Organisations in Designing Research Governance, D 2.2 FP7 Survey Report* (Lille: CONSIDER Project, 2013), 14.

the academics themselves. This practice reflects these organizations' typically greater knowledge of grassroots communities and longstanding relationships of trust and engagement. It does, however, highlight the dependence of universities upon such mediating organizations to play this critical role. This "gap" between universities and wider publics, and the use of "community partners" to mediate, moreover, risks positioning universities not as collaborators but as "funders," and means that partnership relationships have the potential to fracture into instrumentalism and contractualism, in which the notional "public" is leveraged and monetized to generate funding:

> we were hoping that people would turn up to these meetings in order for them to be enough people to participate to make it worth their while so we could get our money from the University, do you know what I mean? (Community Partner, Independent Arts Organisation)

> I'm in the middle and I can't explain to local people what funders and local authorities and subsidisers [...] —how they're couching this experience and the language they're using—I can't reveal that to people. You know I can't say that I'm writing a bid to do a celebration by saying that you're 20th from the bottom of the poverty indices—I can't say that. So there's this invisible line that exists between a funder and the people—there's a triangle. There's a conversation between me and them, and there's a conversation between me and them. (Researcher/Community Activist)

These cases risk reproducing the hierarchies of knowledge, participation and power that co-produced research is intended to overcome, only this time with a limited number of selected (similar, safe) community partners now "included" as formal partners in order to justify the claim that the university is "publicly engaged." In such cases, it is difficult not to see these projects as immunizing the university against more unruly democratic public practices.

That such instrumentalism might occur, however, is not surprising given the institutional conditions in which both civil society groups and universities are working today. Holmwood argues that the concept of the public university that emerged in the mid-20th century was associated with the emergence of relatively stable associational life, with the university as arbiter of professional knowledge and standards, and with a reciprocal partnership between a strong civil society and a collegiate university infrastructure.[40] Studying this research program, the changing nature of both civil society (at least in the United Kingdom) and of university employment practices is clear. The publics that were convened around the projects of the Connected Communities

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[40] Holmwood, "The University, Democracy and the Public Sphere."

Programme were convened on the community side by organizations who are often economically precarious, and if not, at least regularly used to competing for funding and resources and whose engagement with research is often directed toward securing future funding for core activity in a culture of economic austerity. On the university side, a large part of the day-to-day labor of these projects is carried out by research assistants, equally precariously employed, with hybrid identities built through work both in the community and in the academy.[41] The stability and longevity of both civil society and university partners in these collaborations, therefore, can no longer be assumed. Publics are being convened and made in highly dynamic situations in which people are moving, institutions are changing and commitments are short term and shepherded through funding calls or competitive tendering for services.

The matter of concern "who gets to research community?" that became a focus for this program, therefore, was a question not only of knowledge and of power but also of access to scarce economic resources around which there was increasing competition. Structurally different from the associational and professional partnerships identified by Holmwood, then, the publics created by these projects are dynamic, shifting, stratified and evanescent—coming and going with the funding and the matter of concern. When these "new publics" were successfully brought into being, they highlighted the inequalities of wealth, social capital and ethnicity that characterized the so-called "public" university of professional and associational life of the late twentieth century and began to open up new forms of relationship and encounter. But they also made visible the vulnerabilities and fragility of new publics premised upon limited and short-term funding and highly dynamic and fluid staffing in organizations.

Convening Publics Around Matters of Care

The competition for economic and positional advantage that was evident in these publics, however, does not obscure the fact that projects were also

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41 Andrew Nadolny and Suzanne Ryan, "McUniversities Revisited: A Comparison of University and McDonald's Casual Employee Experiences in Australia," *Studies in Higher Education* 40, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 142–157, https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.818642; Bryony Enright and Keri Facer, "Developing Reflexive Identities through Collaborative, Interdisciplinary and Precarious Work: The Experience of Early Career Researchers," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 15, no. 5 (October 20, 2017): 621–634, https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2016.1199319.

convened around recognizable matters of care. Indeed, the civil society organizations who played an active mediating role in many projects, were motivated by deep commitment to people, places, causes, and actions. This took many forms, from the communities congregating around an ancient hillfort in Wales characterized by love and care for the ancient monument and the stories that it told them about their history; to the activist on a council estate in Edinburgh whose 40-year battle to provide good health care and facilities for his community was proudly in evidence as he walked me around the new health-center he'd developed, and who refused to take funding from any project he was involved with given his previous experience of the negative effects of dependence on external and ultimately precarious state funding in the 1980s. Care was also evident in the international community of birdwatchers brought together to create the first international archive of cultural stories of birds tied by their migration patterns; and in the mothers of the Somali community of Bristol working together with community artists to intervene in the food cultures of the city. Such care for people, places, history and community has a powerful convening force that is capable of shifting the logic of research projects from instrumental exchange to deep, affective commitment to an issue that comes to exceed project boundaries.

Here it is helpful to focus on an individual project to exemplify this process: The Tangible Memories project was developed as a collaboration between academics in the disciplines of computer science, history and education in partnership with local artists, and specialists in the care of older adults living with dementia. The funding call invited applications to develop digital tools to support community development. The proposal that this group put together was to explore the use of "tangible technologies" (digital technology embedded in material objects) to support the creation of community in care homes for older adults living with dementia. As the project developed, however, the deep emotional commitment of the Chief Executive of the charity involved in the project, became clear. The problems of adults living in these homes was reframed not only as matter of fact and concern, but as a matter of care. As he explained:

> there's people [in care homes] walking round going "These aren't my clothes" you know. And you think, in a civilised society how is this possible? So I started off on the naïve assumption that care homes are measured on all kinds of things, and quality of life is going to be fairly towards the top of that list. And it became apparent that quality of life is not only not on the list, it's not even properly defined. So nobody even has measured it yet, so it's a long way from being on the list … little elements of it are. So you know I'm fuelled as you can tell by a bit of passion, a bit of injustice if you like. (CEO Community Partner, Arts and Dementia Organisation)

While the group was convened by the university around an initial broad topic and set of technical possibilities, the matter of care at stake in this field was articulated and made real by this partner. He reframed the focus of the project as being the quality of life for residents in care homes and made clear the urgent need to address this given the lack of engagement with this issue by the professionals and authorities working in the field. The project, from this point on, gained an urgency and a focus that came to encompass not only the project team, but the workers in the care homes, the residents involved in the project, as well as a wide range of other interested parties who came to learn from the innovations (only tangentially digital) that the project came to invent. What was noticeable in observing this project, was that a collective common concern—the mutual concern for these older adults—served to equalize relations between all those who came to be involved, and to actively draw out highly diverse sets of skills and knowledge to inventively explore how the issue might be addressed. New knowledge—in fields as diverse as folklore, dementia care, history and gerontology—emerged from this work, alongside tangible and cutting-edge developments of practice.

It is worth returning here to Simon and Masschelein's definition of the process of convening a public:

> People are transformed into a public when confronted with issues that are not being taken care of by the existing private and official institutions and experts. The public, therefore, is a group of people who are exposed to an issue that cannot be appropriated by the available expertise and official (governance) agencies. In other words, something becomes a matter of public concern because it is not and cannot be dealt with in the given order of society. And because within the given order of society no one is able to transform the issue into a problem that can be solved or a need that can be responded to, the public is always a public of equals. […] such a public is always a public in view of particular issues.[42]

In the Tangible Memories project, as with others that have built relationships of equality around deep commitment to matters of care, it is possible to see the real potential of these collaborative projects, and therefore of universities, to convene a public in these terms.

Such publics of equals, moreover, have other effects; in particular, the formation of deep friendships and trust between the collaborators that facilitates much deeper forms of collaboration. As Chambers has observed elsewhere of her research practice in Canada, working together on matters of care necessarily requires researchers to disrupt and exceed institutional boundaries and enter a world of affective relationships:

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42   Simons and Masschelein, "The Public and Its University," 212.

> My relationship with the women I work with on this project extends far beyond the boundaries of researcher collaboration into the tentatively more intimate territories of friendship and apprenticeship.[43]

As Claire, a participant in the "Starting from Values" project in the Connected Communities Programme observed: "*The trust we have in friendship is something that is enabling […] particularly of thought, creating this ability for thought and creative thought and deep thought.*" Such friendships exceed project boundaries, both engendering commitments over long periods of time and creating networks that act as latent resources for future collaboration. As two other project participants on the program observed:

> Well like all relationships and friendships, they don't have to be consistent and still there all the time […] you've built those relationships and that nexus of contacts if you like and friends and people you can dive into pools, amazing pools of knowledge and wealth that can help you and you can help them as well. (Fred, Project Manager, independent national research organisation)

> To some extent you go to communities on projects that they have finished, because you develop a friendship and partnership. So I'm still visiting places that the project has already finished. So that's outside the academic work and outside any ... yes plan. (Austin, PI and Co-I)

Such relationships can be seen as forming the raw material and relationships for the emergence of future publics;[44] fluid and dynamic they are a latent resource for situations in which future matters of concern may become pressing and urgent. Take, for example, the friendship that was developed over several years of project-based collaborations between a leading female community activist in the north of England and a leading female literacy professor. These projects enabled them to develop deep trust and mutually respectful ways of working around girls' literacy practices in the Muslim community of the city. When a major crisis involving social care, young girls and the "Muslim community" emerged in the region, these two friends were able to act quickly and responsively to convene a group of actors able to challenge the initial public accounts and policy prescriptions emerging from government,

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[43] Cynthia Chambers, "Research That Matters: Finding A Path with Heart," *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* 2, no. 1 (2004): 19.

[44] My thanks to one of the anonymous reviewer who drew my attention also to Danielle Allen's work on political friendship and the potential for friendship to act as a defining feature of public encounters. See Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship since Brown v Board of Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

and to propose new approaches that would listen to and respect the ideas and opinions of, in particular, Muslim women in the region.[45]

Understanding the implications for the public university of the collaborative research in such programs, therefore, means understanding the affective relationships that develop and that forge new commitments that exceed the boundaries of funded research projects and institutional roles. Such friendships and the mutual knowledge exchange they generate creates an urgency that engages new actors around an emerging problem. They lay the foundation for a network of resources that can be mobilized rapidly in response to the emergence of future matters of concern.

The Public University Today: Convening Contradictory Publics

Simons and Masschelein ask: *Do we need time and a place to deal with matters of concern? If we agree that we do, perhaps the de-immunised or com-munised university could be that place and time.*[46] In this paper, I have asked whether practices of collaborative research in which academics are encouraged to partner with communities in the development of research inquiry might form a foundation for such a "com-munised" university. After all, a program called "Connected Communities" seeking to facilitate collaborations between universities and communities in mutual inquiry should, one would hope, offer a route toward a new form of public university.

The analysis in this paper suggests that a new form of "public university" is indeed emerging through these projects, one that has the potential to draw in new actors to the processes of research and to convene new and more democratic publics around matters of concern. This embodied public university can be understood as dynamic, fluid, affective and distributed across relationships of friendship, personal affection and respect. It convenes publics around care, equality and a mutual commitment to learning. Such a public university is well-suited to changing institutional structures and pressures, adaptable and responsive to emerging issues; it has the qualities of fluidity and amorphousness characteristic of liquid modernity. Indeed, the relationships developed through these projects have formed the basis for a wide range of other projects and partnerships, working in similarly embodied and relational ways, under new funding schemes.

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[45] Zanib Rasool, "Collaborative Working Practices: Imagining Better Research Partnerships," *Research for All* 1, no. 2 (July 15, 2017): 310–322, https://doi.org/10.18546/RFA.01.2.08.

[46] Simons and Masschelein, "The Public and Its University," 214

The very embodiment of this emerging form of public university in individual actors, however, also demonstrates its potential fragility. In conditions in which the emotional labor of care not only struggles for recognition but is often subject of disdain in the contemporary academy, and in which academic labor is better understood as alienated[47] than autonomous, there is no guarantee that such work is sustainable for the individuals involved. Indeed, exhaustion and anxiety about institutional position were key features of many of our interviews alongside the clear joy and passion for the work. Moreover, as Barnett observes in his analysis of the "liquid" university;[48] such embodied practices, without associated institutional buy-in or coherence, may lead to tensions within the institution. Indeed, there may be profound contradictions between these academics working with and alongside civil society actors and others in the same institution, working with and for elite economic interests.[49]

The public university emerging under these conditions then, might better be understood as a university that is simultaneously convening many, potentially contradictory, publics. The risk that must be recognized, of course, is that given the imbalances in power and funding that different forms of research attract, the sorts of research reported here will simply serve to immunize the entrepreneurial university as a whole against the need to ask more fundamental questions about its corporate commitment to convening and engaging with those publics who cannot pay to participate in research. As a relatively small investment[50] a program like this risks acting as a palliative, a cover for institutions increasingly detached from the communities beyond their walls, and a refuge for academics seeking to embody particular forms of publicness that cannot survive elsewhere in the university.

Such refuges, however, can also be understood as niches for nurturing new public identities among academics and civil society actors who together are beginning to develop the everyday institutional practices necessary for working within and between the precarious, stratified and competitive realities of both civil society and universities today. As one participant in the program argued:

> The CC program completely changed the way that I think about research. I was quite new to it anyway, having entered academia in a less conventional way

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[47] Richard Hall, *The Alienated Academic* (New York, NY: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2018).

[48] Barnett, "The Coming of the Ecological University."

[49] Tannock, "Learning to Plunder."

[50] The Connected Communities Programme budget of £40m over 10 years pales into insignificance in comparison, for example, with the overall budget of £400m a year for the UK Space Agency and an annual national UK research budget of nearly £8bn.

(experience, rather than a PHD). Being a Co-I [joint project lead] on the large grant project […] was a kind of 'training' for then being a PI [Principal Investigator] on my own community-involved projects. I designed a couple of GCRF projects since in a very collaborative way. […] This has worked very well, and people have been interested in this approach for sustainable development. This work has fed into [an] exploration of mobilising indigenous knowledge. I attribute all of this to the CC ethos. Totally transformative, and particularly useful in the fraught area of development! I can't imagine working in any other way now. (Co-I large grant, personal email)

Conclusion

Where might these emerging practices take us? What forms of public university might we see growing out of these fluid relationships of care as well as these institutional practices of immunization? The language of "co-production," taken seriously, provides both epistemological and methodological challenges and resources to contemporary academic practice. Its adoption, even as a form of lip-service, is potentially a troubling one for traditional patterns of authority in research programs. It may begin, even in science and engineering disciplines (where the difficulties of epistemic access by nonspecialists to complex forms of knowledge is often used as justification to restrict decision-making to "the experts") to create the basis for competing claims to legitimacy and value[51].

Where collaborative research programs are cognisant of the fact that they are *convening* rather than simply engaging preexisting publics, when they are attentive to the fact that they are engaged in practices of drawing new lines around new groups of "insiders" to the academic practice, this language of collaborative research may begin to create the conditions for new, rich, diverse and uncomfortable publics to emerge. Such publics may begin to provide a foundation for exploring the plural forms of knowledge and perspective likely to be necessary to address complex contemporary challenges. In contrast, where such programs proceed unreflexively, in particular when "publics" are defined simply as those "not in the academy," the consequences are likely to be profoundly harmful both to the knowledge that is produced and to the society that emerges in the process. The outcomes will range from the simple reinforcement of existing hierarchies and inequalities in which it

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[51] See Helen Manchester and Gillian Cope's account, for example, of the negotiations over what "co-produced" research means in a large Urban Smart City Project. Helen Manchester and Gillian Cope, "Learning to be a smart citizen" *Oxford Review of Education* 45, no. 2 (2019): 224–241.

is taken for granted that only those with easy access to the social networks and educational and social capital of university practice are catered for, to the more insidious and intentional capture of university research activities as part of the Public Relations practices of large corporations posing as "publics" and "partners" to the research process[52].

If the moments of encounter between publics and universities offer both opportunities and threats to the integrity of the search for truth within the academy, so too do they offer potential and risks to the partner organizations, in particular to those civil society organizations who are now beginning to see universities as more natural allies. As has happened when civil society groups are brought in as "partners" to governments in the delivery of services, there is a risk that the core mission and values of these organizations becomes subsumed into the academic endeavor. It is, after all, not the primary purpose of civil society to produce *academic* research, even if they are important producers of powerful knowledge. To paraphrase Penny Waterhouse's analysis of community organization collaboration with government:

> *[universities] do not usually offer a radical home for local action. Collective action for local resistance and alternatives lies elsewhere, within informal alliances of mutual aid, campaign groups, trades unions and between individuals angered and directly affected by austerity and other punitive policies.*[53]

It is potentially, however, precisely in these "informal alliances of mutual aid" between academics as public intellectuals (rather than as representatives of their university) and civil society groups that the potential for new forms of public university may emerge. As a generation of younger researchers, working in conditions of precarious employment, building security through reciprocity and solidarity rather than the search for tenure track positions and developing hybrid careers across many sectors, "grows up collaborative,"[54] what new publics might they convene? And what forms of public scholarship, research, and teaching might these entail? Perhaps, as we watch the emergence of movements such as Extinction Rebellion or Scientists Warning we can begin to see the beginnings of these new publics, convened not within the university but mobilizing the expertise of both civil society groups and

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[52] See Andersson and Westholm (2018) and Tannock (2010) for powerful case studies of how such processes are already working.

[53] Penny Waterhouse, "Homes for Local Radical Action: The position and role of local umbrella groups" NCIA Inquiry into the Future of Voluntary Services, working paper 7 (London: National Coalition for Independent Action, 2014), 1.

[54] Bryony Enright and Keri Facer, "Developing Reflexive Identities."

academics to "take care of" a neglected issue. Such practices, however, do not guarantee the emergence of a new "public" forum. We should beware of the illusion that liberation from the entrepreneurial university will, in and of itself, be sufficient to create democratic, plural publics. New exclusions necessarily emerge with each practice of public making.

Instead of looking beyond the university, perhaps the challenge now is to create more radical and reflexive experiments with the practices of public formation by universities, experiments that recognize the unruliness of relationships and commitments that exceed project boundaries, experiments that intentionally explore the university's potential to convene publics around overlooked matters of concern. And in doing so, to work with the knowledge that such experiments always and of necessity only convene a partial public at any time. How such publics might be brought into encounter with each other, how the publics convened by scientists or artists, with civil society partners, industry or grassroots communities, create *different* accounts of the world and how these different accounts can be put into dialogue and *negotiated*, might, instead, usefully become a focus of energy and inquiry in the invention of a new form of public university.

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3. On Building a University for the Common Good[1]

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Abstract: Around the world, universities have been converted into agents of globalization, competing for business in the markets of the knowledge economy. To an ever-increasing extent, they are managed like corporations. The result has been a massive betrayal of the underlying principles of higher education. In both teaching and research, universities have reneged on their founding commitment to the pursuit of truth, and to the service of the common good. With their combination of overpaid managers, staff in precarious employment and indebted students, they are manifestly unsustainable. Rather than waiting for them to collapse, however, we need to start now to build the universities of the future, and to restore their civic purpose as necessary components of the constitution of a democratic society. This article first sets out the four principles—of freedom, trust, education and community—on which any university must be built, if it is to meet the challenges of our time. It will then go on to consider the meaning of the common good, and how universities of the future can be of service to it.

Keywords: university, freedom, education, research, community, democracy

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[1]   Editor's Note: This paper was delivered as the keynote address at the conference of the Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education Society at KU Leuven, September 19, 2019. It is offered here with only minor desk revisions, unmarred by the traditional review process.

Introduction

Around the world, universities are in turmoil. There was a time when they stood out as pinnacles of Enlightenment, where scholarly elites could profess to a superior knowledge, based on reason and evidence, of the ways of the world. Their mission was to educate, to spread the light of learning to all nations, and to deliver their citizens from ignorance, poverty and subjugation. Chauvinistic they may have been, and even complicit in the regimes that created the very oppression from which they offered emancipation—albeit for a privileged few. Nevertheless, universities were progressive institutions, and their legitimate aspirations were backed by a belief in common human potential. Like it or not, however, the Enlightenment program has more or less collapsed, along with the powers that sustained it. These were the historic powers of European-led colonization, by which the allegedly superior ways of knowing of dominant nations were imposed upon subaltern populations. The flag of universality has always been flown by the victors in struggles over knowledge. In our post-colonial world, however, the hierarchies that once propped up the academy's claim to intellectual hegemony have crumbled. And as tends to happen at such moments, far from reaching an accommodation that would open up to other ways of knowing and being, and to voices previously muted or suppressed, we are witnessing just the opposite, with the emergence on all sides of closed and self-righteous fundamentalisms, whether religious, political or economic. As we are all too aware, the world is becoming an increasingly fractious and dangerous place.

Beset by weak and compliant leadership, universities present soft targets for hostile takeover, be it by multinational corporations wedded to the doctrines of neoliberalism, by totalitarian regimes bent on the suppression of critical inquiry or by sectarian organizations aiming to spread their own particular versions of bigotry and intolerance. In the face of this threat, it is imperative for universities to redefine their purpose. There is no going back to a rose-tinted version of the past—to an imaginary golden age of cosseted erudition. Universities can no longer take refuge behind self-serving appeals to academic immunity that have ceased to have any traction beyond their ivory towers, nor can they surrender to the profoundly anti-democratic forces that threaten their very existence. Some might argue that universities are already so tarnished by the historical legacy of colonialism, and today so corrupted by corporate interests, that they would be better abandoned to their fate. For in their present form, they are bound to collapse, as surely as the powers that sustain them. Perhaps, then, they should be replaced with something entirely different. I disagree, however. We still have our universities, and they

represent a priceless asset. Rather than standing by and waiting for them to fall, I believe we should already commence the task of shaping universities for the future. For anyone of good conscience, who cares about fashioning a world fit for coming generations to inhabit, no task could be more urgent. We need to start now.

There is very little sign, however, that the regimes of management which have arrogated to themselves the business of controlling our universities have more than the slightest grasp of the issues at stake. Fatuous mission statements merely paper over the abject failure of university leaders to address the question of what universities are *for* with the depth and seriousness it deserves. Their myopic vision is circumscribed by crude indices of rank and productivity. Financially, universities have come off relatively lightly from years of austerity, driven by the insatiable demands of international capital, which have hollowed out many of our most cherished public institutions. But they have done so only by playing the same game. Across what many call "the sector"—by which they mean a lucrative business operation conducted in national and international markets of the knowledge economy—knowledge is understood as a commodity, research is driven by the demand for measurable outputs, students are customers, and teaching is designed to satisfy their expectations. It has long been obvious that this business model of higher education is unsustainable. Grossly overpaid vice-chancellors or principals acting as chief executive officers, swelling ranks of managerial staff, an ever-growing proportion of academics whose career prospects are blighted by precarious conditions of employment, and a student body bearing unprecedented levels of debt, add up to a toxic combination.[2] It cannot continue, least of all when the massive loans taken out by university executives to finance vanity building projects come up for repayment. Who will teach students when universities can no longer afford to pay their staff?

Everywhere, indeed, universities are in a crisis of headline-grabbing proportions, only temporarily overshadowed by such calamities as Brexit in the United Kingdom, the Trump Presidency in the United States and the Bolsonaro regime in Brazil, all now dwarfed by an epoch-changing global pandemic. Ultimately, however, this crisis is not financial or even political but existential. It is a crisis of purpose. And it mirrors—to an extent—a crisis in the global order. As the engine of economic growth collides with the realities

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[2] On the casualization of academic labor, and its pernicious consequences in U.S. universities, see Frank Donoghue, *The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 55–82.

of climate change, the world, it seems, is poised on a knife-edge. We live in an age when people and ideas are moving and meeting on an unprecedented scale, but also one in which arguments may be twisted and data manipulated to serve competing and often jarring worldviews. Public debate, in many arenas, has been reduced to a trade in soundbites; truth is up for grabs. We need no reminding of the hazards this entails, to democracy, to society, and to the environment. To address these hazards, nothing can be more important than to bring people of all nations and generations together, across their multiple differences, to learn and study in a spirit of reason, tolerance, justice and common humanity. No other institution, apart from that of the university, is currently equipped to take on this challenge. To live up to it, however, universities must rediscover their civic purpose as indispensable components in the constitution of a democratic society, charged with educating its citizens and furnishing them with the wisdom and understanding that will enable every generation to begin afresh, to imagine a world different from the one we have, and to offer hope for the future.

In the marketization of higher education, however, this purpose has been all but eclipsed, putting at risk the freedom on which the integrity of scholarship depends, as well as the trust that enables it to flourish. Education, in the business model, is limited to a narrow view of service provision, with research answering to the needs of commerce and industry, and teaching and learning geared to the demands of graduate employment.[3] Moreover in its embrace of the principles of new public management, dedicated to competitiveness and cost-efficiency in the provision of services, the model systematically undercuts the openness, generosity and collegiality that are of the essence, if we are to collaborate in addressing the challenges of the years to come.[4] Instead of collegiality we have the consortium, which is a quite different thing, resting not on openness and generosity but on partnerships of mutual self-interest. Most troubling of all, perhaps, is the extent to which the assumptions built into the business model have come to be normalized. They are so deeply embedded in the everyday discourse and practice of the university that it is increasingly difficult to imagine any other way of doing things, let alone to put it into effect. It takes an effort of will to shake off the dense web of expectations, indicators and metrics that govern every aspect of academic lives, especially when they

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[3]   For a succinct summary of these developments, see Andrew Wernick, "University," *Theory, Culture and Society* 23 (2006): 557–563.

[4]   Chris Lorenz, "Why Are You Under Surveillance? Universities, Neoliberalism and New Public Management," *Critical Inquiry* 38 (2012): 599–629 offers a withering analysis of the corrosive impact of new public management on university education.

are incorporated into the IT systems to which these lives are increasingly shackled. Originally intended as vehicles of facilitation, these systems have instead become powerful instruments of surveillance and control.

The Four Pillars of the University

The causes and effects of marketization in higher education have been much analyzed and are thoroughly understood.[5] But we are much better at explaining what has gone wrong than we are in setting out what to do instead. Conspicuously lacking, up to now, has been an alternative vision—a clear and coherent statement of the principles to which a university of the future should aspire, the values it should uphold, and the way it should work. That is what I want to present here. Let me acknowledge at once that the ideas I put forward are not purely my own; they have rather emerged through intense conversations both with colleagues and students in my institution, the University of Aberdeen, and with friends in other places—in Scotland, more widely in the United Kingdom, and internationally. These conversations began as part of a campaign to reclaim the university, which I launched in Aberdeen in October 2015, and which has since joined forces with a number of similar campaigns, initiated in other institutions, under the banner of "The University of the Future." What came out of them was a vision of the university as resting on four pillars, namely *freedom*, *trust*, *education*, and *community*. These are not mere keywords. Every pillar carries a heavy moral and philosophical burden, and our conversations caused us to reflect in some depth on what they really entail. In what follows, I shall revisit the four pillars and spell out some of their implications. I begin with freedom.

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[5] The literature is immense. Some key texts include: Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State and Higher Education* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Henry A. Giroux, *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial-Academic Complex* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2007); Henry A. Giroux, *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2014); Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities For?* (London: Penguin, 2012); Stefan Collini, *Speaking of Universities* (London: Verso, 2017); Joanna Williams, *Consuming Higher Education: Why Learning Can't be Bought* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012); Andrew McGettigan, *The Great University Gamble: Money, Markets and the Future of Higher Education* (London: Pluto, 2013); Roger Brown, with Helen Carasso, *Everything for Sale? The Marketisation of UK Higher Education* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013); and Chris Bank, *The Soul of a University: Why Excellence Is Not Enough* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2018).

Freedom

As a concept, freedom has been sorely abused, as indeed has its cousin, democracy. It is widely taken to mean a right or entitlement to be exercised by individuals, singly or collectively, in the pursuit and defense of their interests. Applied to society at large, it leads to the fateful equation of democracy with the will of the people, a kind of totalization that, in converting difference into identity, admits only a majority who self-identify as the same, while placing out of bounds all those who do not. Applied more narrowly to the university, however, it leads to the perception of its academics as a minority interest group—a scholarly elite—jealous in the protection of rights and privileges denied to ordinary folk. It is no wonder if appeals to academic freedom couched in such terms cut little ice in a wider society suspicious of all forms of elitism and claims to superior expertise. But this is a false sense of freedom. In reality, freedom is not something one *has*; it is not a property or entitlement. It is rather the condition in which one *is*; in which is founded one's very existence. As such it is fundamentally open to others, and to difference, rather than circumscribed by the identity of preexisting interests. While identity can lead only to stultification and ultimately to fragmentation, difference holds the key to social continuity and renewal. That key is true freedom. The truly free, far from sheltering behind closed doors, secure in their positions, risk exposure by pushing out into the unknown, where outcomes are uncertain and destinations yet to be mapped. This kind of freedom, open to all in a truly democratic society, is—in the academic sphere—both exemplified and intensified, not in the defense of common interests but in the ongoing fashioning of community in difference.

I shall return to this. For now I want only to highlight the intrinsic connection between the respective freedoms of education and democracy. We cannot have one without the other. It is a connection to which the great American philosopher of education, John Dewey, drew our attention over a century ago. These freedoms, as Dewey insisted, are not handed down on a plate. "Freedom," he tells us, "is something to be achieved, to be wrought out."[6] It is not a right that is given but a vocation that falls to us and that we have continually to work at. We can never give up on it or assume that it has been already won. To put it another way, freedom is nothing if not *practiced*. This—the practice of freedom—lay at the heart of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's manifesto for a pedagogy of the oppressed: it is the means "by

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[6]   John Dewey, *John Dewey on Education: Selected Writings*, ed. Reginald D. Archambault (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."[7] To participate is to follow a calling, in which one both responds to others and is responsible to them. There can therefore be no freedom without responsibility. As scholars we are responsible for what we do in our studies, and for the social and environmental transformations they set in train. Thus the underside of academic freedom is *care*: for others, for the world we live in, for generations present and to come. We care for others, and for the world, because we depend on them for our own existence, our own freedom. This combination of freedom and dependency lies at core of trust, the second of the four pillars on which the coming university rests.

Trust

To trust others is to acknowledge that we depend on them, and on what they do, without in any way curtailing their freedom to act responsibly toward us.[8] There can be no freedom without trust, and no trust without freedom. That is why loss of trust is the greatest enemy of academic freedom, since it leads to the replacement of autonomy and self-determination with surveillance and control. Of course, there will always be rogue individuals, in the university community as in any other, who fail to live up to the trust placed in them. Trust always entails an element of risk. But it is surely better to start from the generous assumption that all can be trusted than from its negation, that none can. Nevertheless the premise that everyone is in it for themselves, and that they will react only to threats and incentives, lies at the root of much that currently goes under the name of "management"—a set of precepts and practices that universities have adopted, more or less wholesale, from business organizations. Regimes of management founded on the business model, in which employees are classed as human resources, tasked with delivering corporate objectives and monitored for their compliance in doing so, are inimical to the flourishing of any community of scholarship. Their importation into our universities, mainly during the 1980s and 1990s, has done immense damage. For far from promoting openness and collegiality, they are virtually designed to set colleagues up in competition with one another, for their own security

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7   This passage is quoted from Richard Shaull's "Foreword" to Freire's *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos [New York: Continuum, 2006]). Freire's book was first published in 1970.

8   On this, see Diego Gambetta, ed., *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988).

and advancement, and to create a pervasive atmosphere of suspicion, mistrust and even fear.[9]

I am not exaggerating: not only have I witnessed this at firsthand, I have also had it confirmed in reports from one institution after another. We all know how trust which may have taken years to build can be broken down in no time at all. We know, too, that this breakdown affects relations not only among academic staff, but also with students. They, too, are increasingly subjected to regimes of monitoring and assessment, geared to the achievement of measurable results, which are founded on the default assumption that students are motivated in their studies by strategic self-interest, and therefore cannot be trusted. It hardly comes as a surprise that in a system of education explicitly set up as a competitive game, with prizes in the form of grades, many students will seek to game the system! The game, familiar to any student essay-writer, is how to convert received knowledge and information into original results. The rules of the game, which are set out in elaborate handbooks full of legalese but devoid of scholarly content, forbid copying, and demand that all work should be novel. Players, then, are required to rearrange fragments of text or particles of information, by means of a word-processor, into previously unrecorded permutations and combinations, while evading detection by the monitoring software, menacingly known as "Turnitin," designed to catch them out. That this exercise should be thought to have any educational value whatever is a good indication of just how far education has itself been devalued through its reduction, under the business model, to a results-driven service industry.

Education

Universities, of course, are not businesses. They are institutes of higher education. It is extraordinary, however, that in all the debates that have raged around what universities are supposed to offer, so little attention has been devoted to the question of education itself, of how it is conducted, of what makes it "higher," and what it is intended to bring about. By and large, these debates have been conducted as if we already knew the answers. Typically,

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9   Much of this is conducted through the impersonal medium of email. Comparing his experience in a Canadian "non-managerial" institution, in 2013, with a "managed" institution in Australia a year later, Yancey Orr found that the email traffic relating to teaching, administrative meetings, student grading, and mandatory training during one semester had increased sixfold (Yancey Orr and Raymond Orr, "The Death of Socrates: Managerialism, Metrics and Bureaucratisation in Universities," *Australian Universities Review* 58 (2016): 15–25).

education is equated with a practice of pedagogy known as "teaching and learning," a one-way transmission of knowledge from its sites of production, in centers of research, to those, namely students, who are contracted—and have in many cases paid—to acquire it. Universities tend to pride themselves on their teaching being "research-led," implying that learners receive their knowledge at first rather than second hand. Students have the privilege of being taught by those at the top of their game, working at the cutting edge of research in their respective fields. The closer their education approaches the summit of scientific and intellectual advance, the higher it purports to be. That it is about the transmission of knowledge products newly minted by research, however, is assumed without question. For at the very same time that education has contracted into the pedagogy of teaching and learning, research has been co-opted as an engine of the global knowledge economy.[10] The one is a direct consequence of the other. To recover the real meaning of education, therefore, we must first think again about the meaning of research.

There was a time when the main business of universities was scholarship, and when their teachers and students were scholars. Teaching, learning and research, insofar as they could be distinguished at all, were all aspects of scholarship. This time is no longer. The don may, on special occasions, assume the mantle of the scholar, yet knows full well that in the new republic of academia, it is an anachronistic charade. In today's regime of evaluation, exemplified in the United Kingdom by the so-called Research Excellence Framework (REF), scholarship has been consigned to the menial function of research support, epitomized by such dogsbody work as the compilation of dictionaries, critical editions, catalogs, and databases. In itself, it carries little value. Those who cling to a life of scholarship are treated as the fossils of a bygone age, at best with indifference, at worst facing redundancy. Research, on the other hand, takes pride of place as anything meeting the needs of commerce, industry or the public sector, insofar as it leads to what the REF describes as "new or substantially improved insights … materials, devices, products and processes."[11] In academia as in industry, the tagline "new and improved" must be attached to any proposal, if it is to attract investment funding, and to any product if it is subsequently to succeed in the marketplace. That is why so much effort is dedicated to demonstrating the novelty of research, and to

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[10] On this, see Hans Radder, "The Commodification of Academic Research," in *The Commodification of Academic Research: Science and the Modern University*, ed. Hans Radder (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 1–22.).

[11] REF 2019/01 *Guidance on Submissions*, January 2019, page 90 Annex C§2, available at https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1092/ref-2019_01-guidance-on-submissions.pdf.

measuring the business take-up, or so-called "impact," of its outputs. For in a global market with ever more intense competition for dwindling returns, only what is new sells. Rephrased in the brutal language of corporate capitalism, excellent research is the driver of innovation, and innovation drives up profits.

All this flies in the face of the real vocation of the scholar, for whom research means what it says: *to search and search again*.[12] It means a second search. In this, what was an answer in the first search becomes a question in the second. And so it continues: every search both doubles up on what was done before, and is yet an original intervention that invites a double in its turn. There is no end to this, no final breakthrough into the light. Real researchers are anxious souls, always fumbling in the dark where nothing is ever quite what it seems. There is little room, here, for optimism. There is however room for *hope*, for as every closure turns into an opening, every apparent end-point into a line of further inquiry, research is the guarantor that life will go on, that the well of learning will never run dry, and that every generation can begin afresh. What, then, does research seek, that ever evades its grasp? The answer, of course, is *truth*. Research in its proper sense, uncorrupted by the business model, is characterized neither by the novelty of its results, nor by their impact, but by its resolute and relentless pursuit of truth. Of course, truth can mean different things, depending on a scholar's discipline or philosophy. What is truth for the physicist may not be what it is for the theologian, anthropologist or musician. Nevertheless, the *search* for truth is common to all. It is driven by a burning desire to get things right, whether empirically, intellectually, ethically or aesthetically. And what fuels this desire is not profit but curiosity.

With curiosity, however, comes care. Do we "love the world enough," asked philosopher Hannah Arendt, "to assume responsibility for it?"[13] Are we curious enough to care? Only if we are, Arendt foretold, can there be hope of renewal for generations to come. Without care, without responsibility, curiosity can only lead to ruin. Indeed, curiosity and care—both derived from the Latin verb *curare*, meaning to attend to things or persons, to look after them, and to respond—are two sides of the same coin. That coin is truth. Thus care, not impact, is the hallmark of the responsible search for truth. It is a way, as we have already seen, of giving back to the world what we owe for our own existence, and for the freedom that comes with it. But could the same not be said, not just of research, but of education in general? Is not education also

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[12] Tim Ingold, *Anthropology and/as Education* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).
[13] Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis of Education" (1954), in *Hannah Arendt: Between Past and Future*, intro. Jerome Kohn (London: Penguin, 2006), 170–193. Hannah Arendt's essay "The Crisis of Education" was first published in 1954.

dedicated to the pursuit of truth? Is it not equally motivated by curiosity and care? Again, it pays to attend to the words themselves. For if to research literally means "to search again," then to educate means "to lead out."[14] The word comes from the Latin compound of *ex-*, "out," plus *ducere*, "to lead." In this sense, education is research-led, not because it conveys the results of research at first rather than second hand, but because it leads out along the paths of inquiry that research, in its iterative redoubling, ceaselessly opens up. Insofar as it turns all answers into questions, research can hardly be taught as though these questions were already answered! Education must go *beyond* the transmission of newly minted knowledge products, as mandated by the pedagogy of teaching and learning, if it is truly to follow in the footsteps of research.

Now as a way of leading out, education is fundamentally a practice of exposure. Its purpose is not to arm ourselves with knowledge, or to shore up our defenses so that we can better cope with adversity. It is rather to disarm, to relinquish the security of established standpoints and positions, and by the same token to attend more closely to the world around us, enabling us to respond with skill and sensitivity to what is going on there. In education, then, lies the path to real freedom. It is a path along which teachers and students go along in each other's company, as fellow travelers in the pursuit of truth. The journey can be difficult, even uncomfortable, with no certain outcome. The job of the teacher is certainly not to make things easy for students. It is however to set them an example, to serve as a generous guide and constant companion in the conduct of their research, and as a tireless critic of their work. And students, following their teacher's example, should not be afraid to copy, just as a young musician would copy the teacher in learning an instrument, or as the apprentice would copy the master in learning a craft. This is not plagiarism; it is practice. As an apprentice in the crafts of the intellect, the student practices under the eyes of the teacher only, eventually, to become those eyes, watching in turn over the next generation. Therein lies the continuity of scholarship. It is a continuity founded on trust: on the assurance that students, who cannot be forced to learn, are nevertheless eager to join in the scholarly endeavors of their teachers, and to relay the torch of learning to generations to come.

Community

This brings me to the fourth pillar of the coming university, namely community. Again, as with education and research, I go back to the original Latin

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14   On this, see Jan Masschelein, "E-Ducating the Gaze: The Idea of a Poor Pedagogy," *Ethics and Education* 5 (2010): 43–53.

sense of the term, *com-munus*, meaning "giving together." In the community, we all have things to contribute because we are all different. The educational community, to borrow a felicitous phrase from philosopher Alphonso Lingis, is a "community of those who have nothing in common."[15] It is a coming together in difference. The university is a community in this sense. It is, first and foremost, its people, and the place in which they gather to study. One can only study by joining *with* others; no-one ever studies alone. That is why every university has to offer a place of gathering, not just for socialization, in time off from study, but for deep conversation. We only have to look at the spaces of study of the contemporary university, however, to see how the reduction of teaching and learning to service provision, and the designation of students as customers, has broken up the gathering. Classrooms that once hosted practices of study are rebranded as resource centers, populated with banks of computers before which individual students, oblivious to their fellows, play the information game on which their grades depend. Chalkboards around which teachers and their students previously gathered to write and to draw become screens for the projection of images, on which both drawing and writing are strictly forbidden. And the auditorium, once a place where students would assemble to listen together, and to share in the experience, becomes a theater whose only function is to achieve economies of scale, allowing the same information to be transmitted simultaneously to a mass audience.[16]

How can community be restored to the university? Only by reclaiming it as a place of gathering—a place to which students and teachers, researchers all, are drawn by their love of learning, and by their desire to study. This place is, of course, both one and many, singular and plural, and its great community, united in difference, comprises a plethora of lesser communities. In just the same way, the universe of scholarship, from which the university takes its name, comprises a multitude of subjects. In short, the university is a multiversity.[17] It has long been the convention to call every subject a discipline, and to designate

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15 Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).

16 See Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons, "The University in the Ears of its Students: On the Power, Architecture and Technology of University Lectures," in *Die Idee der Universität—Revisited*, ed. Norbert Ricken, Hans-Christoph Koller, and Edwin Keiner (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2014), 173–192.

17 The term "multiversity" was coined by Clark Kerr, Chancellor of the University of California, in 1963, but in a sense that would ultimately lead to the sacrifice of community to corporate managerialism (Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964]). It can, however, be reclaimed

as a department the little community of teachers and students who, in any particular place, gather to study it. For every discipline, then, there corresponds a department. The terms are not ideal, but we can live with them. They are not ideal because they rest on a model of the academy, inherited from the Enlightenment, which no longer applies, if indeed it ever did. Following a vision originally articulated by the greatest of Enlightenment philosophers, Immanuel Kant, the task of academic scholarship is to raise a grand edifice of knowledge upon the foundation of the human mind, like a castle with a thousand rooms, in each of which is contained all there is to know about some aspect of the world. Every room of the castle corresponds to a particular branch of scholarship, a discipline. In it you will find the assembled knowledge of that discipline, along with the personnel dedicated to its study, the department. Put all disciplines together, and you have the universe of human knowledge; put all departments together, and you have a university.[18]

These days, however, it is more common for disciplines to be compared, less politely, to concrete bunkers or silos, while a manager in my own institution was recently heard to say of departments, including mine, that they are "no longer fit for purpose in the twenty-first century." "Whose purpose?" I wondered. Have disciplines become ossified? Have departments become prisons? In practice, departments have never been the walled-in divisions of a greater whole that their name suggests. They are in reality no more, and no less, than the transient convergence of scholarly lives, coming together in difference, that makes of each a community. And as communities they have always been open. There has never been a time when scholars, following their various lines of inquiry, have not been drawn to other lines emerging from other sources. They have done so whenever it has been germane to their research. This fundamental openness of both disciplines and departments, however, is an inconvenient truth for those who would seek to manage the

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in a sense that chimes with the multiversal—or "singular plural"—character of the world in which the university is embedded. On this, see Wernick, "University," 561, Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 184–185, and Ingold, *Anthropology and/as Education,* 80–81.

[18] Kant's blueprint for the university was set out in his essay of 1789, *The conflict of the faculties* (Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties,* trans. and intro. Mary J. Gregor [Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1992]). The blueprint is discussed with specific (and critical) reference to our movement to reclaim the University of Aberdeen, and the resulting manifesto, in Michael Schapira, "Kant versus the Managers: Historical Reconstruction and the Modern University," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 53 (2018): 111–126.

university along corporate lines.[19] In their model, the university is constituted not by interwoven lines of inquiry but by lines of control that work from the top down. The loyalty, cohesion and self-reliance of disciplinary communities, which comes from an intimate knowledge of the field, from working together and teaching the same students, is perceived as an immediate threat to this control. In the eyes of corporate management, the way to address the threat is to use the alleged ossification of departments, their silo mentality, as a pretext for dissolution. They are to be amalgamated into larger multidisciplinary conglomerates, within which the bonds of community are broken, and collegiality gives way to compliance.

Of these conglomerates, the largest are in the fields of science, technology and engineering. So far, I have studiously avoided any mention of the division which, more than any other, rends the academy, between these fields and everything else, commonly bracketed under the rubric of the arts and humanities. I have avoided it because I believe it is both inappropriate and unhelpful. There is no escaping, however, the way in which science, technology, engineering and—rather oddly—mathematics have been weaponized in the corporate capture of our universities. This has happened under the cover of their acronym, STEM. Higher education policy documents are full of references to STEM subjects. What is evident from these documents, however, is that STEM is not really a shorthand for a congeries of subjects but a front for the business model, and the umbrella under which it has been imported into the university. The institutions of science and technology, if not scientists and technologists themselves, have been undeniably complicit in this. But it places champions of the arts and humanities in a quandary. Some advocate playing to the same tune, by marketizing their disciplines. You only have to insert an A for Arts in the midst of STEM, they say, thus turning STEM to STEAM, and all will be resolved.[20] But that would amount to capitulation.

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[19] As Braidotti writes, after Louis Menand, ed., *The Future of Academic Freedom* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), "given that the disciplines are not timeless entities, but historically contingent discursive formations, their de-segregation is not itself a source of anxiety for the scholars. … It is, however, a major headache for the administrators" (Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 177).

[20] See Pamela Burnard and Laura Colucci-Gray, eds., *Why Science and Art Creativities Matter: (Re-)Configuring STEAM for Future-Making Education* (Leiden: Brill, 2020). The acronym STEAM was coined in 2011 by the Rhode Island School of Design. The school's advocacy of STEAM, according its website, is aimed at "spurring a growing conversation about how innovation and creativity … are what the US urgently needs to foster economic growth and competitiveness in the years ahead." See https://www.risd.edu/news/stories/steam-map-debuts-on-capitol-hill/.

In my view, to the contrary, it is for the arts and humanities to carry the flame of scholarship not against science, in which it has been all but extinguished, but in its defense. It is to rescue science from itself, and to rekindle its founding commitment to the common good. And it is to this commitment that I now turn.

The Common Good

Having reviewed the four pillars of freedom, trust, education and community, where does this leave us? Certainly, with a picture of the university very different from what we have today. In the following I want to revisit the key question of what the university is *for*, of its purpose, in the light of the principles I have set out. There is no better place to begin than from the vision and foresight of the founders of our ancient universities. Just as we should aspire to do today, they—in their own time—were attempting to establish something for which there was no precedent. In 1495 William Elphinstone, Bishop of Aberdeen and Chancellor of Scotland, declared his ambition "to found a university, which would be open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others."[21] This ambition should be ours too, and it could hardly be stated more succinctly. Yet it is betrayed, in every single respect, by the contemporary business model of higher education. I have already shown how the principle of education as the pursuit of truth has been trounced by an exclusive emphasis on novelty, in research, and on transmission, in teaching and learning. In the UK's frameworks of excellence for the evaluation of research and latterly of teaching, the word "truth" appears not once. What counts is rather innovation, when it comes to research, and employability, when it comes to teaching. But I want now to turn my attention to the other two components of Bishop Elphinstone's ambition, namely "openness to all" and "service to others."

These principles of openness and service are inextricably linked. They add up to what, in my title, I call "the common good." A university that is open to all, and of service to others, is a university for the common good. Let me first be clear what I do *not* mean by this. I make no appeal to the common man—the universal human subject—endowed by nature with a suite of interests from the start, whose improvement was the project of the Enlightenment. To explain what I *do* mean I return to John Dewey, whose thinking on democracy and education I touched on earlier. For Dewey, education was fundamentally

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[21] This pronouncement, admittedly uncorroborated, is reproduced on the University of Aberdeen's website, at https://www.abdn.ac.uk/about/history/#panel453.

about communication. But he meant this in a sense very different from what we understand by the term today. Our present idea of communication, inflected by contemporary data technologies, implies the transmission of information. But for Dewey, communication was about forging community. This, he insisted, does not rest on what people have in common to begin with. Like the freedom it entails, it is rather something that has continually to be worked at. Participants, coming in with different experiences and perspectives on things, must be ready to move on from where they stand, to cast their imaginations forward along paths that meet with the imaginations of others who do likewise, so as to achieve a degree of consensus, or what Dewey called "like-mindedness," that makes it possible for them at once to carry on their lives together and to go their own ways.[22] Communication for Dewey—or what we might better call "communing"—is both a coming together in difference, and the differentiation made possible by coming together. A university should be a place of commoning.

What then is the "good" to which commoning contributes? It is not a commodity, nor even a supply of commodities. It is not the same as "goods." Factories produce goods, but universities are not factories. Goods are finished; universities, however, are places of renewal. And the common good is nothing if not perpetual renewal. In his recent book *Reimagining Britain*, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby describes it thus: "The common good—and all the values and practices it encompasses—is not something legislated or mandated, but is the sum of innumerable small and large actions by every participant in society."[23] It is, in this sense, none other than social life itself, the ongoing creation of persons in community. It is you and I and everyone else, in our mutual relations. Or in short, it is the world we inhabit. Commoning is the guarantor that this world can carry on, of its continuity or sustainability. To say that universities serve the common good is to insist that they play an essential role in underwriting this guarantee. It is a role, however, which today's universities have largely abdicated. Instead they have set themselves up as providers of knowledge products, for government, commerce and industry, and of services, in the form of training and qualification for their student clientele. And just as the common good is distinguished from the supply of goods, so there is all the difference in the world between acting

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[22]   John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Essay on the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 4. John Dewey's *Democracy and Education* was first published in 1916.

[23]   Justin Welby, *Reimagining Britain: Foundations for Hope* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 236.

in the service of others, and providing services *to* others: one is founded on generosity, on giving what we owe for our formation as participants in a social world; the other is founded on contract, on rendering services for payment.

Now to contribute to the common good, as I have already suggested, is to follow a calling, in which is combined both freedom and responsibility. It is to accept a certain way of life, motivated by a duty of care. In the university, this is a life of study. Literally, the call to study is a vocation. Yet like "service," "vocation" is also a term that can be taken in quite different senses. To brand a course of study as "vocational," for example, implies that it is expressly designed to provide the individual student with qualifications for entry into a career. It is easy to gloss over these ambiguities in the understanding of service and vocation, or to conflate good with goods, as universities routinely do in their mission statements. They can declare their aim to transform the world with their research, and in their teaching to enable every student to fulfill his or her calling, while boasting about the millions earned in grants and contracts, and their success in securing high-paid employment for their graduates. But no amount of papering over can hide the fact that mission and boast are in flagrant contradiction. Universities cannot operate as profitable businesses and serve the common good at one and the same time. To opt for the former is to renege on any commitment to the latter. So which is it to be? Or more to the point, if universities are not to run on the business model, where is the money to come from that would keep them afloat? Who will pay for them? For there are financial costs to be borne, and like any other organizations, universities have to balance the books.

Funding models vary from country to country, but in the United Kingdom most universities are set up as charities. Some of their support comes from philanthropy, and some from other charitable organizations that part-fund their research. Much of it, however, still comes from the public purse.[24] Arguments rage over the justification for this support, given that the benefits accrue overwhelmingly to the better off in our society. Universities, to their credit, can point to the real efforts they have made to open their doors to students of poorer backgrounds, to give them opportunities never enjoyed by their parents and grandparents, and to set many on a path to distinction in their careers. It sounds perverse—indeed downright elitist—to argue that it is not for universities to operate as agents of social mobility, or to assist students who start out at a disadvantage. Yet this is what I propose. As institutions

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[24] In addition, a substantial proportion of universities' income comes from fees paid by overseas students. The majority of these fee-paying students, however, are supported by charitable foundations or publicly funded scholarships from their home countries.

whose educational purpose is underwritten by service to the common good, universities should certainly aspire to provide the support necessary to allow anyone drawn to academic study to accept this calling, regardless of wealth or background. What they should *not* do, however, is present this study as a means to an end, namely to set up those who undertake it at an advantage, or to raise them up the ladder of attainment, in a meritocracy that puts the highly educated at the top, with the most powerful positions, the best incomes and the most enviable lifestyles. For if that were the purpose of higher education, then its claim to work for the common good would be a sham. It would serve only the good of those lucky enough to succeed in it. And for that very reason, it would scarcely warrant public support.

The problem lies in underlying assumptions that are, perhaps inadvertently, brought in whenever we use such words as "disadvantage" or "mobility." These words conjure up a competitive society in which some inevitably fare better, and others worse. And when the same words are used to frame policies of higher education, they cannot help but reproduce the very hierarchies that universities are pledged to overcome. Upward mobility allows some to rise to the top, but it does not flatten the landscape. To the contrary, attaining the heights only affirms the gradient. There will be winners and losers. This is not to serve the common good. It is to reserve it for some at the expense of others. Cynics, of course, will argue that the ideals I have presented—of fulfilling a calling, and of service to others—are fine for those whose own prosperity is otherwise assured. For those who lack the means, they surely remain a pipedream. How can the idea of a university that is open to all in the service of others have any traction beyond a moneyed class, if in practice it is open only to individuals who can afford to study there? This objection, however, only underscores the importance of providing adequate levels of public support for students who need it, precisely on the grounds of the contribution to the common good that their studies will enable them to make. It is surely preferable for public money to be used to enable those who are fired by a burning desire for study to fulfil their ambition, rather than subsidising the upward mobility of those who are not, and whose only interest in higher education is to obtain the qualifications that would open the door to comparatively well-paid employment.

Yet from the pronouncements of most politicians and policymakers, you would think not only that the vast majority of students enter university expressly in order to enhance their employment prospects, but also that it is entirely right that they should do so. It is a view, moreover, that resonates powerfully among members of the public, whose own children's education is on the line. And it accounts, at least in part, for the profound antipathy

toward university education, bordering on contempt, that is widespread among the many who have been left behind in the race to the top, and made to feel surplus to requirements in the shiny new world of corporate globalization. These are people, be it noted, who are also vociferous in their defense of democracy. Their idea of democracy may be dangerously warped, for reasons I have already outlined, yet in their diagnosis of higher education they are not wrong. It is perceived to be a system designed to produce a cosmopolitan elite that has gone out of its way to corner every advantage for itself, and whose global ambitions have been allowed to ride roughshod over people's grounded sense of belonging to place, community and nation. Indeed, the corruption of democracy, under the banner of populism, is in part a backlash against the globalization of higher education, for which the latter must take its share of the blame. This rift between democracy and education is already tearing our societies apart. It is vital that we find ways to heal it. And to do so, I suggest, we need to return to the idea, drawn from the work of John Dewey, of both education and democracy as ways of commoning.

This is to insist, on the one hand, that democracy lies not in the willful imposition of majority rule, to the exclusion of all other interests, but in a never-ending quest for like-mindedness, for ways of going along together in difference. And on the other hand, it is to insist that education is not a gateway to the higher echelons of society but a way of leading life in which generations, even as they overlap, can contribute to each other's ongoing formation. In a recent interview following the release of his film *Peterloo*, documenting the events that took place in the city of Manchester two centuries ago, with the violent suppression of a protest to demand the reform of parliamentary representation, director Mike Leigh observed that the people who gathered on that day, "were hungry for education and hungry for the vote."[25] They knew that education and democracy go hand in hand, as twin foundations for human flourishing. Yet nowadays, Leigh went on to say, people who feel themselves to be equally downtrodden are both apathetic about education and cannot be bothered to vote. Why, he wondered, is that? There can be no more dramatic demonstration of the need to reconnect education and democracy, on the basis that the commitment of both is to the common good. It is no more for education to keep the wheels of the economy turning than it is for democracy to protect its vested interests. So why should people participate in the democratic process? And why should they go to study at a university?

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[25] The text of the interview is available at https://newint.org/features/2018/11/01/interview-mike-leigh.

They should do so, as Leigh intimated, because they are *hungry*. This hunger is not for advancement or promotion. It is not satisfied by eating at a higher table. It is a hunger to enjoy a *life* that is rich, fulfilling and generous, lived in freedom and trust. This is to find in study a way of life, not the means to stage a career. Time means something different here. There has been much discussion about the length of a degree course. Should it be four years or three, or even two? The pressure, for those who see in education the means to an end, has always been to compress the time it takes, in order to reduce costs and drive up efficiency. What if we were to apply the same logic to human lives? Would it not be much cheaper and more efficient to get them over and done with more quickly? The proposition is, of course, absurd. But it is no less absurd than measuring out the duration of scholarship in years. To align study with life, rather than with preparation for a career, is to acknowledge that it carries on as life does. We do not cease to study, any more than we cease to age. Education is about maturation, not matriculation. Thus, the university should be open, for any length of time and at any time of life, to all who are hungry for scholarship. But any hint of advantage or disadvantage, any idea of relative status and mobility, must be suspended at the gates. It has no business within. We should not even hear of it. For the university, I insist, is a place of freedom, wherein the structuring forces of society should be set aside, or at least held in abeyance.[26]

With this I return, finally, to the founding ambition that the university should be open to all. This is absolutely not to suggest that it should dissolve into a virtual "global city space," awash with data and mediated by high-tech interactivity.[27] On the contrary, if the university is to be a place of gathering, then its openness must primarily be to those who live around and about, in what we could call the region. By region, I do not mean a level of administration intermediate between the municipality and the state, or of a scale between the local and the global, but a territorially unbounded field of life and activity, within which are nevertheless hubs of concentration. The university is such a

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[26] On the idea of suspension, see Jan Masschelein and Maarten Simons, *In Defence of the School: A Public Issue*, trans. Jack McMartin (Leuven: E-ducation, Culture & Society Publishers, 2013). It means setting aside all those rules that place students, for example, on a certain rung of the social ladder, or that burden them with expectations to succeed in their future careers. "It is this suspension," Masschelein and Simons argue, "that instils the scholastic with equality from the outset" (2013: 35). They are speaking of the school (*scholè*), as a place and time of real freedom. But their argument applies equally to the university.

[27] As proposed, for example, by Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 179.

hub, a concentration of the intellectual life of the region.[28] Without denying that universities and their scholars are, and should be, in continual dialogue with one another, unconstrained by political and administrative barriers, I want to insist that the region is nevertheless the lifeblood of the university, the very source of its vitality. This is not just about outreach—about offering the public, or schoolchildren, occasional glimpses behind the scenes, or bringing in a bit of local culture to burnish the university brand. It is about fostering a scholarship that breathes the air of the region, of its people and their history, memory, communities and environment. This is what makes every university different in its character and modus operandi, even in its languages and customs.

Indeed, without this differentiation, higher education would become the bland, monotonous and standardized affair that it increasingly is today. Undoubtedly the most pernicious effect of such standardization is the rise of global rankings, which see universities jostling for position on a scale that pits eminence against regional affiliation. The higher up the university, the more disconnected it is from its milieu, and the more wedded to the service of an international corporate elite. The world's top-ranked institutions take pride in their cosmopolitanism, in the total detachment of the knowledge they produce from any sense of place, and in the rootlessness and mobility of their staff and student bodies. Like gated communities, their campuses are rigorously secluded from contact with the outside world, and access is carefully controlled. By contrast, many institutions ranked low in the scale, while often poorly funded and held in disdain by their overweening superiors, are truly embedded in their civic environments, and dedicated to improving the lives of all around. Their research might not appear in top-ranked, international journals, and their staff and students might not be in a position to emulate the globe-trotting, carbon-emitting lifestyles of their high-flying colleagues. For these institutions, the measure of distinction lies not in global eminence but in service to their regions. And it is only thanks to the foundations they have laid that we can hope to build universities for the future, dedicated to the common good.

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[28] "Higher education," as Roussell argues, "actually takes place at a regional level of specificity within the mesocosm of a university campus, its surrounds, and its extended phenotype of ecological networks (social, digital, political, and so on)" (David Roussell, "Dwelling in the Anthropocene: Reimagining University Learning Environments in Response to Social and Ecological Change," *Australian Journal of Environmental Education* 32 [2016]: 146–147).

Conclusion

I began with the purpose of the university, and I shall now conclude with it. For William Elphinstone, you will recall, it was to be open to all, dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others. When I and my colleagues at Aberdeen set out to draft our manifesto to reclaim the very university that Elphinstone had founded over five hundred years previously, we had once again to define its purpose in a manner appropriate to our times, in the defense of democracy, peaceful coexistence and human flourishing. I am proud of the formulation we came up with:

> The primary civic purpose of the university, in a democratic society, is to educate future generations of citizens and to forge the knowledge needed to sustain a just and prosperous world. The university is a place where people of integrity, from all nations, gather in order to learn to think, and think deeply, about the nature of things, about the ways we live, about truth and justice, peace and conflict, freedom and responsibility, the distribution of wealth, health and sustainability, beauty and virtue. They learn to weigh these thoughts against the evidence of experience, and to translate them into policy and practice, systems of law and governance, as well as great works of science, literature and art. These things are the foundations of civilised life. Our university will be a place in which they can be incubated and nurtured.[29]

This, I propose, is what it means to build a university for the common good, and I commend it to you.

Acknowledgments

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[29] The full text of the manifesto can be accessed at https://reclaimingouruniversity.wordpress.com/.

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4. *Healing the Ethical Cleft: Phronesis and University Ethical Leadership*

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Abstract: A misalignment exists between the institutional management of individual student behavior and the stated ethical principles undergirding modern higher education practices in the United States, ultimately creating an ethical failure serving no one. We discuss this misalignment from the site of student affairs, due to its charge to represent both university and student. A technocratic ethical discourse creates the illusion of decision-making autonomy that promises certain outcomes if "common sense" leadership practices are employed. The lens of technical rationality homogenizes and reduces perceived problems to simple either/ors that fail to address the inequitable effects of such ethical logic. We counter "common sense" leadership with a notion of ethical leadership called phronetic leadership, which is informed by an Aristotelian understanding of phronesis (practical wisdom), virtue ethics, and a Foucauldian awareness of governmentality. We argue that phronetic leaders can mend the cleft crippling institutional ethical foundations and practices.

Keywords: ethical leadership, higher education administration, phronesis, practical wisdom, senior student affairs officer, virtue ethics

Higher education leaders make judgements every day that depend upon some kind of ethical framework, whether consciously named and developed over time or couched within the cliché "common sense" or "what works." We argue that those operating from the overly rationalized "common sense" framework of ethics inevitably foster the conditions that diminish autonomy of the leader and more often generate outcomes that actually fail to benefit the very individuals the leader is charged with serving—the student, or in

the nomenclature of the modern university, the client. In this article we offer a critique of this rationalized form of ethics and propose a different kind of ethical leadership approach called "phronetic leadership," an ideal we argue should be considered a primary charter in preparing administrators, specifically those within student affairs, given their position as the primary representative of institution to student relations within the field of higher education.

While ethical theories abound, we argue that an ideal ethical leader must commit to the principles of virtue ethics worked out by classical Greek Philosopher Aristotle (384–322 B.C.), known as "The first teacher" within Arab culture. While Aristotle details virtue ethics with concrete specificity and nuance, the success or failure of his theory is contingent upon a concept that cannot be measured or quantified, the slippery but significant *phronesis* (from the ancient Greek—φρόνησῐς, translated as practical wisdom, prudence, wisdom in action, social wisdom).[1] While phronesis applied to all individuals, Aristotle specifically sought to produce ethical leaders for the preservation of the polis. Aristotle targeted the education of those "chosen" to make decisions for the citizenry, teaching the young men ("[*sic*]") to seek their telos through the concept of *arête'* (loosely trans. as "life of excellence"). One guided by *arête* began every decision with a basic question, something to the effect of "What does a good person do to achieve right action?,"[2] as opposed to "What is the outcome that will best serve my interest?" or "What decision will preserve the current structure?," or worse, no consideration whatsoever, just a box to check on a predetermined and decontextualized rubric guided by a "common sense" logic. Instead, phronesis demands an acute awareness of the inherent messy conditions within which any decision made in real time, with real human and institutional consequences, and contend with outcomes never certain or predetermined.[3] Phronetic leadership provides an ideal and primary charter through which to prepare administrators, specifically those within student affairs due to their proximity as the primary representative of institution to student relations within the field of higher education.

This would be a straightforward theoretical comparison of phronetic leadership principles to other ethical frameworks if not for a particular structural,

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[1] Aristotle, *Aristotle: Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Roger Crisp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[2] Aristotle; Emmanuel M. Michelakis, *Aristotle's Theory of Practical Principles* (Athens, Greece: Cleisiounis Press, 1961).

[3] Bent Flyvbjerg, "Aristotle, Foucault, and Progressive Phronesis: Outline of an Applied Ethics for Sustainable Development," in *Planning Theory*, ed. Ali Madanipour (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 340–354.

institutional constant that undermines and destabilizes efforts to engage in phronetic leadership. We refer to a systemic form of technical rationality that permeates every space of institutional life of the university.[4] Technical rationality, a century old set of powerful beginning assumptions and operationalized as within the rhetoric of "common sense" decision making alluded to earlier, reduces ethical decision to a rubric of binary do's and don'ts, stripping any autonomy from one charged with deciding daily issues.[5] Technical rationality is a pattern of decision making that ignores context and constructs a weak veneer of desired but highly restricted outcomes that claim to serve the needs of students as well as the community of those individuals representing the university in that service. We dispute these claims. We argue universities response to long held foundational ideals of education for equality, equity, justice, and community excellence (to name a few significant ones) generates just the opposite condition.[6] The effect of this response is an ethical cleft, a disembodied ethical practice and misalignment between stated institutional principles and technical rational "common sense" institutional practices.[7]

In fact, the ill effects of privileging such technical rationality sensibilities need illuminating. Otherwise, phronetic leadership will not be break through the shadows of "common sense" rationality that asserts objective reality but is in fact just the opposite and that damages the very ideals it claims to uphold. Worse, the technical rationality apparatus deceives leaders into believing an illusion of deciding "freely," but in actuality are submitting to what has already been determined, a decontextualized ethics and policies that enumerate

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[4]   Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Random House, 1964); Andrew Feenberg, "Subversive Rationalization: Technology, Power, and Democracy." *Inquiry* 35, no. 3–4 (1992): 301–322; Andrew Feenberg, *Questioning Technology* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Andrew Feenberg, *Between Reason and Experience—Essays in Technology and Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010); Michel Foucault, "Questions of Method," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 73–86; Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1984).

[5]   Foucault; Pieter Tijmes, "Albert Borgmann: Technology and the Character of Everyday Life," in *American Philosophy of Technology: The Empirical Turn*, ed. Hans Achterhuis (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 11–36; Neil Levy, "Foucault as Virtue Ethicist," *Foucault Studies* 1 (2006): 20–31.

[6]   Richard Smith, "Paths of Judgement: The Revival of Practical Wisdom," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 31, no. 3 (1999): 327–340.

[7]   Arthur W. Chickering, "Reclaiming Our Soul: Democracy and Higher Education," *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 35, no. 1 (2003): 38–44.

do's and don'ts under the guise of clarity, accountability, and transparency.[8] By interrogating the role of Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs), which we put forth as edifying examples given their proximity to students and role as representative of intuitional ethics to the student, we hope to demonstrate how administrative leaders would benefit to consider the human context when making decisions that impact their communities of service.[9] We seek to find spaces for phronetic leadership to thrive despite the disciplinary dominance of technical rationality that restricts what can and cannot be considered in any ethical decision. With the help of Flyvbjerg's analysis of ethics by way of Aristotle and Foucault, we will propose some beginning notes on a vision of phronetic leadership[10] that confronts the ethical cleft that burdens higher education by emphasizing the individual level of leadership.[11]

Technical Rationality

Technical rationality is a well-trodden concept that has a long history both theoretically and as an applied framework, with sociologist Max Weber credited with delivering the most thorough understanding of its wide ranging effects at the start of the twentieth century.[12] Technical rationality and the common sense practices that stem from this rationality to understand efficiency as effectiveness are symptomatic of the neoliberal university.

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[8]   Gregory H. Davis, *Technology: Humanism or Nihilism: A Critical Analysis of the Philosophical Basis and Practice of Modern Technology* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1981); Bent Flyvbjerg, Todd Landman, and Sanford Schram, eds., *Real Social Science: Applied Phronesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); William. G. Tierney, ed., *Governance and the Public Good* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006).

[9]   Ryan P. Barone, "In Search of Social Justice Praxis: A Critical Examination of Senior Student Affairs Officers' Leadership Practices," PhD diss., University of Denver, 2014; Sandra M. Estanek, "Student Affairs and Truth: A Reading of the Great Books," *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice* 36, no. 4 (1999): 278–287.

[10] In this article, we are attempting to lay out some basic outlines of phronetic leadership and some of the tensions and institutional hurdles that problematize such ethical leadership. Due to the limited space we are not able to address each concept or term to its fullest, and hence must make some claims and statements without the usual in-depth analysis in order to make the overall argument.

[11] R. J. Holton, "Max Weber, 'Rational Capitalism,' and Renaissance Italy: A Critique of Cohen," *American Journal of Sociology* 89, no. 1 (1983): 166–180.

[12] R. J. Holton, "Max Weber, 'Rational Capitalism,' and Renaissance Italy: A Critique of Cohen," *American Journal of Sociology* 89, no. 1 (1983): 166–180.

A critical understanding of the effects of technical rationality on what is deemed common sense leadership practices is vital for understanding why phronetic leadership is a preferable, though complicated and tougher ideal to attain. The quickened rate that technical rationality has altered institutional existence in the United States makes identifying, specifying and comprehending the impact of multiplying effects challenging if not impossible.[13] However, Davis has traced one staggering impact within the bureaucratic practices born of technical rationality employed within politics and government, directly affecting how higher educational institutions are valued, understood, practiced, and organized—the creation of complex hierarchies that administrative leaders must navigate.[14]

Embedded within these hierarchies are multiplying arrays of ever intensifying "accountability" measures, which claim to honor transparency and accountability to the public but in fact are constituted within the logic of technical rationality that has at its highest ideals the "virtues" of efficiency and effectiveness as ends in themselves.[15] According to Richard Smith, "the ascendancy of technicism, of technical or instrumental rationality, is sufficiently marked in education…the assumption that the main values of the education system can be characterized in terms of efficiency and effectiveness" and the growth of accountability measures all indicate a great challenge is faced by philosophers of education who desire a, "richer, more humane and in the end more educational conception of education and … other forms of public service."[16] What is made possible, and what is not made possible, through technical rationality is of vital importance to the decisions that are made within higher education. Feenberg said that we must, "… explain the social and cultural impact of technical rationality without losing track of its concrete social embodiment in actual devices and systems."[17] One must first become aware of the contours of this form of rationality before one can name it, describe it, and recognize the productive effects it has on ethics, decision-making, and

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[13] Davis.

[14] It is important to point out that while technical rationality has fit easily into the conceptual and implementation of bureaucratic functions, meaning processes of managing and controlling the flow of information within an institution, it is not the only logic by which bureaucracies function. It has just been the dominant one since modernism has drifted into post-modernism (e.g. Lyotard, 1984); Davis.

[15] Derek Sellman, "Reclaiming Competence for Professional Phronesis," in *Phronesis as Professional Knowledge*, eds. Elizabeth A. Kinsella and Allan Pitman (Boston, MA: Sense Publishers, 2012), 115–130.

[16] Smith, 327.

[17] Feenberg, *Between*, 150.

forms of leadership. Furthermore, one must become aware of how technical rationality is reproduced through relations of power, normalized practices, organization of programs, and processes of operation within neoliberal higher education institutions.

Technical rationality makes it appear that universals can be (1) known, and (2) applied as scientific knowledge in order to find a concrete solution for any problem, regardless of the complex values of a community. The goods that technical rationality promises to produce are objective solutions (through methods)—weighed and measured by experts in advance—for any problem that is encountered by a leader. The acceptance of this arrangement becomes internalized by leaders (and others), as the conditions that must be fulfilled to arrive at said solution become not the concern of the leader but rather the technical expert who, rather invisibly, determines solutions through the utilization of various methods and technologies.[18] Rather than deliberating over a problem, technical rationality promises to allow a leader to "hand off" a problem for it to be studied through means of quantifiable measures, and once the problem is appropriately "sized-up" through a standardized process a solution can be returned to the leader that will simply require implementation of specified steps.

Technical rationality is supposed to offer techniques of leading and making decisions that can be predetermined before one ever encounters a future problem. With the right outcomes-based training (education), codification of ethics, and the application of appropriate technologies one can produce the desired outcome with regularity. The individual leader is viewed as being less important, because they are reduced to a technician who is applying knowledge and skill within a formulaic scenario. Further, through the appearance of convenience in decision-making leaders are ultimately less engaged in the process of making a decision; it could even be argued that the leader is not in fact making any decision at all; instead, they are delivering a decision that has been made for them.[19] Technical rationality puts ends and means in a static form because it is assumed that what matters is what is produced; therefore, the way in which something is produced is not of importance.[20] Through technical rationality, certain outcomes can be sought (e.g., a vision of a greater good), and other consequences can be ignored as being unimportant, inconsequential, or even non-existent. This is disconcerting, not only for its dismissal of context, but also because it is the dominant rationality and

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[18] Tijmes.
[19] Tijmes.
[20] Smith.

is embedded in higher education practices to an extent that its existence and influence is not known; in a sense, it is hidden, because of its wide acceptance as a common sense approach to leadership.

The scientific methods and technologies developed in alignment with technical rationality, with supposed predictive capabilities regarding human behavior, have been unable to live up to the challenges of describing the complexity and unpredictability of human existence and social communities.[21] However, despite these limitations, technical rationality continues as the dominant logic, even though it falsely conceptualizes issues that simplifies the act of thinking but actually obfuscates understanding, and hence, wisdom in action.[22] The ethical dilemmas faced by Senior Student Affairs Officers cannot be addressed in an ethically authentic way through technical rationality due to its overarching concern with the most efficient way to accomplish a narrow, "measurable" goal rather than considering what goal should be sought in consideration with the possible means that align with said goal.[23] The presence of such ethical blinders is troubling.

Phronetic Leadership

Phronetic leadership's conceptual foundation is rooted firmly in Aristotelian virtue ethics; in addition to virtue ethics, our understanding of phronetic leadership is strengthened by a Foucauldian understanding of relations of power, governmentality, and surveillance. Phronetic leadership is ethical leadership, as a phronetic leader is aware of the always already ethical consequences of their decisions. Phronetic leadership is different than a formulaic or skills-based approach to leadership that is indicative of commonsense leadership approaches that are informed through technical rationality. Common sense practices create an illusion of decision-making autonomy and predictable outcomes for a leader, when in fact the decisions are already pre-determined and therefore not conscious of a community's context. Perceived problems are homogenized and reduced to simple either/ors that fail to analyze and address problems in an ethical manner; this reductive approach limits the ability of the leader to lead wisely.

What is considered wise is considered good for the community. A practically wise leader can apply their knowledge, experience, and values through

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21   Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Social Science*, 4th ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2012).
22   Flyvbjerg, "Habermas."
23   Tijmes.

a process that is often described as judgement. It is through wise judgement that the ethical approach that is most likely to be achievable within a specific community can be determined. Instead of the practical wisdom (phronesis) of an ethical leader guiding the decision-making process, what most often occurs is that practical wisdom is not considered as being the best approach to determine the best action/inaction for a given scenario. Instead, technical approaches to leadership, such as managerialism, serve as the common sense "best practice."

Leaders with an awareness of values (what Aristotle called virtues in his work on ethics) cannot only choose different actions than if employing technical rationality, they can also challenge and bring transparency to the faulty assumptions and problematics of employing technical rationality as the standard of operation for making decisions. Phronesis, as developed by Aristotle in his two works on Ethics (*Nicomachean Ethics* and *Eudemian Ethics*), has over the last decade received greater interest by those concerned with the direction of education, especially given institutional schooling's emphasis on quantification over an ethical, virtuous standpoint in which the individual leader makes a decision appropriate for that particular situation, which is rarely generalizable (generalizability and universals are something that technical rationality seeks and claims to be able to achieve).

An understanding of phronetic leadership is rooted in an understanding of Aristotle's concept of phronesis. The Greek concept of episteme (scientific knowledge) can be distinguished from techne (skill) and phronesis (practical wisdom), "because what can be known by scientific knowledge is demonstrateable, and skill and practical wisdom are concerned with what can be otherwise."[24] According to Flyvbjerg, a distinction between techne and episteme is that episteme, "aims at uncovering how things are that cannot be otherwise," yet, "the product of techne is always capable of being otherwise or of being or of not being."[25] With this distinction, Flyvbjerg writes that, according to Aristotle, "techne concerns what is variable, not what is fixed; it concerns pragmatics, not universals."[26] Phronesis incorporates both episteme and techne, as phronesis is a form of reason that is developed through one's knowledge, as well as skill gained through experience. Phronesis can be thought of as making knowledge and skill match up to coordinate and combine them in order to choose the most appropriate action in a given scenario. Therefore, an approach to leadership nested in phronesis extends the awareness and abilities of

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[24]   Aristotle, 108.
[25]   Flyvbjerg, "Aristotle," 342.
[26]   Flyvbjerg, "Aristotle," 342.

the leader beyond the limits of technical skill and official knowledge; phronetic leadership is dependent on the character of the leader and therefore cannot be understood in a faulty thought vacuum that divorces the character of a leader as being inconsequential. Phronesis is the most important intellectual virtue, and it is the form of reason that is utilized to determine how to incorporate the appropriate knowledge and skill to act in the right way; the right way is what is judged as most appropriate when considering the context of a situation and what can be practically realized in action.

Phronesis is concerned with universals as well as particulars, and the knowledge of particulars is developed through one's experience.[27] The contours and nuances of any community's values become clearer as one gains experience within said community as well as in different communities that allow for comparison and contrasting of those experiences. According to Bent Flyvbjerg, who draws on Aristotle's conception of phronesis, "Phronesis concerns values and goes beyond analytical, scientific knowledge (episteme) and technical knowledge or know how (techne) and it involves judgements and decisions made in the manner of a virtuoso social actor."[28] Flyvbjerg describes phronesis as being concerned with acting in a manner that is concerned with what is good or bad for humanity; specifically, phronesis is concerned with, "an analysis of values and their implications for action."[29] According to Aristotle, the practically wise person is focused on the particulars of a scenario that allow one to determine what can be achieved through action.[30] It is partially through experience that a practically wise leader is able to address problems in a different and more contextually-situated manner than can be addressed by a leader who is limited to the application of skill and/or scientific knowledge. Hence, the argument that phronetic leadership is an ideal approach to leadership that serves as a dynamic form of ethics. This is a form of ethics that is not limited to a codified form of ethics; rather, it resides with an individual leader who is able to apply phronetic ethics in accord with their skill, practical experience, character, and intelligence.

Phronesis has a different view of ends and means than the assessment offered through technical rationality. Phronesis views the ends and means as in constant conversation with one another; the means must be chosen in accordance with standards of excellence, values, and ethical norms which

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[27] Michelakis, *77*; John A. Vella, *Aristotle: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008), 152.

[28] Flyvbjerg, "Making," 371.

[29] Flyvbjerg, "Aristotle," 342.

[30] Aristotle, 110.

are internal to one's community. Further, the end is not viewed as being separate from the actions (means) one takes, but instead the end is sought through one's actions.[31] Aristotle explained that practically wise people are those who, "calculate well to promote some good end that lies outside the ambit of a skill; so, where living well as a whole is concerned, the person capable of deliberation will also be practically wise."[32] According to Aristotle's conception of phronesis, it is not a skill or form of logic that can be adopted when needed for a given situation; instead, phronesis is only possible for those who are good, according to the manner in which they live their lives. Therefore, leading phronetically is not simply a skill acquired across a short period. Instead, there must be the right conditions, virtuous role models, character dispositions, and experiences to equip and develop a phronetic leader capable of making decisions for the "good" of the community.

To explore the notion of the "good" demands a departure from those moral and ethical gifts of preconceived assumptions that define a place and passed on to each child, and a willingness to venture into the sphere of virtue ethics and the moral philosophy of phronesis. For Aristotle, the good is all about right action. According to Aristotle, what makes any action right is that the chosen action is virtuous, rather than vicious.[33] Aristotle called this act of choosing the virtuous action the Golden Mean (e.g., the action that can be practically achieved while seeking the middle ground between deficiency and excess of virtue and vice). The Golden Mean is not static, nor can it be pre-determined; as an example, two phronetic leaders faced with the same context may make different decisions. However, according to Aristotle's understanding of the Golden Mean neither decision would be wrong; in fact, both decisions would be sound decisions due to the manner in which the decisions were made by a practically wise leader. An individual comes to have virtues of character through habits. While character virtues are developed through consistent habituation, the intellectual virtues (including phronesis) are acquired primarily through being taught about them by virtuous role models.[34] One develops character virtues through the repeated performance of just actions, courageous actions, etc., while receiving feedback from role models who are able to teach how to act in a virtuous rather than vicious manner. The presence of role models is vital in developing the right kind of habits and understanding what choices align with a community's standards

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[31] Smith.
[32] Aristotle, 107.
[33] Aristotle, xvii.
[34] Aristotle, xiv.

of excellence. It is through the habit of carrying out these actions in a virtu-ous manner that one hones and acquires virtues of character (understood as character dispositions). Through this continual process of acting, receiving feedback, and adjusting future actions toward the Golden Mean, one can learn how to choose the virtuous action in a consistent manner. According to Aristotle, an action is virtuous when it is chosen by an individual—from among other possible actions—as being the most virtuous action that can be taken within that specific context. An action cannot be understood as virtu-ous when the action is not intentionally chosen by an individual as being the best action (i.e. decisions pre-determined through technical rationality are not considered virtuous decisions). Virtues are character dispositions that one develops through the practice and habituation of deciding on an action that falls between vice and deficiency.[35] The person who has virtue of character is therefore most often able to act in a way that is the right way to act, at the right time, and for the right reasons. This will vary according to the given situation and context of the community; therefore, a quantitative measure of how brave or generous someone should be in a given situation cannot be determined in advance—which means an individual is not courageous in a static sense but rather consistently demonstrates the ability to choose the appropriately courageous action in a variety of situations. One must choose how to act courageously when considering the practical limits placed on them in any given scenario as well as how their actions as an individual impact the community.

Practical limits surrounding any leadership decision necessitate a Fou-cauldian understanding of power and regimes of rationality, in order to judge what is practicably achievable in action as a phronetic leader. This means that a phronetic leader focuses on developing an awareness of the practices and relations of power that shape the margins of what is most likely to be achieved by any decision. With a lack of focus on practices, many theoretical approach-es will fail to contribute to an awareness of socio-historical context. Gordon's critique of political theory is that it, "attends too much to institutions, and too little to practices."[36] This focus on institutions can limit one's understand-ing of the relations of power which can be traced through particular practices. One's approach to analysis of power must therefore focus on micro ques-tions of how processes operate through a system of practices and behaviors.

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[35]　Aristotle, xv.
[36]　Colin Gordon, "Governmental Rationality: An Introduction," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 4.

Flyvbjerg interpreted Foucault's critique of unachievable ideals as, "not even entire institutional systems can ensure freedom, even though they are established with that purpose."[37] So, one must shed a utopian view of freedom or lack of oppression for all, through a Foucauldian understanding of power.

Flyvbjerg sees value in the emphasis that Foucault places on the dynamics of power, for, "understanding how power works is the first prerequisite for action, because action is the exercise of power."[38] This Foucauldian approach to analyzing the techniques and relations of power necessitates a focus on the concrete, within a specific context. Yet, a danger is that while focusing on the particular and local, one may overlook generalized conditions that are concerned with institutions, constitutions, and structural issues. While institutions may appear to be neutral and independent, Foucault says the political task is to criticize these institutions, "in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them (Chomsky and Foucault 1974: 171)."[39]

In response to power, Foucault, "stresses substantive micro politics."[40] The specifics of these micro politics must be determined by the leader in action, for it would be overly reductive to construct an outline or a prescription for such action (e.g. the ethical approach cannot be codified in advance). Foucault would not prescribe the process or outcome for actions; instead, he would recommend that individuals focus on conflict and relations of power, "as the most effective point of departure for the fight against domination."[41] This fight, according to Flyvbjerg, is "central to civil society both internally, i.e., in the relationship between different groups within civil society … and externally, in the relationship of civil society to the spheres of government and business where the fight against domination can be said to be constitutive of civil society."[42] The question that is often asked in relation to questions of domination of others or perceived injustices is "What can I do about it?" The desire to take action should not lead one to accept a universal prescription; such a false solution could be found through technical rationality. Foucault would argue that this desire to find such a prescription is part of the problem itself, because of what it makes possible and what it makes impossible.[43] Yet, according to Levy, "Foucault tells us, that where the codes are numerous

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37   Flyvbjerg, "Habermas," 222.
38   Flyvbjerg, "Habermas," 228.
39   Flyvbjerg, "Habermas," 223.
40   Flyvbjerg, "Habermas," 224.
41   Flyvbjerg, "Habermas," 224.
42   Flyvbjerg, "Habermas," 224.
43   Flyvbjerg, "Habermas."

detailed, 'practices of the self […] almost fade away.' But finding an adequate place for liberty in ethics requires that the practices of the self-remain vital."[44] This is a key point for leaders to take note of in relation to the development of codes of ethics that verge on prescribing action, policies that function as decision-making grids, and quantitative assessment plans that attempt to determine how programs should be organized. This also points to the need for the development and presence of wise leaders who can lead with dynamic and contextually situated ethics.

Foucault focuses his efforts, according to Flyvbjerg, on, "the local and context-dependent and toward the analysis of strategies and tactics as basis for power and struggle."[45] One should take from this that quick or easy answers are likely "answers" in name alone. A different reality must be considered to not seek such false solutions. An embrace of struggle with conflict and a messy understanding of power relations is key for leaders, when addressing problems through a Foucauldian conception of political engagement. A Foucauldian understanding of power and recognition of the harmful impact of prescriptions for action aligns with an Aristotelian understanding of episteme, techne, phronesis, and virtue ethics; this coalescence of Aristotelian and Foucauldian theory is the basis for phronetic leadership.

Senior Student Affairs Officer

Phronetic leadership is a leadership ideal for Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs), due to the complexity of their roles within communities of higher education. SSAOs cannot avoid participating in relations of power, or the utilization of disciplining technologies of power as administrators. Even if SSAOs become aware of the fact that their actions have endless consequences, this awareness will not keep their actions from reproducing relations of power in normalized ways.[46] Therefore, SSAOs must come to terms with this reality, and in the process shed any naivety surrounding an interpretive ideal of achieving a utopian outcome through every action. However, SSAOs must not let this self-awareness lead to apathy; instead, Foucault would suggest, they must participate in, "a hyper- and pessimistic activity" that contributes toward a more just and wise practice.[47]

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[44] Levy, 22.
[45] Flyvbjerg, "Habermas," 227.
[46] Alecia Y. Jackson and Lisa A. Mazzei, *Thinking with Theory in Qualitative Research: Viewing Data Across Multiple Perspectives* (Routledge, 2011).
[47] Arthur W. Frank, "The Feel for Power Games: Everyday Phronesis and Social Theory," in *Real Social Science: Applied Phronesis*, ed. Bent Flyvbjerg, Todd Landman, and Sanford Schram (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2012), 61.

Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO) is a term that is used to describe higher education administrators who have the role and responsibility of being the top hierarchical leader for student affairs divisions for a given higher education institution. Responsibilities vary for each SSAO, but these responsibilities are complex and intertwined with most other divisions within a college or university. Roles fulfilled by the SSAO can include: "disciplinarian; advocate, mentor, and friend; educator and resource; mediator; initiator, and change agent."[48] The care, well-being, health, and safety of students most often fall within the Senior Student Affairs Officer's purview. Their work is often described as concerning student life outside the classroom. Therefore, having an ethic of care for students and student advocacy are espoused as principle values for SSAOs; yet, having these values inform decisions may run counter to the additional priorities of managerial efficiency, effectiveness, policy development, and interaction with extra-institutional publics.[49] Additionally, viewing students not as clients/customers but as members of a community who need to develop character dispositions through meaningful and sometimes consequential learning experiences runs counter to the neo-liberal delivery of higher education. An SSAO who maintains an ethic of social justice through student advocacy is often, "viewed with suspicion and concern by fellow administrators who find this behavior threatening and who proceed to isolate [them] from the real decision."[50] Barone, writes about the many obstacles that Senior Student Affairs Officers face, including, "funding, curricular hegemony, pedagogical conservatism, and centuries of oppression."[51]

Valuing equity and maintaining an ethic of care can lead to political conflicts that may threaten one's job security as an SSAO. This is due, at least in part, to the tension inherent when technocracy's commonsense prioritization of efficiency limits the possibility of phronetic leadership. The risk on one's job security, when making decisions as a SSAO, is great: "the riskiness of the [SSAO] position is magnified by the visibility and controversy inherent in it, possibly exceeded only by that of the [institution's] president."[52] These

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[48]   Joy L. Gaston-Gayles et al., "From Disciplinarian to Change Agent: How the Civil Rights Era Changed the Roles of Student Affairs Professionals," *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice* 42, no. 3 (2005): 268.

[49]   Paul A. Bloland, "A Personal Point of View Student Personnel Training for the Chief Student Affairs Officer: Essential or Unnecessary," *NASPA Journal* 17, no. 2 (1979): 57–62.

[50]   Bloland, 58.

[51]   Barone, 207.

[52]   Linda Kuk, Margaret King, and Cynthia Forrest, "The Lived Transitions of Senior Student Affairs Leaders," *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice* 49, no. 2 (2012): 176.

risks necessitate political engagement by the individual SSAO. The need to engage politically was evident in the responses to a survey completed by 58 SSAOs; Herdlein, Kretovics, Rossiter, and Sobczak found that the majority of SSAOs (65.4%) reported that they spend, "between 11% and 50% of their time managing politics on their campuses."[53] Furthermore, over 96% of the survey respondents agree that to not participate politically as an SSAO is to operate without a full range of resources. The issues requiring the most political behavior, according to the survey respondents, were budgetary issues and resource allocation.[54]

SSAOs must politically engage in an effective manner when seeking to acquire the resources for their divisions' operations.[55] When considering the technical nature of budgets and the dividing of resources between different units within colleges/universities, the pressure to align with normalized ways of assessing/communicating a unit's impact on education are clear. Making a case for resources through a vastly different rationality than other divisional leaders may quickly harm an SSAO's ability to operate effectively; they be misunderstood or be viewed as striving for different priorities. The common sense of implementing quantitative measures to highlight the impact of a student affairs division is evident when needing to make the case for budget and resource allocation. Yet, some of the most important decisions and impacts of student affairs divisions are incompatible with such commonsense forms of measurement. Barone recognizes the incompatibility of being able to incorporate value-based judgments into decision-making as often leading to simply focusing on "metrics-based outcomes."[56] An SSAO, who is a phronetic leader, must recognize the prevalence of this common sense and resist its effects, in order to seek the middle ground (or Golden Mean) of sustaining the meaningful impact of their division.

Vaala writes about student affairs administration in a manner that describes it as simply a skill on which to be trained.[57] This view of it as a skill fails to recognize the complex nature of SSAOs responsibilities, and reduces understanding it as a combination of techne and episteme—absent of phronesis.

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[53] Richard Herdlein et al., "A Survey of Senior Student Affairs Officer Perceptions of the Role of Politics in Student Affairs Administration," *New York Journal of Student Affairs* 11, no. 1 (2011): 48.

[54] Herdlein et al., 46-47.

[55] Cheryl D. Lovell and Linda A. Kosten, "Skills, Knowledge, and Personal Traits Necessary for Success as a Student Affairs Administrator: A Meta-Analysis of Thirty Years of Research," *NASPA Journal* 37, no. 4 (2000): 567.

[56] Barone, 209–210.

[57] Vaala.

Such normalized expectations regarding how one should lead as an SSAO are absent of the virtuous character required of phronesis. Dalton recognizes that, what he calls practical wisdom, "is an important dimension of leadership not often discussed in the professional literature of student affairs because it is so difficult to define and measure."[58] However, practical wisdom must not be ignored, due to the inability to study and write about it in normalized ways. It is due to the multifaceted nature of student life that Senior Student Affairs Officers must be able to respond to the needs and demands of several different, sometimes conflicting, constituencies. They must be able to assess the environment, identify problems, and propose and implement solutions, taking into account the mission and values of the institution and the goals of its president.[59]

The contextual considerations that an SSAO must take into account vary across institutional type (i.e., private, public, or religiously affiliated institution). Yet, the influence of technocracy is evident across institutional type. According to Tierney, "the rise of administration and bureaucracy is a hallmark of American higher education in the twentieth century."[60] Hyman, Beeler, and Benedict highlight the increasing call for institutions to develop assessment measures that are designed to hold higher education institutions accountable for the quality education of students, and these accountability measures are not isolated to classroom instruction.[61] The growth of institutions participating in technorational forms of assessment has contributed to a normalizing of approaches for measuring educational outcomes and student success. The way in which student affairs professionals come to know what is true is of vital importance as it relates to their development as leaders. Inexperienced student affairs professionals are especially at risk of developing as leaders that are informed by technical rationality; according to Dalton, inexperienced student affairs professionals tend to rely on their intellectual knowledge when they are faced with a problem situation; these inexperienced student affairs professionals have not yet had the experiences that have given them the opportunity to recognize the nuances that distinguish what may appear as similar situations.[62] The ability to recognize nuance can come

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58   Jon C. Dalton, "The Art and Practical Wisdom of Student Affairs Leadership," *New Directions for Student Services* 98 (2002): 3.

59   Estanek, 278.

60   Tierney, 8.

61   Randy E. Hyman, Karl J. Beeler, and Larry G. Benedict, "Outcomes Assessment and Student Affairs: New Roles and Expectations," *NASPA Journal* 32, no. 1 (1994): 20–30.

62   Dalton, 6.

through practical experience. SSAOs have far more practical experience than new student affairs professionals, as SSAOs often have a decade or more of practical experience in student affairs. That complexity of the role necessitates experience as a precursor to leading as an SSAO.

The complexity, breadth, and depth of roles and responsibilities that must be fulfilled by a Senior Student Affairs Officers are vast. Compliance with federal, state, and institutional law and policy is paramount, as is an ethic of care for individual student well-being and success. It is through these sometimes seemingly disparate responsibilities and roles that the tension arises of serving as a representative of the institution and student advocate. Being aware of values is vital for SSAOs to function from a place of awareness/resistance regarding the influencing factors and rationalities that shape common sense leadership. To deny the complexity (and confusion) of leading and living in a good manner is to live in an unsustainable state of denial; yet, this state of denial becomes easier to accept when decision making is reduced to techno-rational approaches. These approaches are informed by a utilitarian ethic that cannot consider the same value-based questions of which the phronetic leader is equipped to ask and act upon. A commitment to the development of oneself as a phronetic leader, who can resist the dangers of technical rationality and heal the ethical cleft through wise leadership, is a moral imperative facing SSAOs.

Summary

> The problem is not of trying to dissolve [relations of power] in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give … the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics … which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination.[63]

The problems that Senior Student Affairs Officers face are complex and evolving; therefore, higher education communities are best served by leaders who can put means and ends in conversation in order to make decisions that are the most effective in the context of a specific time and place. Phronetic leaders learn cyclically by making decisions as a leader, and through the dynamic process of phronetic leadership their wisdom is constantly, "reconstructed and enriched," and the more that the lived experience of the phronetic leader is reconstructed in this way, "the more sensitive and insightful phronesis becomes."[64] So, phronetic leadership is necessarily fluid and dependent upon

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[63] Flyvbjerg, "Habermas," 223.
[64] Joseph Dunne, *Back to the Rough Ground: "Phronesis" and "Techne" in Modern Philosophy and in Aristotle* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993), 293.

the leader's character dispositions, virtuous role models' feedback, community context, and wisdom; in a sense, phronetic leadership is never in a static form, as it is continually reconstituted through lived experience, even though it is grounded in the character virtues (values) of a leader. A phronetic leader's Foucauldian-like understanding of power makes it possible to know what is practicably achievable in action while simultaneously being the least oppressive. A phronetic leader commits to living and leading in a virtuous manner. Leading virtuously obliges a one to refine character dispositions by weighing actions as being excessive with vice or deficient or virtue (striving for the Golden Mean), considering ethical consequence, grounding decisions in the values of the community of practice, honing leadership skills by observing and absorbing all the contexts that define a community so as to better transform all the bits and pieces of information into social wisdom and right action, which entails analyzing common sense practices, seeking critical feedback from virtuous role models, and refining one's wisdom through reflexive practice.

Phronetic leadership is not without its problems, even as an ideal. However, the kinds of questions that can be addressed, as well as the manner in which these questions can be addressed offers possibilities in action that are absent in other forms of leadership shaped by different forms of rationality and therefore also understand ethics differently. The moral philosophy of phronetic leadership is values-conscious and power-aware. Phronetic leadership enables the phronetic leader to act in ways that cannot be consistently achieved by non-phronetic leaders. It is the consistently ethical approach of phronetic leadership that can contribute to a sustainable middle ground of ethical leadership. Phronetic leadership allows one to ethically apply science and technology, rather than having either erase ethics.[65] SSAOs must first acquire skill and knowledge, and put these in practice with virtuous character—repeatedly—in order to gain the experience that is required to develop practical wisdom.

It is without question that the complexities of problems, relations of power, and burden of responsibilities for a Senior Student Affairs Officer manifest in a kind of tension in action that is unique to the SSAO position. Yet, this constant tension is compatible with the honing of phronetic leadership. Phronetic leadership for SSAOs cannot be reduced to prescriptive methods, rather it must be enacted in continual practice by leaders who have extensive practical experience in student affairs, who maintain a steady pulse on their institutional community's values, history, norms, and politics, as well as the relations of power that can be explored through an analysis of

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[65]   Flyvbjerg, "Making," 373.

institutional practices. Further, phronetic leadership maintains a commitment to working to disrupt relations of power and practices in ways that reduce domination. Phronetic leadership is not enacted as a method in moments of crisis or dilemma, rather it is embodied by the phronetic leader through everyday practices, language use, actions, as well as maintaining a commitment to reflexive practice that strives to explore the various consequences of each decision while aiming for virtuous action (e.g., striving for the Golden Mean or middle ground).

According to Kavanagh, "part of the conceptual power of phronesis is that it counters the desire to create a systematic body of generalized knowledge (technical rationality) and reminds us that we should neither forget nor seek to overcome the conditionality, situatedness and historicity of human life."[66] SSAOs that seek the ideal of phronetic leadership can begin to challenge existing relations of power in new ways that are not possible through method-based forms of leadership. No matter how a SSAO may dream about bringing about change as they make decisions, if they are informed only through technical rationality nothing will change due to their leadership; instead, what will continue to be left is an illusion that something important has happened. This illusion is created through the functionalist, data-collecting, and universals seeking nature of technical rationality's promise. Phronetic leadership offers a better alternative for Senior Student Affairs Officers to heal the ethical cleft, through wise leadership that is contextually-situated, value-informed, and conscious of relations of power.

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[66] Donncha Kavanagh, "Problematizing Practice: MacIntyre and Management," *Organization* 20, no. 1 (2013): 111.

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5. Toward an Ethics of Opacity in Higher Education Internationalization

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Abstract: This conceptual essay employs the intersecting lenses of critical university studies (CUS) and decolonial theory to make a critical intervention into the terrain of ethics in higher education internationalization. It is argued that a combined framework of ideas from CUS and decolonial theory will bring a sharper social justice *and* decolonizing edge to debates on how to disrupt dominant ethical frames of action in higher education internationalization. In particular, the author develops Corey Walker's (2011) notion of the "ethics of opacity" as an approach that interrogates the logics of neoliberalism and coloniality/modernity in internationalization practices and policies of higher education. It is suggested that the ethics of opacity provides ethical and political recognition to the opaque sites and repressed knowledges of marginalized and colonized peoples. The paper discusses the implications of the ethics of opacity for a renewed agenda in internationalization practices and policies of higher education.

Keywords: higher education, ethics, internationalization, decolonial theory, critical university studies

Introduction

[T]he philosophical ethics most in fashion, the standard ones, and even those that have a critical orientation with a claim to being postconventional in character, are in fact themselves the ethics of minorities (most emphatically of hegemonic,

dominating minorities; those that own the resources, the words, the arguments, the capital, the armies).[1]

[I]f a man could write a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all other books in the world.[2]

The above quotations highlight two issues that are at the heart of this conceptual essay: first, any attempts to "translate" decolonial ethics into our familiar (Western) ethical theories risk reproducing existing colonial logics;[3] and, second, the project of developing and deploying ethically responsive critical knowledges and intellectual practices carries within itself the possibility of its own demise, as it is difficult to be cognizant of its own epistemological and other limitations.[4] Both issues highlight the (im)possibilities of articulating a critical project in higher education that interrogates the ethico-political limits of the rising focus on *internationalization* as a key strategic priority in many universities around the world.[5]

Internationalization has become an increasingly important phenomenon for higher education around the world, as it has been positively presented as a means to enrich university curricula and teaching methods, increase mobility of students and staff in and out of universities, build partnerships, and increase capacity building.[6] In general, internationalization is regarded as

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[1]   Enrique Dussel, *Ethics of Liberation: In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), xx.

[2]   Ludwig Wittgenstein in Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (London: Blackwell, 1992), 2.

[3]   Louiza Odysseos, "Prolegomena to Any Future Decolonial Ethics: Coloniality, Poetics and 'Being Human as Praxis,'" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 45, no. 3 (2017): 447–472.

[4]   Corey Walker, "'How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?' (Local) Knowledge, Human Interests, and the Ethics of Opacity," *Transmodernity* 1, no. 2 (2011): 104–119.

[5]   European University Association, *Internationalisation in European Higher Education: European Policies, Institutional Strategies and EUA Support. EUA Membership Consultation 2013* (Brussels: European University Association, 2013); Elspeth Jones, Robert Coelen, Jos Beelen, and Hans de Wit, "Introduction," in *Global and Local Internationalisation: Global Perspectives on Higher Education*, edited by Elspeth Jones, Robert Coelen, Jos Beelen, and Hans de Wit (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2016), 1–4; Sue Robson and Monne Wihlborg, "Internationalisation of Higher Education: Impacts, Challenges and Future Possibilities." *European Educational Research Journal* 18, no. 2 (2019): 127–134.

[6]   Sue Robson, "Internationalisation: A Transformative Agenda for Higher Education." *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice* 17, no. 6 (2011): 619–630.

the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the rationale, benefits, activities, stakeholders and outcomes of higher education.[7] However, a growing number of voices have expressed concerns that internationalization in higher education is being driven by neoliberal and corporate interests.[8] As it is argued, this trend risks reproducing already uneven geopolitical relations and ultimately contributes to expanding social and economic injustices and furthering coloniality in the world.[9]

    In particular, concerns about the ethical dimensions of internationalization in higher education highlight how internationalization practices and policies raise many ethical questions about the consequences of internationalization, particularly in relation to reproducing ideals of Eurocentric epistemologies and market expansionism.[10] While ethical questions have increasingly come to the fore in public discussions about the internationalization

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[7]   Jane Knight, "Is Internationalisation of Higher Education Having an Identity Crisis?" in *The Forefront of International Higher Education: A Festschrift in Honor of Philip G. Altbach,* edited by Alma Maldonado-Maldonado and Roberta Malee Bassett (Dordrecht: Springer Science + Business Media, 2014), 75–87.

[8]   Uwe Brandenburg and Hans de Wit, "The End of Internationalisation," *International Higher Education* 62 (Winter 2011): 15–17; Gifty Oforiwaa Gyamera and Penny Jane Burke, "Neoliberalism and Curriculum in Higher Education: A Post-Colonial Analyses," *Teaching in Higher Education* 23, no. 4 (2018): 450–467; Jonas Stier, "Taking a Critical Stance Toward Internationalisation Ideologies in Higher Education: Idealism, Instrumentalism and Educationalism," *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 2, no. 1 (2004): 257–272.

[9]   Marcelle Dawson, "Rehumanising the University for an Alternative Future: Decolonisation, Alternative Epistemologies and Cognitive Justice," *Identities*, DOI.: 10.1080/1070289X.2019.1611072 (2019); Nikki Luke and Nik Heynen, "Abolishing the Frontier: (De)colonizing 'Public' Education," *Social & Cultural Geography*, DOI: 10.1080/14649365.2019.1593492 (2019); Riyad Ahmed Shahjahan, "Decolonising Evidence-Based Education and Policy Movement: Revealing the Colonial Vestiges in Educational Policy, Research, and neoliberal reform," *Journal of Education Policy* 26, no. 2 (2011): 181–206; Riyad Ahmed Shahjahan, "International Organisations, Epistemic Tools of Influence, and the Colonial Geopolitics of Knowledge Production in Higher Education Policy," *Journal of Education Policy* 31, no. 6 (2016): 694–710.

[10] Emma Guion Akdağ and Dalene Swanson, "Ethics, Power, Internationalisation and the Postcolonial: A Foucauldian Discourse Analysis of Policy Documents in Two Scottish Universities," *European Journal of Higher Education* 8, no. 1 (2018): 67–82; Marnie Hughes-Warrington, "The Ethics of Internationalisation in Higher Education: Hospitality, Self-presence and "Being Late,'" *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 44, no. 3 (2012): 312–322; Karen Pashby and Vanessa Andreotti, "Ethical Internationalisation in Higher Education: Interfaces With International Development and Sustainability," *Environmental Education Research* 22, no. 6 (2016): 771–787.

of higher education,[11] there is a paradox that hovers discussions about the "ethics of internationalization": "the same Eurocentric categories and commitments that reproduce the highly uneven global higher education landscape may also shape many of our efforts to address these inequities."[12] This paradox reveals that a fundamental problem in debates about internationalization is that it lacks critical reflection of its own ethical consequences. To this end, an interrogation into the question of ethics may prove beneficial in enabling us to come to grips with the tensions of rising "academic capitalism' and, most importantly, to invent new ethics approaches that interrupt dominant ethical frames in higher education internationalization.

In response to these observations, then, the central task I have set out to accomplish in this essay is to use the intersecting lenses of Critical University Studies (CUS) and decolonial theory to make a critical intervention into the terrain of ethics in higher education internationalization. The emerging field of CUS[13] analyzes how universities foster injustice or perpetuate inequalities and advocates opposition to the current neoliberal turn in higher education. Decolonial critiques in higher education[14] highlight the importance of resisting colonizing moves that are driven by dominant epistemological, ontological and ethical investments in universality, supremacy and mastery, while occluding the intensities of global capitalism and processes of racism, classism and sexism that have often made our current institutions unethical in their

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[11] Sharon Stein, "Rethinking the Ethics of Internationalisation: Five Challenges For Higher Education," *InterActions* 12, no. 2 (2016), https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2nb2b9b4; Sharon Stein, Vanessa Andreotti, and Rene Suša, "Pluralizing Frameworks For Global Ethics in the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Higher Education* 49, no. 1 (2019): 22–46.

[12] Stein, "Rethinking the Ethics of Internationalisation," 1.

[13] Jeffrey Williams, "The Need for Critical University Studies," in *A New Deal for the Humanities: Liberal Arts and the Future of Public Higher Education*, edited by Gordon Hunter and Feisal G. Mohamed (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 145–149; Abigail Boggs and Nick Mitchell, "Critical University Studies and the Crisis Consensus," *Feminist Studies* 44, no. 2 (2018): 432–463.

[14] Sharon Stein, "Beyond Higher Education as We Know It: Gesturing Towards Decolonial Horizons of Possibility," *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38 (2019): 143–161; Sharon Stein and Vanessa Andreotti, "Decolonisation and Higher Education," in *Encyclopaedia of Educational Philosophy and Theory,* edited by Michael Peters (Singapore: Springer, 2017), 70–75; Michalinos Zembylas, "Decolonial Possibilities in South African Higher Education: Reconfiguring Humanising Pedagogies As/With Decolonising Pedagogies," *South African Journal of Education* 38, no. 4 (2018): 1–11; Michalinos Zembylas, "The Entanglement of Decolonial and Posthuman Perspectives: Tensions and Implications for Curriculum and Pedagogy in Higher Education," *Parallax* 24, no. 3 (2018): 254–267.

intellectual practices. I argue that a combined framework of ideas from CUS and decolonial theory will bring a sharper social justice *and* decolonizing edge to debates on how to disrupt dominant ethical frames of action in higher education internationalization.

I begin by discussing the ethics of internationalization in higher education, focusing on how issues of ethics are entangled with internationalization processes in higher education, and what ethical dilemmas and challenges emerge. Next, I focus on how perspectives from CUS bring attention to some problematic ethical consequences of the neoliberal turn in higher education. Then, I turn to examining some major tenets of decolonial critiques and how they give rise to a decolonial ethics that differs from the currently dominant ethical investments of internationalization in higher education. The final part of the essay uses the intersecting lenses of CUS and decolonial critiques to show the new theoretical openings created for critical reflection on ethics in higher education internationalization. In particular, I develop Corey Walker's notion of the "ethics of opacity" as an approach that interrogates the dominant logics of neoliberalism and coloniality/modernity in higher education internationalization.[15] It is suggested that the ethics of opacity, as a form of decolonial ethics, provides ethical and political recognition to the opaque sites and repressed knowledges of colonized peoples. In other words, an ethics of opacity enhances CUS by offering a dynamic alternative of what the university might look like when its current institutional mode is abolished and a new vision and institutional structure take its place. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of the ethics of opacity for a renewed agenda in internationalization practices and policies of higher education.

The Ethics of Internationalization in Higher Education[16]

Any effort to make sense of the concept of "internationalization' in higher education today has to be situated in the long history of colonialism.[17] For many centuries, since the establishment of the early universities of medieval Europe to the beginning of the twentieth century, higher education was at

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[15] Walker, "'How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?'"

[16] This paper largely focuses on rationalist enlightenment traditions of ethics and their critiques. It is important to acknowledge though that within Western philosophy there are other traditions of ethics that have been very influential such as virtue ethics and the ethics emerging from Christian spirituality.

[17] Sharon Stein, "Internationalisation for an Uncertain Future: Tensions, Paradoxes, and Possibilities," *The Review of Higher Education* 41, no. 1 (2017): 3–32.

the service of the nation-state.[18] The European university model, ground-ed in Eurocentric epistemologies and colonial principles, has been imposed across the colonies in other continents—the Americas, Asia, Africa, and the Pacific.[19] Internationalization approaches have gone through dramatic chang-es after World War II, taking place under the heading of "international devel-opment," "international cooperation," and "international education."[20]

In the past few decades, higher education institutions worldwide are called to respond to enormous pressures to restructure their missions, func-tions, and processes and to fundamentally transform themselves to become more "international," "global," and "intercultural."[21] As Jane Knight has noted, though, "internationalization has become a catch-all phrase used to describe anything and everything remotely linked to the global, intercultural and international dimensions of higher education and is thus losing its way."[22] This commentary highlights that internationalization is not a neutral policy or practice in higher education, but rather full of varied and often conflicting ideologies and investments.[23] Thus, higher education institutions conceptual-ize and experience internationalization in very different ways; some embrace it, regarding internationalization as necessary, productive and beneficial and aspire to move into that direction, while other institutions do not prioritize internationalization and express concerns about its negative consequences, particularly the driving forces of managerialism and neoliberalism.[24] For some institutions, internationalization is seen as a means of improving the quality of teaching, learning and research or addressing societal issues to improve cross-cultural understandings, while for others internationalization is associ-ated with a (neo)colonial and neoliberal logic incorporated in universities.[25]

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[18] Hans de Wit, *Internationalisation of Higher Education in the United States of America and Europe: A Historical, Comparative, and Conceptual Analysis* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

[19] Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

[20] Jane Knight, "The Changing Landscape of Higher Education Internationalisation—For Better or Worse?" *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* 17, no. 3 (2013): 84–90.

[21] Jane Knight, "Internationalisation: A Decade of Changes and Challenges," *International Higher Education* 50 (Winter, 2008): 6–7.

[22] Jane Knight "Internationalisation Remodeled: Definition, Approaches and Rationales," *Journal of Studies in International Education* 8, no. 1 (2004): 10.

[23] Guion Akdağ and Swanson, "Ethics, Power, Internationalisation."

[24] Robson and Wihlborg, "Internationalisation of Higher Education."

[25] Pashby and Andreotti, "Ethical Internationalisation in Higher Education."

On the one hand, then, internationalization of higher education has become a key strategic priority in many universities worldwide over the last few decades; on the other hand scholarship emphasizes that there is an increasing incorporation of private interests and neoliberal governance logic within the contemporary university.[26] While the broad and vague conceptualization of internationalization entails calls for including more global perspectives in university curricula and incorporating processes for partnership collaboration, mobility, and capacity building, there are concerns that these attempts have repositioned the universities as corporate enterprises. In other words, it is argued that higher education has been reframed as a private good tied to neoliberal economic imperatives and market-oriented commodification of knowledge with national policies regarding internationalization as a means for growth and income generation in the higher education sector.[27] Debates on internationalization in recent decades, then, have evolved from a focus on internationalization's increasing importance in education to a mounting critique regarding the ways in which internationalization has been hijacked by neoliberalism.[28] Hence, scholars suggest that there is need for increased critical reflection not only on the differentiated meanings and impacts of internationalization in different contexts of higher education,[29] but also on the ethical problems and dilemmas that emerge from internationalization processes.[30]

Needless to say, conceptualizations of internationalization are informed by certain ethical investments and commitments.[31] Different ethical frameworks offer different diagnoses of internationalization and propose different "solutions" to the concerns identified earlier. These ethical frameworks are not articulated or enacted in social and political vacuums; as Stein correctly points out, they are formulated, situated and experienced within particular sociohistorical contexts and power relations.[32] Therefore, it is significant to

[26] Guion Akdağ and Swanson, "Ethics, Power, Internationalisation"; Stein and Andreotti, "Decolonisation and Higher Education."

[27] Robson and Wihlborg, "Internationalisation of Higher Education."

[28] MiriYemini and Netta Sagie, "Research on Internationalisation in Higher Education—Exploratory Analysis," *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education* 20, nos. 2–3 (2016): 90–98.

[29] Hans de Wit and Fiona Hunter, "Europe's 25 Years of Internationalisation: The EAIE in a Changing World." *International Higher Education* 74 (2014): 14–15; Guion Akdağ and Swanson, "Ethics, Power, Internationalisation"; Knight, "The Changing Landscape of Higher Education Internationalisation."

[30] Stein, "Rethinking the Ethics of Internationalisation"; Stein et al., "Pluralizing Frameworks for Global Ethics."

[31] Stein, "Rethinking the Ethics of Internationalisation."

[32] Ibid.

acknowledge that most Western ethical frameworks have emerged and flourished in colonial conditions—an event that is rarely, if ever, acknowledged in the dominant modern categories that have been invented (e.g., Western Subject and Other) and are widely used in internationalization discourses and practices. In other words, the burden of Eurocentric colonial categories inevitably shapes efforts to conceptualize ethical commitments in Western higher education, even when the stated intentions are "good," namely, to disrupt these patterns.[33]

As Stein and her colleagues have recently argued,[34] both liberal approaches to ethics—rooted in a global imaginary treating some ways of being (i.e., Western values) as if they were universal—and critical approaches—rooted in the recognition of how power relations shape dominant conversations about ethics—are often articulated from a liberal frame; namely, these approaches fail to go beyond Eurocentric categories of thought to acknowledge the colonial conditions in which most Western ethical frameworks have emerged. A decolonial approach to ethics, on the other hand, "emphasizes and denaturalizes the enduring coloniality of the liberal global imaginary and the institutions and social relations that it engenders, and which in turn uphold it."[35] It is suggested, then, that any effort to rethink and reimagine the ethics of internationalization has to engage with the colonial origins of the ethical approaches and conceptual categories that are frequently used to both diagnose and respond to the ethical challenges faced by the higher education sector.[36]

In particular, Stein identifies five ethical challenges of internationalization that deserve our attention.[37] The first challenge concerns imagining the ethics of internationalization on a global scale, when the modern university was largely developed to serve national political and economic needs; this paradox raises many questions about how to understand higher education's ethical responsibility and complicity in human suffering beyond national boundaries. The second challenge is ensuring equity and access to higher education as a public good; this idea is frequently understood as an ethical imperative at the national level, but it is not expanded to the context of global higher education. The third challenge grows out of concerns about higher education as a global export product; this development creates further constraints to the idea of higher education as a public good. The fourth challenge concerns the epistemic dominance of Eurocentric thinking; as Stein emphasizes,

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[33] Ananya Roy, "Praxis in the Time of Empire," *Planning Theory* 5, no. 1 (2006): 7–29.
[34] Stein et al., "Pluralizing Frameworks for Global Ethics."
[35] Ibid., 27.
[36] Stein, "Rethinking the Ethics of Internationalisation."
[37] Ibid.

the ongoing colonial politics of knowledge production and circulation continue to shape the form and content of curricula, therefore, internationalization practices often become a means of reproducing Western epistemologies. Finally, the fifth challenge emerges from market-driven and liberal humanist rationales; despite their important differences, Stein notes, both instrumentalist and humanitarian rationales for internationalization can reproduce colonial relations.

All the above ethical challenges highlight the dangers that our ethical approaches to internationalization may be repeating the very violence we seek to disrupt.[38] To address these challenges, focusing in particular on the fourth one, in this article I have chosen to use the intersecting lenses of CUS and decolonial theory, because their combination provides critical insights that empower attempts to interrupt both the neoliberal and the neo-colonial logics that dominate higher education internationalization. I focus on the ethical challenges emerging from the epistemic dominance of Eurocentric thinking, because this is central to discussions about the internationalization of the curriculum. By using the intersecting lenses of CUS and decolonial theory, attention can be given to the ethical and justice-oriented attempts of universities to wrestle with the question of internationalization as an ethical endeavor connected to struggles for epistemic justice. I argue that the insights offered by CUS and decolonial theory help us begin to conceptualize a decolonial ethics that is distinct from, and critical of, both the neoliberal orientation of higher education and the modern-colonial global imaginary in which internationalization policies and practices are embedded. In the next section, I focus first on the contribution of CUS in critiquing the ethical investments of internationalization, while the following section turns to decolonial critiques.

Perspectives from Critical University Studies

Critical University Studies (CUS) is an emerging field of scholarship that not only exposes and analyses how higher education perpetuates structures of inequality, but also opposes the current neoliberal turn in higher education.[39] Although the term "critical university studies" was only recently coined by Williams,[40] the field emerged in the 1990s as "a new way of criticism"[41]

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38   Ibid.
39   Williams, "The Need for Critical University Studies."
40   Jeffrey Williams, "Deconstructing Academe: The Birth of Critical University Studies," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 58, no. 25 (2012), http://chronicle.com/article/ An-Emerging-Field-Deconstructs/130791/.
41   Ibid.

to neoliberal trends in American higher education. As Boggs and Mitchell explain, "Some of the most widely cited and circulated work in CUS has sought both to contest and to historicize a vision of the university articulated by journalists and campus administrators that has triumphed over the past four decades,"[42] namely, the vision of the university as a "privatizable knowledge factory."[43]

Although most of the work that falls into CUS focuses on American higher education, the questions that are raised have relevance to higher education institutions beyond the North American context. For example, Boggs and Mitchell suggest that the ethical and political investments of higher education institutions open up a set of productive questions for higher education scholars such as:

> How might we, as scholars whose lives and livelihoods are entangled with institutions of higher education, address these institutions in this moment and moving forward? How do we need to understand the histories of such institutions in order to do so? What forms of knowledge and what types of tools are available for scholars to work in, through, and on these institutions? Toward what ends do we labour?[44]

Through the work of CUS, then, scholars in higher education can raise critical questions about issues such as corporatization, privatization, and student debt in higher education and their ethical implications for higher education as public good.[45] But more importantly, the work of CUS debunks widespread fantasies that the university is the scene of social mobility, racial equality and self-transformation for the disenfranchised.[46] Drawing on the seminal work of Newfield and others, Briggs and Mitchell point out that the university and those who work in it today are implicated "both in the reproduction of such fantasies and the epistemology of forgetting that subtends them."[47] As they ask rather provocatively: "How much certainty about the progressive nature of the university must we presume such that the public university itself appears to be innocent of the neoliberalism that has come so thoroughly to pervade it?"[48]

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[42] Boggs and Mitchell, "Critical University Studies," 439.
[43] Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 5.
[44] Boggs and Mitchell, "Critical University Studies," 437–438.
[45] Williams, "The Need for Critical University Studies."
[46] Boggs and Mitchell, "Critical University Studies."
[47] Ibid., 442.
[48] Ibid., 443

While contemporary debates about the "neoliberal university" have evolved out of acknowledging the increasing corporatization of universities and the disenfranchisement of certain groups (e.g., poor, women, people of color), these observations need to be situated within a deeper historical perspective, which offers insights into how higher educational institutions have been far more ethically complicit with settler colonialism, coloniality, racism, nationalism, militarism and violence they claim to redress than is frequently acknowledged.[49] For example, many universities in North America reproduced slavery and racial capitalism to the extent that they served as pivotal sites in the production, legitimation and dissemination of dominant ideas and state technologies of settler colonialism.[50]

In order to understand the rise and establishment of the university in modernity/coloniality, then, it is necessary to acknowledge the systematic repression of knowledges (e.g., Indigenous; women; minority groups) that counter colonial epistemologies and the imperial, nation-building project—from the social and political structures of the academy to the power relations involved in the organization of knowledge and its disciplines, the knowledge production and legitimation processes, the institutional culture and the university's relations to the society. If the university still largely functions within an imperial nation-state, according to Chatterjee and Maira's argument, then what sort of ethical commitments do internationalization policies and practices have?[51] To what extent can internationalization efforts challenge the liberal ethics of universities historically operating in the service of a colonial logic?

Recognizing the historical processes within universities' attempts for internationalization will lay the groundwork for de-colonial interventions that question how a university is involved in internationalization efforts and with what ethical consequences. It is necessary then to think about how internationalization is manifested in different parts of the world (e.g., South and North) in relation to the plurality of epistemic positions that have been/are overlooked, namely, the colonial legacy of Europe. From this perspective, the task of developing a critical project in higher education internationalization

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[49] Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira, "The Imperial University: Race, War, and the Nation State," in *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent*, edited by Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 1–50; Luke and Heynen, "Abolishing the Frontier."

[50] Craig Steven Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery and the Troubled History of America's Universities* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).

[51] Chatterjee and Maira, "The Imperial University."

is inevitably linked to the question of ethics[52] and specifically to how hegemonic knowledge regimes marginalized and continue to marginalize peripheral others, even under the disguise of curriculum internationalization.[53]

Moten and Harney discuss the paradox of working toward an "abolitionist" ethics and politics within the university, while being situated in a modern/colonial global imaginary.[54] How can students and employees of higher education institutions foster a decolonial ethics—or what Luke and Heynen call an abolitionist praxis and ethical orientation—in the internationalization of the curriculum, without simply reproducing dominant colonial arrangements of knowledge production and circulation?[55] To respond to this challenge, Harney and Moten suggest the project of "undercommoning," which seeks to "take apart, dismantle, tear down the structure that, right now, limits our ability to find each other, to see beyond it and to access the places that we know lie outside its walls."[56] Ultimately, undercommoning, explains Dawson, is a project that seeks to create alternatives to the hegemonic structures of the Westernized university through engaging its staff and students in subversive work.[57] This sort of work, continues Dawson,

> highlights the profoundly dehumanising outcomes of the establishment of knowledge hierarchies and the entrenchment of epistemic hegemonies. It then considers the ways in which internationalization, as currently practised at many universities, can be regarded as an aspect of global neo-colonialism that subverts attempts to address inequalities at a national level. This discussion is counterbalanced with arguments about the potential of internationalization to foster global solidarity through learning about and incorporating alternative epistemologies into the daily operation of universities.[58]

My argument here, then, is that challenging the dominant ethics of internationalization in higher education is a counter-hegemonic project entailing the

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[52] Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, "The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses," *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (2004): 101–115.

[53] Importantly, CUS should not be perceived as if there are not contestations within. For example, it has been recently argued that CUS isn't worth doing of it is not abolitionist; see Abigail Boggs, Eli Meyerhoff, Nick Mitchell, and Zach Schwartz-Weinstein, "Abolitionist University Studies: An Invitation," August 27, 2019, https://abolition. university/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Abolitionist-University-Studies_-An-Invitation-Release-1-version.pdf.

[54] Moten and Harney, "The University and the Undercommons."

[55] Luke and Heynen, "Abolishing the Frontier."

[56] StefanoHarney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe: Minor Compositions, 2013), 6.

[57] Dawson, "Rehumanising the University."

[58] Ibid., 2.

transformation of the knowledge structures that facilitate epistemic injustice. Hence, the pursuit of an alternative ethics of internationalization must involve the identification and abolition of deeply embedded epistemic hegemonies, which have been created through the twin processes of capital expansion and colonization.[59] Recognizing and challenging the neoliberal and colonial logics at work in higher education internationalization means opposing policies and practices that exacerbate inequalities and unequal power relations rooted in the histories of coloniality. These efforts might include strategies that mobilize student support and restructure curriculum internationalization in ways that are more aligned with altering and diversifying epistemologies. The next section builds on this discussion, drawing on decolonial critiques to further analyse and expose the problematic aspects of internationalization in relation to its ethical dimension.

Perspectives from Decolonial Critiques[60]

In general, decolonial thought consists of a plural and critical set of critiques of colonialism and coloniality.[61] This section cannot capture the diversity and complexity of decolonial thinking, but rather it will outline three major tenets that are important to consider in discussions around the ethics of internationalization, and especially the ethical challenge concerning the epistemic dominance of Eurocentric thinking: the entanglement of modernity/coloniality and its implications for the creation of a modern-colonial global imaginary in higher education; the geopolitics of knowledge production and how higher education and internationalization processes can reproduce Eurocentric epistemologies; and, the radical exclusion of the "other" as an ethical subject from Western modernity's moral narratives and how ethical internationalism entails dangers for reinscribing colonial ethics.

I begin with one of the main positions of decolonial theorists, namely, that coloniality and modernity are entangled, and that there is no modernity without coloniality.[62] Coloniality, according to Maldonado-Torres, "refers

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[59] Ibid.

[60] Needless to say, there is a plurality of approaches to decolonial tradition. It is impossible to cover all of those, as this is beyond the scope of the paper, so I focus on some major tenets.

[61] Odysseos, "Prolegomena to Any Future Decolonial Ethics."

[62] Ramón Grosfoguel, "The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 11, no. 1 (2013): 73–90; Walter Mignolo, "Citizenship, Knowledges, and the Limits of Humanity," *American Literary History* 18, no. 2 (2006): 312–331.

to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but define culture, labour, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations."[63] It is argued, then, that intersecting political, cultural, epistemic, and ethical hierarchies shaped by modernity and its values—Christianity, civilization, development, liberal democracy, secularization, and capitalism—form a "colonial matrix of power"[64] that has been imposed on others as universal and globally applicable. Different ways of understanding the world and different modes of living and being in the world (e.g., Indigenous values) have been rejected, often violently in the name of these universal values.

Decolonial critiques, then, analyse coloniality as the darker side of modernity and expose how modern Western ways of knowing and being (e.g., discourse of progress; claims for the neutrality of rational thinking; teleological and dialectical reasoning etc.) have formed a dominant global imaginary that pervades all sectors of modern life, including contemporary Westernized universities.[65] The language of development and progress, or the claims of interculturalism and cosmopolitanism that are inherent in internationalization policies and practices today operate to make those appear to be "good for everyone," masking past injustices, colonial histories and ideological interests that have shaped those policies and practices.[66]

The second tenet of decolonial critiques discussed here is Mignolo's notion of geopolitics of knowledge, namely, how all knowledge systems originate in social, historical and geographical locations that are situated within power relations.[67] The geopolitics of knowledge privileges knowledge systems that are considered universal and applied everywhere.[68] For example,

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[63] Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "On the Coloniality of Being." *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2–3 (2007): 243.

[64] Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality," *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2–3 (2007): 168–178.

[65] Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity;* Stein, "Beyond Higher Education as We Know it"; Stein and Andreotti, "Decolonisation and Higher Education."

[66] Pashby and Andreotti, "Ethical Internationalisation in Higher Education"; Shahjahan, "Decolonising Evidence-Based Education" and "International Organisations, Epistemic Tools of Influence"; Fazal Rizvi and Bob Lingard, *Globalizing Education Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[67] Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity.*

[68] Riyad Shahjahan and Clara Morgan, "Global Competition, Coloniality, and the Geopolitics of Knowledge in Higher Education," *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 37, no. 1 (2016): 92–109.

Western epistemology has built an image of being a universal and objectivist conception of knowledge, when in reality it has masked its origins in particular geopolitical conditions. Decolonial critiques, then, reject the idea that normative thinking grounded in modernity and its concepts (rationality, logic, and epistemic virtues) can operate in a historical and political vacuum.[69] The notion of geopolitics of knowledge, argues Mignolo, shifts attention from the presumed neutrality and universality of knowledge to questions of who, when, why, and where knowledge is produced.

The geopolitics of knowledge continues to operate in contemporary higher education, as global competition leads universities to adopt tools and templates from enterprising models that act as benchmarks, reproducing an internationalized and competitive geopolitics of knowledge.[70] These tools include, for example, institutional, curricular, and pedagogical templates for the internationalization of higher education. As it is argued, concepts such as autonomy, competition, market, and internationalization are transmitted and assimilated across the globe, often masked in a liberal ethical frame, even if the ways they are taken up perpetuate (colonial) "difference" among higher education institutions, countries, and regions of the world.

The third tenet of decolonial critiques discussed here is Wynter's interrogation of the "Man" as a historically prominent figuration within knowledge regimes that are still embedded in colonial structures.[71] Moral discourses and narratives about moral agents found in European knowledge regimes have at their heart the figure of the "Man" as the ultimate ethical subject, whereas other ethics are rejected or marginalized. In other words, Europe's figuration of "Man" entails an ethical subject embedded in "master-narrative of Renaissance humanism, Christian missions, biocentric evolutionism and, today, neoliberalism."[72] As Odysseos explains, Wynter's thought helps illuminate that the subject of ethics and moral thought rests on such figurations and that the

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[69] Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity.*

[70] Shahjahan, "Decolonising Evidence-Based Education" and "International Organisations, Epistemic Tools of Influence."

[71] Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337; Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, edited by Katherine McKittrick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 9–89.

[72] Odysseos, "Prolegomena to Any Future Decolonial Ethics," 454.

vocabularies used have not been able to exceed colonial structures and the monolingual predicate of "Man."

Wynter's questioning of the figuration of "Man" alerts us to the role that this figure plays in the production and structuring of education policies, such as internationalization, and indeed, the ethical grounding of such policies and practices as manifestations of generalizing/universalizing narrations and trends. Hence, interrogating how the ethics of "Man" is embedded in agendas of internationalization in higher education shows how colonial structures of being may be reproduced and naturalized as "good practices." Such figurations of "Man" grounded in humanism, liberalism, and cosmopolitanism need to be unsettled within each higher education setting at the multiple sites of contemporary coloniality. This project is not only a political or epistemic one, but also an ethical one of immense importance for ongoing projects of decolonization.[73]

In summary, CUS and decolonial critiques bring attention to three problematic aspects relevant to critical engagement with the ethical dimensions of internationalization in higher education, and especially the epistemic dominance of Eurocentric thinking: first, the banner of internationalization as the benevolent and inevitable global expansion of capitalism not only masks but also reproduces a colonial geopolitics of knowledge production in higher education institutions; second, the assumption of internationalization embedded in discourses of (superficial) interculturalism, progress and capacity building reinforces ideals of rationality, autonomy and (market) expansionism, while de-emphasizing issues of ethics; finally, decolonial thought can be considered an ethical lens for understanding the current process of higher education internationalization, allowing for a more critical and theoretical critique of internationalization policies and practices by bringing into play issues of both power and ethics. The great challenge, of course, as already noted earlier, is how such critiques are caught up in a double bind: while signifying efforts to interrupt the dominant ethical investments of internationalization and its demands, at the same time these critiques may be complicit within colonial structures of higher education institutions. So, the question is: Is there a kind of ethics that could transform internationalization into a critical practice that evades the problematic aspects outlined above? The last section of this essay makes an attempt to provide some thoughts on this question.

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[73] Ibid.

The Ethics of Opacity

This section brings together the perspectives from CUS and decolonial theory discussed earlier to sketch a distinctive decolonial ethics that challenges normative understandings of internationalization in contemporary higher education. The prospect of a decolonial ethics in pursuit of a critical project in higher education internationalization creates openings for unmasking the colonial and neoliberal logic of the contemporary organization of Westernized universities. Moreover, the recourse to ethics reminds us that the issue of internationalization "cannot be approached without critical attention to the question of ethics, particularly for those projects that claim to be emancipatory."[74] While universities around the world take up a trend toward a vague but strong imperative to internationalize, ethical issues cannot be stepped over for long.[75]

My point of departure for discussing ethics here is Badiou's statement that "ethics does not exist" just by itself; ethics is always the ethics of something—of politics, of love, of science, of art[76]—because there is not a single Subject, but "as many subjects as there are truths" and "as many subjective types as there are procedures of truths."[77] This understanding of ethics proposes a conceptualization of ethics and truth in a processual manner, namely, as a critical discursive practice that goes beyond the Kantian categorical imperative. For example, a decolonial ethics in higher education internationalization is rendered as a critical practice that interrogates normative assumptions about disciplinary categories and epistemological demands of the modern/colonial organization of knowledge in universities.

The *ethics of opacity* is proposed by Walker as "a critical intellectual posture that disrupts the dominant logic of coloniality/modernity in exploring the hidden and unknown, the repressed and submerged narratives, histories, and epistemologies—the *sites of opacity* that are the conditions of im/possibility of the contemporary world."[78] The ethics of opacity, then, may be seen as a critical space within which repressed and suppressed knowledges, that is, knowledges and ways of being that have been hidden and unknown, are articulated and disseminated. As Walker explains, "the ethics of opacity establishes a critical movement, indeed produces an ethical demand, that speaks to and

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74   Walker, "'How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?'" 108.
75   Pashby and Andreotti, "Ethical Internationalisation in Higher Education."
76   Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil* (London: Verso, 2001) 24.
77   Ibid., 28.
78   Walker, "'How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?'" 109–111.

is founded upon a responsibility to interrogate hegemonic epistemological production."[79]

Importantly, then, an ethics of opacity is neither some sort of situational ethics nor simply about being "critical,' as mere critique is often "a mode of institutional reproduction."[80] An ethics of opacity offers a positive alternative of what the university might look like, when it involves uncovering and revealing the opaque. It is not enough to identify and critique the university's normative practices of knowledge fueled by enlightenment traditions; a new set of ethical practices are needed, if the opaque is going to be uncovered. For this to happen, new institutional arrangements, spaces, relationships, and intellectual competences will need to be developed at the university. These new intellectual and material practices would have to be *affirmative* of the worth, value and dignity of knowledges that have been hidden and repressed. An ethics of opacity, then, is more than a critique of the practices and institutions of the university as we know it; it provides a new intellectual and institutional posture that abolishes the dominant logic of coloniality/modernity.

For example, an ethics of opacity calls into question formulations of higher education internationalization that affirm the modern/colonial global imaginary. In this sense, the ethics of opacity interrogates the ethical presuppositions of internationalization policies and practices. The ethics of opacity also enables higher education policymakers and scholars to dismantle those mechanisms that perpetuate cognitive injustices—from the systems of access and management in universities, the systems of authoritative control, standardization, classification, commodification, accountancy, and bureaucratization reflected in the organizational structures, the teaching methods and assessment mechanisms of students and faculty alike, the research practices and publishing norms, to the curricular content and design of courses.[81]

As Stein argues, the continued hegemony of higher education "in the form of the modern *uni*-versity precludes other educational possibilities, because it posits itself as *uni*-versal."[82] For the university to become *pluriversity*, the hegemony of the modern university has to be dismantled,[83] therefore,

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[79]   Ibid., 109.

[80]   Boggs et al., "Abolitionist University Studies," 3.

[81]   Achille Mbembe, "Decolonising the University: New Directions," *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 15, no. 1 (2016): 29–45.

[82]   Stein, "Beyond Higher Education as We Know It," 149.

[83]   Capucine Boidin, James Cohen, and Ramón Grosfoguel, "Introduction: From University to Pluriversity: A Decolonial Approach to the Present Crisis of Western Universities," *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 10, no. 1 (2012): 1–6.

a decolonial ethics approach such as the ethics of opacity that welcomes the "opaque ones" as fundamental partners in the quest for knowledge is important. Key, then, in making "pluri-versities" possible is constructing "global" or "internationalized" understandings in a different way—a way that does not involve the one-way diffusion of locally produced knowledges into a universal global design.[84] It is here that the idea of pluriversality is useful.

Pluriversality refers to recognizing that there are plural values and ways of knowing across cultures rather than only Western ones.[85] A value is pluriversal, explains Dunford, "insofar as it is constructed in a manner that takes seriously, shows respect for, and emerges from communication and exchange across multiple places, cultures and cosmovisions."[86] As Dunford suggests further, a particular policy or institutional practice "is compatible with a pluriverse, if it allows other worlds to survive and thrive, and incompatible if it inevitably involves the destruction of other life-worlds."[87] In this sense, then, one may ask: To what extent do internationalization policies and practices in higher education pluriversalize knowledge traditions and enable curricula to better capture the experiences of different populations? What might pluriversal dialogue look like across higher education institutions? Does intercultural dialogue have any limits or constraints, when it comes to institutional policies or practices in higher education?

The idea of pluriversality of knowledge-making in higher education has repercussions for the internationalization paradigm in that it re-orients the civic role of higher education institutions as spaces for critical debates about the ethical investments of contemporary universities as public institutions. A move toward an ethics of opacity in higher education, then, means reimagining the contemporary university by opening up "potentially emancipatory possibilities for a critical theory of knowledge in the interests of those on the underside of modernity."[88] Yet, as noted earlier, this is not "critical theory" of a negative critique, but rather an affirmative intervention that provides new intellectual and institutional strategies and practices of uncovering and revealing the opaque. Hence, the questions which may be raised such as "what do we teach, how do we educate, in what languages, and in what

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[84] Robin Dunford, "Toward a Decolonial Global Ethics," *Journal of Global Ethics* 13, no. 3 (2017): 380–397.

[85] Mignolo, "Citizenship, Knowledges, and the Limits of Humanity"; Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2014).

[86] Dunford, "Toward a Decolonial Global Ethics," 390.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Walker, "'How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?'" 110.

systemic conditions?"[89] are only the starting point—a point that does not simply negate existing institutional structures, but rather is marked by an ongoing process that highlights university spaces of organizing, teaching and knowledge production toward an ethics of opacity.

As calls to develop a decolonial ethics in higher education internationalization grow louder, we may choose to ignore them; or we may decide to engage with the sort of pluriversality discussed earlier and begin to challenge more systematically and persistently the mechanisms by which universities continue to circumscribe what counts as knowledge. We may do so, suggests Odysseos, in order to participate in the struggles for epistemic justice and contest the ethico-political "consciousness" of coloniality/neoliberalism that may be entailed in internationalization policies and practices.[90] Engaging in an ethics of opacity in higher education internationalization would essentially amount to working toward abolitionist praxis in the university, as noted earlier[91]—that is, practices that dismantle "the structures of admission, ways of teaching and researching, compensation for university employed, patterns of land dispossession and occupation, and other measures that operate through racialized notions of difference."[92] Abolition in this sense consists in a new kind of engagement with higher education institutions that promises to break from the conditions that make possible the colonial production of knowledge.[93]

Conclusion

This paper employed the intersecting lenses of CUS and decolonial theory to bring a sharper social justice and decolonizing edge to debates on how to disrupt dominant ethical frames of action in higher education internationalization. In particular, I have sought to suggest a distinctive form of decolonial ethics in higher education internationalization in response to the ethical dilemma related to the epistemic dominance of Eurocentric thinking. The ethics of opacity creates possibilities at the most fundamental level—the level of knowledge production—to contest and confront what the university *does* on an everyday basis to perpetuate Western ways of knowing as a superior way of producing universal knowledge. Moving a step further, the ethics

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89   Odysseos, "Prolegomena to Any Future Decolonial Ethics," 466.
90   Ibid.
91   Luke and Nik Heynen, "Abolishing the Frontier"; Moten and Harney, "The University and the Undercommons."
92   Luke and Nik Heynen, "Abolishing the Frontier," 16.
93   Zembylas, "Decolonial Possibilities in South African Higher Education"; Zembylas, "The Entanglement of Decolonial and Posthuman Perspectives."

of opacity also creates openings in which past, present and future "opaque" others can be welcomed and disturb our sense of the world. Taking the ethics of opacity seriously opens avenues for further work judging whether, how, and why given policies and practices in higher education internationalization are compatible with pluriversality.

Insisting on the notion of ethics of opacity, this article sees this as an incessant and unfinished project in higher education that constantly poses the question:[94] What sorts of institutional arrangements and intellectual projects in higher education internationalization would such an ethics of opacity entail? In response to this question, I recognize that even an attempt rooted in critical and decolonial ethics is not exempt from the risk of reproducing neoliberal and neo-colonial imperatives of internationalization. In this respect, I feel obligated to locate myself within such an attempt—an attempt that follows from bringing together CUS and decolonial theory. To this end, my scholarship is still operating within the colonizing university, as its abolition has not come yet. But if "Within the colonizing university also exists a decolonizing education,"[95] then developing new practices and institutional arrangements that highlight an ethics of opacity does not only have its risks, it also affirms new transformative possibilities.

Hence, by not settling a conclusive response to the question about what kinds of new institutional arrangements are needed, but rather treating this as an open invitation to explore various examples is a move that imagines this as an ongoing effort and an ethos with various potentials for transforming what and whom the university can be for.[96] If this essay encourages others to explore further this question, then it would have made its small contribution to the construction of an ethics in higher educational internationalization that can foster a new culture that embraces epistemic justice as a necessary means to achieve social justice and decolonization.

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[94] Walker, "'How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?'"; Boggs et al., "Abolitionist University Studies."

[95] la paperson, *A Third University Is Possible* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), xiii.

[96] Boggs et al., "Abolitionist University Studies."

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6. *The Communicative Pragmatics of Data-Use for Equity: A Theoretical and Methodological Framework*

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Abstract: Calls for higher education institutions to implement improvements guided by "data-driven" processes are prevalent and widespread. Despite the pervasiveness of this turn toward data, research on how data-use works on the ground in postsecondary institutions—that is, how individuals within institutions make sense of education data and use it to inform practice—is still developing.

Drawing on Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action (TCA), critical-race theory, and methodological guidance on critical-qualitative research methods, this paper synthesizes methodological and substantive insights from P–12 data-use research, with an eye to applying these insights to critical questions on postsecondary educational equity. The result of the review and analysis is a theoretical framework and a set of methodological recommendations for future research on the perceptions and experiences of college faculty, administrators, and practitioners, regarding their data-use and its implications for equity.

Keywords: equity, data-use, critical research methodology, critical-race theory

Purpose of the Inquiry

Calls for higher education institutions to implement improvements guided by "data-driven" processes are prevalent and widespread.[1] Faculty, administrators, and practitioners working in colleges and universities increasingly encounter reporting requirements and institutional norms that bring them face-to-face with data about their students and programs. As the educational accountability movement moves into its fourth decade, the discourse surrounding education data is a pervasive and multivalent part of education as a social practice. Policy makers and policy intermediators (influential foundations, funding agencies, and advocacy groups) encourage institutions to enact data-driven decision making and to foster data-driven cultures.[2] Researchers amplify these calls.[3] Accrediting bodies have increasingly incorporated both data-use in general and data on diversity and equity into their criteria for accreditation.[4]

Research results have suggested that practices grounded in data are associated with improved student outcomes.[5] At the same time, however, other scholars have noted the potential for this emphasis on data to promote privatization and a phenomenon known as performativity, characteristic of

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[1] Bridget Burns, "Big Data's Coming of Age in Higher Education," Accessed January 29, 2016, https://www.forbes.com/sites/schoolboard/2016/01/29/big-datas-coming-of-age-in-higher-education/#4b1f397a1c41; Arne Duncan, "Toward a New Focus on Outcomes in Higher Education." United States Department of Education (Washington, DC, 2015); Holly Else, "How Do Universities Use Big Data?," Accessed May 5, 2017, https://www.timeshighereducation.com/features/how-do-universities-use-big-data; Louis Soares, Patricia Steele, and Lindsay Wayt, "Evolving Higher Education Business Models: Leading with Data to Deliver Results," American Council on Education (Washington, DC, 2016).

[2] Duncan, "Toward a New Focus"; Jennifer Engle, "Answering the Call: Institutions and States Lead the Way toward Better Measures of Postsecondary Performance." Gates Foundation (Seattle, WA, 2016); Christopher M. Mullin and Anna Lebesch, "Moving Success from the Shadows: Data Systems That Link Education and Workforce Outcomes." American Association of Community Colleges (Washington, DC, 2010).

[3] George D. Kuh et al., "Knowing What Students Know and Can Do: The Current State of Student Learning Outcomes Assessment in U.S. Colleges and Universities," *National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment*, January (2014); Philip J. Piety, Daniel T. Hickey, and MJ Bishop, "Educational Data Sciences: Framing Emergent Practices for Analytics of Learning, Organizations, and Systems," *Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Learning Analytics And Knowledge* (Indianapolis, IN, 2014).

[4] "Assumed Practices," Higher Learning Commission, 2017, http://policy.hlcommission.org/Policies/assumed-practices.html; "Criteria for Accreditation," Higher Learning Commission, 2017, http://policy.hlcommission.org/Policies/criteria-for-accreditation.html.

[5] Engle, "Answering the Call," 18; Kuh et al., "Knowing What Students Know," 15.

neoliberal policy and discourse.[6] With regard to equity specifically, disaggregated data have been framed in the policy and practical literature as central to efforts to promote equitable outcomes.[7] Recent research has stressed that, especially when discussions of equity data are deliberately framed to move the discourse from deficit models to reflective equity-minded frameworks, this kind of engagement can push institutions to improve the climate for diversity on their campuses, and may even point to actual gains in equity.[8]

Despite the pervasiveness of this turn toward data, a firm empirical basis to tell us how data-use works on the ground in postsecondary institutions—that is, how individuals within institutions make sense of education data and use it to inform practice[9]—is still developing. The underlying theory of action built into the policy emphasis on data and data-use is that faculty, practitioners, and administrators will draw transparent conclusions and direction from the data, and that these conclusions will point the way clearly to steps that individuals and groups will be empowered to undertake. Scholars focused on equity in higher education have long worked to shed light on the complexity that this view ignores.[10] An initiative of University of Southern California's Center for Urban Education, the Equity Scorecard, for example, structures and supports colleges and universities in an inquiry process through which institutional actors examine data and collaborate to improve inequities on campus. Nevertheless, while initiatives such as the Equity Scorecard process guide data discussions toward productive engagement working skillfully with these complexities, further research can help us to learn more about how college and university faculty, administrators, and practitioners actually understand and

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[6] Stephen J. Ball, *Global Education Inc.: New Policy Networks and the Neo-Liberal Imaginary* (New York: Routledge, 2012): 30.

[7] Paul Goren, "Data, Data, and More Data—What's an Educator to Do ?," *American Journal of Education* 118, no. 2 (2012): 233.

[8] Estela Mara Bensimon and Lindsey Malcolm, *Confronting Equity Issues on Campus: Implementing the Equity Scorecard in Theory and Practice* (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2012): 92; Alicia C. Dowd and Estela Mara Bensimon, *Engaging the "Race Question": Accountability and Equity in US Higher Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2015): 104; Tiffany Jones, "Addressing a Historical Mission in a Performance Driven System: A Case Study of a Public Historically Black University Engaged in the Equity Scorecard Process" (PhD diss, University of Southern California, 2013): 20; Linda Skrla and James Joseph Scheurich, *Educational Equity and Accountability: Paradigms, Policies, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2004): 3.

[9] Cynthia E. Coburn and Erica O. Turner, "Research on Data Use: A Framework and Analysis," *Measurement* 9, no. 4 (2011); Judith Warren Little, "Understanding Data Use Practice among Teachers: The Contribution of Micro-Process Studies," *American Journal of Education* 118, no. 2 (2012).

[10] Alicia C. Dowd, "Data Don't Drive: Building a Practitioner-Driven Culture of Inquiry to Assess Community College Performance," *Pure and Applied Mathematics*, 2005.

make meaning from data in the less structured business-as-usual discussions and exchanges that frequently occur in our institutions.[11]

The need to understand more at this level is all the more pressing when efforts to improve educational equity are considered. Individual and institutional understandings of educational equity for students of color and low-income students are enmeshed in socioculturally situated systems of privilege and oppression. Moreover, most predominantly white institutions have predominantly white faculty and administrations who operate within varying levels of consciousness and proficiency with issues related to educational equity. Because of these contextual factors, and because both the issues and the data are often complex and difficult to understand, it seems inadvisable to assume that educators' sense-making around equity data will be transparent and easily directed toward improvement.

The need to improve educational equity is amply evinced in national statistics showing attainment gaps, lack of access, and stratified postsecondary opportunity for students of color and low-income students.[12] Nevertheless, concrete improvements in educational equity continue to be elusive. Faculty, administrators' and practitioners' efforts with, and interactions around, equity data can tell us a great deal about how policy and practice come together as schools and institutions work to become vehicles of transformation, rather than replicators of social inequalities, especially with regard to race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and the ways in which these intersect. In order to understand how institutions can use education data to improve equity and student learning, further research grounded in critical social theory is needed to explore the complexity and sociocultural context of educators' sense-making and use of equity data in practice.

As one way of contributing to theory and research on this problem, this paper synthesizes a theoretical and methodological framework by drawing from critical social theory and adapting insights from the newly emerging research on data-use in P–12 education[13] to address critical questions related

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[11] Coburn and Turner, "Research on Data Use"; Little, "Understanding Data Use"; Pamela A. Moss, "Validity in Action: Lessons from Studies of Data Use," *Journal of Educational Measurement* 50, no. 1 (2013).

[12] Margaret Cahalan et al., "Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States: 45 Year Trend Report," 2015; Samuel D. Museus, María C. Ledesma, and Tara L. Parker, *Racism and Racial Equity in Higher Education*, *ASHE Higher Education Report*, vol. 42, 2015; Jeannie Oakes, "Opening the Doors to Opportunity for All: Setting the Research Agenda for the Future." American Institutes for Research (Washington, DC, 2015).

[13] Coburn and Turner, "Research on Data Use"; Moss, "Validity in Action"; Melissa Roderick, "Drowning in Data but Thirsty for Analysis," *Teachers College Record* 114, no. November (2012).

to equity and data-use in higher education.[14] In this way, the paper lays needed groundwork for research investigating college faculty, administrators', and practitioners' perceptions and experiences related to data-use and equity.

A Central Tension

Before tackling this aim, however, it is necessary to explore a central tension that arises with the consideration of how to support research on data-use for equity in higher education. Within this context, a tension arises between the need to interrogate neoliberal assumptions built into performativity and data-use on the one hand, and the need to push critical research to deliver on its emancipatory promise of actually supporting positive social change, on the other. Attendant with the main problem of equity, therefore, is a secondary theoretical and methodological problem focused on how research can contribute to educational equity within the context of broad and pervasive calls for data-driven processes. Navigating this problem is at the crux of how we should move forward on new research on data-use for equity.

Ball has described performativity as the top-down introduction and use of standardized measures in order to define success and facilitate comparison across institutions and sectors.[15] The concept is widely used and can even be said to be intuitive on the surface, a description of incentives that could be applied to and by institutions and individuals to direct practice toward improving equity. However, performativity can also oversimplify complex issues and can lead to satisficing (thereby letting institutions off the hook), and even outright distortions (e.g., a statewide university system using aggregated system-level figures to argue that outcomes are equitable when really opportunity is stratified across institution type). These pitfalls may stem in part from a few key features of the phenomenon. First, the use of quantitative data in education to improve practice is, at one level, an example of what Habermas described as the social system colonizing the lifeworld.[16] That is, the (in principle less accountable, less dialogically open) instrumental rationality of the social system is introduced in order to shape communication at the everyday level where educators, students and families are (at least in principle) accountable to each other. Second, performativity fits intuitively within the market-logic of incentives and competition that is the default

[14] Dowd and Bensimon, *Engaging the "Race Question"*; Engle, "Answering the Call"; Shaun R. Harper, "Race without Racism: How Higher Education Researchers Minimize Racist Institutional Norms," *Review of Higher Education* 36, no. 1 (2012); Jones, "Addressing a Historical Mission"; Museus, Ledesma, and Parker, *Racism and Racial Equity*.

[15] Ball, *Global Education Inc.*, 30.

[16] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (London: Heinemann, 1987): 356.

theory of action within neoliberal policy discourse. Finally, the concept also rests on postpositivist assumptions about the ontology of data. These pitfalls create a problem and complicate the potential of data-use to create positive social change. Consequently, data-use for equity should be studied from a viewpoint that can remain alert to the ways these practices may edge toward performativity and its attendant dangers. This will entail, among other things, that we engage probing questions about the nature of data (or more accurately, language and symbolic representations that are used as data), and their social construction.

It is clear, therefore, that emphasis on data-use as a means toward improving educational equity needs to be counterbalanced with critique from a critical perspective. Nevertheless, at the same time, we need to push critical research to engage in action toward positive social change, and in this data-use may play an important role in defining inclusive excellence and holding institutions and practitioners accountable for creating equitable experiences for students. This is the tension. Real changes in practice and policy are necessary in order to stop the production of racial inequities in education, and to hold institutions accountable for the production of equity. Data-use may be key to defining the focus and creating the pressure needed to affect change. It may also be helpful at the individual level, as educators work reflexively to understand and improve our own practices. Nevertheless, real critique and social change are arguably not possible while our examination of data-use for equity is confined to the hegemonic postpositivist assumptions that legitimate and reinforce neoliberal practices of performativity, and may often implicitly legitimate and reinforce educational inequities as well.

The principal aims of this paper are to produce a theoretical and methodological framework from a systematic literature review, and to outline the warrant, rationale, and uses for a new line of research that addresses this tension, by employing critical-qualitative research (CQR) methods and critical-race theory (CRT) to study what Little[17] has called *microprocesses* surrounding the use of data to promote equity in higher education institutions.

Theoretical Argument and Its Bases: TCA and CRT

Overview

Using social theory based in critical-qualitative and critical-race perspectives, this paper outlines a theoretical basis for research exploring how faculty, administrators, and practitioners in postsecondary institutions make sense of equity data in the course of working for improvement in their

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[17]   Little, "Understanding Data Use," 145.

institutions. Drawing on Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* (TCA),[18] critical-race theory,[19] and methodological guidance on critical-qualitative research methods,[20] the paper synthesizes methodological and substantive insights from P–12 data-use research, with an eye to adapting these insights to critical questions raised by the research on postsecondary educational equity.

The result of the review and analysis is a theoretical framework and a set of methodological recommendations for future research on the perceptions and experiences of college faculty, administrators, and practitioners, regarding their work with institutional data and its implications for equity

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[18] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (London: Heinemann, 1984); Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (London: Heinemann, 1987).

[19] Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Kimberlé Crenshaw et al., eds., *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement* (New York: Free Press, 1995); Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, eds., *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013); Adrienne D. Dixson and Celia K. Rousseau, "And We Are Still Not Saved: Critical Race Theory in Education Ten Years Later," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 8 (2005); Harper, "Race without Racism"; Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Just What Is Critical Race Theory and What's It Doing in a Nice Field Like Education?," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 11, no. 1 (1998); Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Racialized Discourses and Ethnic Epistemologies," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2000); Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Critical Race Theory—What It Is Not!," *Handbook of Critical Race Theory in Education*, (2013); Laurence Parker, "Critical Race Theory in Education and Qualitative Inquiry: What Each Has to Offer Each Other Now?," *Qualitative Inquiry* 21 (2015); Lori D. Patton, "Disrupting Postsecondary Prose," *Urban Education* 51, no. 3 (2016); Lori D. Patton and Stephanie Bondi, "Nice White Men or Social Justice Allies? Using Critical Race Theory to Examine How White Male Faculty and Administrators Engage in Ally Work," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 18, no. 4 (2015); Lori D. Patton et al., "Perhaps the Field of Education Isn't So Nice after All: A Review Essay and Examination of Critical Race Research in Postsecondary Contexts," *NASAP Journal* 15, no. 2 (2015).

[20] Phil Francis Carspecken, *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Phil Francis Carspecken, "Basic Concepts in Critical Methodological Theory: Action, Structure and System within a Communicative Pragmatics Framework," in *Critical Qualitative Research Reader*, ed. Shirley R. Steinberg and Gaile S. Cannella (New York: Peter Lang, 2012); Barbara Dennis, "'Validity Crisis' in Qualitative Research: Still? Movement toward a Unified Approach," in *Qualitative Research: A Reader on Philosophy, Core Concepts, and Practice*, ed. Barbara Dennis, Lucinda Carspecken, and Phil Francis Carspecken (New York: Peter Lang, 2013); Shirley R. Steinberg and Gaile S. Cannella, eds., *Critical Qualitative Research Reader* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012).

(see Figures 1 and 2). This is an important new direction for higher education research, but one that currently lacks a robust theoretical framework from which to design a study. Along with CRT and CQR, the current work emerging from P–12 researchers is a rich resource that can contribute to this goal.

Review Methods

Figure 1 shows the process I followed in this project to synthesize a theoretical and methodological model for research on equity data-use in colleges and universities. Guided by principles and insights taken from recent developments in CRT and CQR methodologies, the process focused on synthesizing findings, observations from the discourse on data-use, and methodological and substantive implications from the P–12 data-use research literature,[21] including but not limited to studies on microprocesses. The results were then revisited with the goal of adapting the resulting insights to address and guide future research on colleges' and universities' institutional efforts to support educational equity.
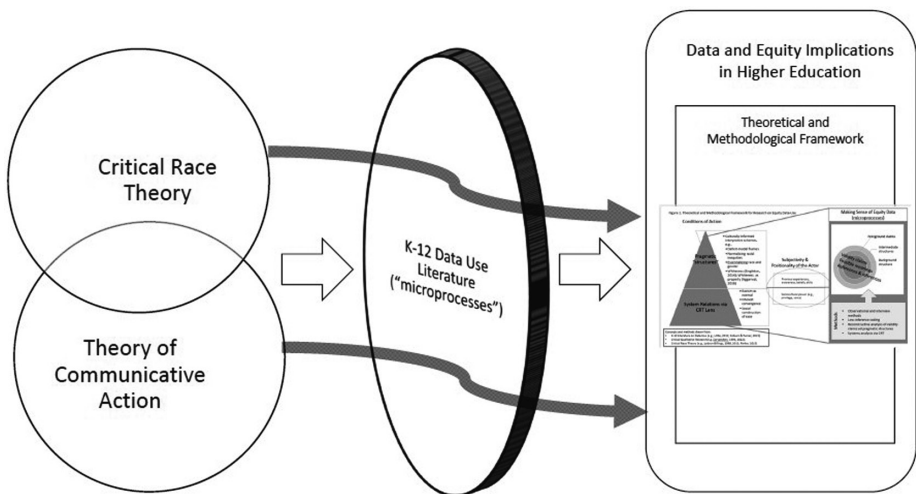

Figure 1

The data-use studies were analyzed using a combination of open coding and analysis based on a set of *a priori* codes derived from CRT[22] and CQR

21 Melanie Bertrand and Julie A. Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking of Data and Implications for Equity," *American Educational Research Journal* 52, no. 5 (2015); Jeannette A. Colyvas, "Performance Metrics as Formal Structures and through the Lens of Social Mechanisms: When Do They Work and How Do They Influence?," *American Journal of Education* 118, no. 2 (2012); Little, "Understanding Data Use."

22 Ladson-Billings, "Critical Race Theory—What It Is Not!"; Parker, "Critical Race Theory in Education"; Patton, "Disrupting Postsecondary Prose"; Sofia A. Villenas

methodology.[23] Coding, analytical memos, and annotations were organized and documented using *Atlas.ti* qualitative data analysis software.

Critical-Race Theory (CRT) and Critical-Qualitative Research (CQR)

At its base, the model draws from critical-race theory tenets to highlight the links between racism and power in education as a social site, and to introduce three central premises as guiding context for research in this area. The following points are identified—by Bell,[24] Delgado and Stefancic,[25] and Ladson-Billings,[26] for example—as three of the basic tenets of CRT:

1. Systemic Racism/White supremacy[27] is a normal or ordinary part of social contexts and practices in U.S. educational institutions: "The first tenet of CRT is the notion that racism is not some random, isolated act of individuals behaving badly. Rather, to a CRT scholar racism is the normal order of things in US society."[28]

2. Interest convergence serves as a guiding principle to help us understand civil-rights gains in this context: "Black rights are recognized and protected when and only so long as policy makers perceive that such advances will further their interests that are their primary concern."[29]

3. Social construction of race is similarly central in underscoring that the concept and lived realities of race have no inherent basis, but are instead the products of social systems (for more on social systems, see the discussion later in this essay): "A third theme of critical-race theory, the 'social construction' thesis, holds that race and races are products of social thought and relations. Not objective, inherent, or fixed, they correspond to no biological or genetic reality; rather, races are categories that society invents, manipulates, or retires when convenient."[30]

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and Sophia L. Angeles, "Race Talk and School Equity in Local Print Media: The Discursive Flexibility of Whiteness and the Promise of Race-Conscious Talk," *Discourse* 34, no. 4 (2013).

23 Carspecken, "Basic Concepts in Critical Methodological Theory"; Steinberg and Cannella, *Critical Qualitative Research Reader.*

24 Bell, *Silent Covenants.*

25 Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge.*

26 Ladson-Billings, "Critical Race Theory—What It Is Not!"

27 Patton, "Disrupting Postsecondary Prose," 317.

28 Ladson-Billings, "Critical Race Theory—What It Is Not!"

29 Bell, *Silent Covenants*, 49.

30 Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, 3.

Concomitant with these principles, critical-race theorists have held from the beginning[31] that systems of oppression based on race, gender, socioeconomic status, and other social identities are experienced by individuals intersectionally—seamlessly, additively, and all at once. Nevertheless, the necessity of focusing on how racist structures and ideologies shape our experiences is clear and is not blunted by this fact. Along with entrenched histories of structures and policies explicitly discriminating by race, gaps in current policies and practices produce racial inequities in education. Consequently, systemic racism is an important factor shaping life in the United States. Examples are plentiful in studies showing inequities in social capital, racially stratified college opportunity, and college outcomes, as well as inequitable experiences in schools.[32] This abundance of evidence has led scholars to affirm that in order to understand educational equity, it is necessary to focus race and racism.[33] These and other ideas forwarded by critical-race theorists form the social context for individual and institutional sense-making surrounding equity data. Any theory of data-use for equity would need to account for, and remain alert to, these dynamics and structures. Data will reify racial/ethnic categories, for example, and so a review of the literature on data-use for equity needs to incorporate attention to implications for capturing the social meanings of race, while also acknowledging it as what Bhaskar[34] has called "demi-real"—a social construction with tangible consequences. Similarly, acknowledgment that racism and white supremacy are an ordinary part of dominant discourse and culture in the United States helps to make visible and available for analysis, the large and

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[31] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1, no. 8 (1989); Tyrone C. Howard and Oscar Navarro, "Critical Race Theory 20 Years Later," *Urban Education* 51, no. 3 (2016).

[32] Cheryl D. Ching, "Why Race? Understanding the Importance of Foregrounding Race and Ethnicity in Achieving Equity on College Campuses," Los Angeles: Center for Urban Education, 2013.

[33] James K. Donnor and Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Critical Race and the Postracial Imaginary," in *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2017), 195–213; Harper, "Race without Racism"; Matthew W. Hughey, David G. Embrick, and Ashley "Woody" Doane, "Paving the Way for Future Race Research," *American Behavioral Scientist* 59, no. 11 (2015); Rita Kohli, Marcos Pizarro, and Arturo Nevárez, "The 'New Racism' of K–12 Schools: Centering Critical Research on Racism," *Review of Research in Education* 41, no. 1 (2017).

[34] Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 2012): 78.

small ways that institutional racism may play a role in educators' interactions over data. Finally, the concept of interest convergence is a pivotal resource for exploring how individuals and work groups may introduce, sustain focus on, or abandon equity frames in the course of data-use discussions.

These dynamics and structures of power operate at the level of what Carspecken has called *social systems*.[35] It is at this level that pervasive systems of privilege, power, and oppression operate to shape individuals' lived experiences. For example, a system of white supremacy might implicitly inform our practices and understandings in the form of culturally-informed interpretive schemes (e.g., deficit models, normalization of racial inequities, the ways Whiteness renders white privilege invisible). In CQR, these interpretive schemes are often termed "pragmatic structures" because they provide access to a partially shared set of discursive resources and cultural frames of reference that participants may use to infer and convey meanings in the course of communicating (i.e., "pragmatic" in the sense of our uses of language as a social practice).

Drawing on insights from CQR and Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action,[36] the social practice of data-use can be interpreted by analyzing *validity claims* that participants may implicate and infer in the process of making sense of data, and the attendant implications for equity. The term *validity claim* refers to explicit and implicit claims to truth that are made as part of everyday communication. This would naturally include interactions between or among people discussing equity data, or even individuals' solitary interactions with data. Along with the *pragmatic structures* mentioned in the previous paragraph, *validity claims* implicate multiple possible meanings which actors or participants then navigate by (1) implicating and inferring meanings, and (2) making choices to accept, challenge, or ignore the various validity claims forwarded in the exchange.[37]

P–12 Research on Data-Use: A Review Based in CRT and CQR

In the current decade, a small but well-focused thread of studies focused on practices related to data-use in schools has emerged in P–12 education

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[35] Carspecken, "Basic Concepts in Critical Methodological Theory," 36–37.

[36] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1*; Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2.*

[37] For more on validity claims and reconstructing meaning, see Phil Francis Carspecken, *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide* (New York: Routledge, 1996); Carspecken, "Basic Concepts in Critical Methodological Theory."

research.[38] These studies have contributed useful insights into how teachers and other educators make sense of education data and what social processes they follow in using data to inform decisions about instruction and institutional improvement. Only a few studies have taken up the parallel questions in postsecondary contexts.[39]

Moreover, the education research literature in general, regardless of P–12 or postsecondary focus, has yet to fully tap into the potential of this line of research to illuminate pressing questions regarding educational equity. With a few important exceptions,[40] research on data-use for equity is scant. Large-scale national initiatives (e.g., the Achieving the Dream initiative, http://achievingthedream.org/); the Equity Scorecard project (https://cue.usc.edu/tools/the-equity-scorecard/) have brought increased focus to efforts to build meaningful discussions and institutional capacity based in using data in efforts to improve educational equity. Research emerging from these efforts[41] will help to extend discussions on these important questions nationally and will help to guide future research.

In a 2012 special issue of the *American Journal of Education*, Little analyzed the methodological advantages and disadvantages of a focused corpus of studies that examined teachers' sense-making with education data, especially those studies that attended to microprocesses (i.e., the localized interactions that participants experienced in assigning meaning to data and deriving implications for their own practice). [42] Little's review provides

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[38]   Coburn and Turner, "Research on Data Use"; Cynthia E. Coburn and Erica O. Turner, "The Practice of Data Use: An Introduction," *American Journal of Education* 118, no. 2 (2012); Jeannette A. Colyvas, "Performance Metrics as Formal Structures and through the Lens of Social Mechanisms: When Do They Work and How Do They Influence?," *American Journal of Education*, 2012; Ilana Seidel Horn and Judith Warren Little, "Attending to Problems of Practice: Routines and Resources for Professional Learning in Teachers' Workplace Interactions," *American Educational Research Journal* 47, no. 1 (2010); A. Susan Jurow, "Generalizing in Interaction: Middle School Mathematics Students Making Mathematical Generalizations in a Population-Modeling Project," *Mind, Culture, and Activity* 11, no. 4 (2004); Little, "Understanding Data Use"; Moss, "Validity in Action"; James P. Spillane, "Data in Practice: Conceptualizing the Data-Based Decision-Making Phenomena," *American Journal of Education* 118, no. 2 (2012).

[39]   Dowd and Bensimon, *Engaging the "Race Question"*; Jones, "Addressing a Historical Mission."

[40]   Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking"; Amanda Datnow and Vicki Park, "Data Use—For Equity," *Educational Leadership* 72, no. 5 (2015); Jones, "Addressing a Historical Mission."

[41]   Dowd and Bensimon, *Engaging the "Race Question"*.

[42]   Little, "Understanding Data Use."

researchers with a differentiated overview of findings on this topic, as well as recommendations for exploring the social phenomenon of data-use by educators.

The P–12 data-use literature is predominantly focused on performativity and prevalently buys into it from a postpositivist research epistemology. However, this is unsurprising given that most current research operates from this perspective. Even so, and perhaps this point is surprising, many studies point to complexities arising from the fact that data are constructed (i.e., they do not exist as singular, independently existing truth; that data are not transparent in meaning, and therefore "don't drive"[43]). Analysis of recent studies on data-use in P–12 education research can point to specific implications for a framework informing research on practitioners' data-use in the context of colleges' and universities' efforts to improve equity. In the following sections, I highlight three central themes drawn from this review: (1) focus on features of data-use processes, deemed as effective; (2) the centrality of microprocesses; and (3) the role of sociocultural context in shaping microprocesses.

Theme I: Practical supports for and features of effective data-use are foregrounded in the literature, but these points ultimately implicate microprocesses

One important theme in the P–12 literature is a focus on identifying the components of effective collaborative data-use. For example, Roderick highlights the outlines and requirements of a successful process from a practical perspective, "educators need tremendous support, problem solving processes, and structures to help make the move from understanding the problem, to analysis of how it affects their day-to-day work, to planning and managing the response."[44] In another instance, Marsh's recommendations for dynamic and productive data-use practice among colleagues include: accessible and clear data displays, group norms promoting open discussion and confidentiality; inclusion of multiple measures and logic models oriented toward improving outcomes; and collaboration across multiple sites.[45] Roderick seconds these recommendations from her experience working with the Consortium on Chicago School Research.[46]

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[43] Dowd, "Data Don't Drive."
[44] Melissa Roderick, "Drowning in Data but Thirsty for Analysis," *Teachers College Record* 114, no. 11 (2012): 7–8.
[45] Julie A. Marsh, "Interventions Promoting Educators' Use of Data: Research Insights and Gaps," *Teachers College Record* 114, no. 11 (2012): 11–16.
[46] Roderick, "Drowning in Data," 8.

Upon examining these and similar recommendations more closely, it becomes clear that several authors focus on how the local conditions of inter-action, such as the intentionality or nonintentionality of the interaction, the specific purposes implicated, or the size of the group, also matter. The structure of facilitation, whether or not the process is participatory, and the data knowledge and other expertise represented in the group all are identified as potential factors shaping how the data-use discussions proceed. Both Slavit, Nelson, and Deuel's[47] and Datnow and Park's[48] findings suggest that research on data-use should attend to the purposes articulated for the meeting, in order to keep discussion focused on the data and, in the case of Datnow and Park, on equity. Bertrand and Marsh[49] and Nelson, Slavit, and Deuel[50] note, furthermore, that teachers often attributed achievement gaps to student background characteristics, especially when the aim of the exchange was to "validate past performance."[51] Studies have also concluded that data-use interactions can often remain at a superficial level of analysis, resulting in unproductive discussions. Little, Gearhart, Curry, and Kafka found that repeated refocusing to the purpose was sometimes necessary to prevent data discussions from straying into superficial discussions of instruction in general, or of noninstructional explanations of student performance (e.g., student or family characteristics).[52]

Teachers' previous experience with data and their implicit epistemological beliefs naturally shape their interpretations and data-use. Datnow and Kennedy-Lewis' findings, for example, showed that participants used an "eclectic" approach in making sense of data (drawing on various resources and frames, often at a superficial level).[53] Jimerson likewise found that teachers' beliefs about data in general were an important part of their experiences with

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[47] David Slavit, Tamara Holmlund Nelson, and Angie Deuel, "Teacher Groups' Conceptions and Uses of Student-Learning Data," *Journal of Teacher Education* 64, no. 1 (2013).

[48] Datnow and Park, "Data Use—For Equity."

[49] Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking," 867.

[50] Tamara Holmlund Nelson, David Slavit, and Angie Deuel, "Two Dimensions of an Inquiry Stance toward Student-Learning Data," *Teachers College Record* 114, no. 8 (2012): 23.

[51] Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking," 867.

[52] Judith Warren Little et al., "Looking at Student Work for Teacher Learning, Teacher Community, and School Reform," *Phi Delta Kappan* 85, no. 3 (2003): 189.

[53] Amanda Datnow, Vicki Park, and Brianna Kennedy-Lewis, "High School Teachers' Use of Data to Inform Instruction," *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk* 17, no. 4 (2012): 259.

interpreting educational data.[54] It is important, furthermore, to examine data-users' interpretive schemes, including attributions and implicit theories explaining patterns they see in the data. Interpretive schemes relevant to data-use can include broad conceptualizations of the dynamics of teaching and learning, such as attribution (i.e., theorizing about the cause of a perceived pattern), or whether students' understandings or capabilities are static or mutable. Data-use interactions can sometimes involve practitioners attributing low scores to student characteristics, and demographic characteristics in particular, and this has clear implications for equity.

Within the literature on equity-data-use in particular, recommended practices cluster around (1) leadership and focus on equity, and (2) student and teacher engagement. Datnow and Park[55] recommend five principles for educational leaders to consider in supporting data-use for educational equity. These include: (1) articulating a purpose [for the data-use discussion] and a commitment to equity; (2) building in adequate time for reflection and discussion around data, equity, and achievement; (3) using assessment data to support flexible and dynamic ability grouping within heterogeneous classrooms (and *not* to support long-term ability grouping or tracking); (4) focusing on student engagement as well as achievement data; and (5) promoting and making use of educators' own professional judgment at multiple levels. Building on this last point, the authors further identified what they termed "principles" for effective data-use: focus on goals for improving education for all students; promotion of an inquiry mindset during discussions; support of educators' professional judgment and development.

Bertrand and Marsh's research points to a similar finding about the importance of supporting educators in developing professional knowledge relevant to teaching, learning and equity. [56] Their results showed that teachers often attributed low assessment scores to student characteristics. Just as often, however, teachers participating in the study attributed the patterns they saw to instructional practices and framed the issue as something that they themselves had the power to address and improve. These findings highlight participants' uses of interpretive schemes, and reinforce Datnow and Park's recommendation to develop and leverage educators' professional judgment.[57]

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[54] Jo Beth Jimerson, "Thinking about Data: Exploring the Development of Mental Models for 'Data Use' among Teachers and School Leaders," *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 42 (2014): 10–11.

[55] Datnow and Park, "Data Use—For Equity," 50.

[56] Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking," 888.

[57] Datnow and Park, "Data Use—For Equity," 53.

In one illustration, Bertrand and Marsh's participants introduced spontaneous examples of the importance of knowing students' histories and contexts in order to interpret data for instructional improvement.[58]

Clearly, the picture emerging from this initial theme has implications for methods in future research on equity data-use in higher education. These implications include: (1) the need to focus not just on the presence of facilitators, but how they interact with participants, and the clarity and consistency with which they articulate an equity-focused purpose for the discussions; and (2) the centrality of teachers' own use of judgment and sense-making, using interpretive schemes such as attributions, deficit models, or contextual knowledge of students' own histories. In terms of methodological implications, Little's review emphasized the importance of detailed and situated data collection, pointing specifically to the advantages of observation and video data.[59] Taken together, these findings suggest that while the literature prevalently seems to foreground the technical features of effective data-use, their underlying implications strongly point to the need to investigate sense-making in the form of social microprocesses.

Theme II: In order to understand data-use practices, research needs to focus on "microprocesses"

Microprocesses are defined by Little as:

> the ways in which interaction is meaningfully situated, shaped by and constitutive of organizational structures, norms, and resources (the context of particular schools or districts, for example) as well as broader institutional and societal structures, processes, and logics (common arrangements for and ideas about education).[60]

In CQR terms, focusing on microprocesses provides a way to consider the on-the-ground *pragmatic structures* and *validity claims* that shape and partially constitute educators' meaning-making around data. As noted earlier, educators' sense-making with data often hinges on their implicit theories regarding the underlying causes of patterns they see in assessment data, but it may also entail interactions where interpretations are proposed, challenged and revised in exchanges with colleagues. Bertrand and Marsh highlight a parallel focus on the lived experience of data-use, and assert that research

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[58]   Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking," 879.
[59]   Little, "Understanding Data Use," 158.
[60]   Ibid., 145.

trained on illuminating these social practices will help us to "realize the goals" of the education data movement and promote equity at the same time.[61]

The recommended focus on microprocesses and lived experience has intuitive implications for research methods. Most obviously, it suggests that future research should emphasize observational methods, as mentioned above. Interview data can also provide insight into educators' sense-making. However, a primary record, especially as supported by videorecorded interactions will likely provide more detail on how educators apply frames and participate in discussions, beyond what participants have internalized and encoded in a format that is ready for the re-telling after the fact. Relying solely on interviews, without the support of critical social theory and inquiry methods, may also occlude the varied ways power may distort these interactions, and shape the discussion toward performativity and superficiality (e.g., participants reverting to 'safe' or abstract interpretations of outcomes). This implication leads us also to consider the central role that sociocultural context plays in practitioner interactions, an issue explored in the third theme.

Theme III: Sociocultural context shapes multiple aspects of the microprocesses that are at the center of data-use

A final theme emerging from this review was that many studies in this literature, and many participants in this discourse, emphasized a technical view of the phenomenon focused on local roles and social negotiations (including organizational structures). Relatively few studies considered broader patterns of culture or structures of power, privilege and oppression as informing data-use. While it is understandable that researchers in this area would focus on actionable implications for technical improvements in practice and policy supporting data-use, it stands to reason, nevertheless, that broader social structures and interpretive schemes would have to play a role in how educators make sense of data. For a full understanding of data-use microprocesses, particularly for equity,[62] we will need to consider both.[63]

Nevertheless, a few key contributions to the P–12 data-use literature have pointed to the need for studies look beyond the exclusive focus on technical solutions to consider the broader sociocultural and political context in

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[61] Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking," 889.
[62] Ibid., 862.
[63] Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, "Constructionist Analytics of Interpretive Practice," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2011), 347.

which educators' data-use practice occurs.[64] Bertrand and Marsh warn plainly that analyses of educators' data-use must consider "broader context," for example, and highlight this theme further as a key focus recommended for future research, "Future research could situate the relationship between data attributions and equity within the broader policy and discourse landscape."[65] Moreover, while most studies take the neutral and transparent meaning of data and the straight-forward process of "data-use" for granted, a small chorus from among these key sources, notes in various ways that data-use necessarily involves layers of socially situated interpretation. Little, for example, characterizes data-use as "a process of interpretation, argumentation and persuasion."[66] Coburn, Touré, and Yamashita argue, "evidence does not independently inform decision making because it is always mediated by interpretation."[67] Henig extends the point even further to assert, "Data usage is not simply affected by this institutional upheaval that is shifting the boundaries of education decision making; it is implicated in the upheaval itself."[68]

Both cultural and organizational norms can be seen to shape educators' data-use practices. Future research seeking to understand educators' sense-making around data will need to attend to the norms built into interactions, including organizational and community norms for talk about work, performativity, teaching/learning, and students and their families. Bertrand and Marsh found the microstructures such as the discussion group-size made a difference for how often teachers attributed low scores to student characteristics rather than to instruction.[69] Their participants were more likely to make that attribution in pairs or small groups as opposed to groups of four or more. Broader analyses of why this may be and how culture and the broader discourses surrounding deficit models and educational practice and institutional accountability may play in are not commonly foregrounded in many studies and reports. Specific discussions of institutional racism,

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[64] Tarika Barrett, "Teacher Conversation and Community: What Matters in Smaller Learning Communities and Inquiry-Based High School Reform" (PhD diss., New York University, 2009), 221–226; Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking," 889; Jeffrey R Henig, "The Politics of Data Use," *Teachers College Record* 114, no. November (2012): 27–28; Little, "Understanding Data Use," 160–162; Roderick, "Drowning in Data," 6.

[65] Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking," 888.

[66] Little, "Understanding Data Use," 151.

[67] Cynthia E. Coburn, Judith Touré, and Mika Yamashita, "Evidence, Interpretation, and Persuasion: Instructional Decision Making at the District Central Office," *Teachers College Record* 111, no. 4 (2009): 1118.

[68] Henig, "The Politics of Data Use," 27.

[69] Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking," 885.

for example, are similarly rare, although not completely absent. However, Timperley noted that professional norms shaped participants' ability to introduce evaluative feedback into exchanges, possibly implicating a norm discouraging colleagues from any form of criticism of each other.[70] In some school settings in Timperley's study, this kind of norm seemed to constrain collaboration, and was exacerbated by a (possibly related) norm preventing teachers from talking about challenges or uncertainty in their own teaching/learning practice.[71] In contrast, the study found a more adaptive pattern at schools that showed more robust data-use. In these more successful interactions, teachers were willing to ask for help and even to expose vulnerability in the course of discussing assessment data and their own practice. These findings demonstrate not only that norms make a difference in educators' sense-making, but also that specific norms can be mediated by local organizational structures. It may be, therefore, that schools and universities can influence working-groups' norms to support more productive and focused exchanges, by (1) setting a purpose explicitly and (2) encouraging educators to be open and reflective about their own practice. Tone-setting steps such as these will not replace broader norms and expectations that participants bring into the exchange, but some findings have suggested that they can make more room for focused and productive interactions with education data.

Nevertheless, Barrett's conclusions raised questions about how much a focus on organizational factors alone can mediate the influence of broader discourses and structures.[72] She found that technical supports such as tools for data display or a facilitator merely being present did not successfully mitigate the prevailing influence of participants' use of interpretive schemes and ideas informed by broader sociocultural patterns of power, privilege, and oppression (e.g., stereotypes, or other categorizations based on student or family characteristics). Teachers' frames on students will therefore also be part of data-use in ways that affect equity. Deficit-model thinking, for example, was found to be linked to interpretations of test-score gaps as (1) static patterns, and (2) not attributable to instructional practice. Bertrand and Marsh[73] discuss how similar interpretive schemes played out in teachers' attributions of patterns they identified in assessment data.

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[70] Helen Timperley, "Evidence-Informed Conversations Making a Difference to Student Achievement," *Professional Learning Conversations: Challenges in Using Evidence for Improvement* (2008): 76–77.
[71] Ibid., 78.
[72] Barrett, "Teacher Conversation and Community," 221–226.
[73] Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking," 889.

It is important, therefore, that future research examine data-users' interpretive schemes, including implicit theories explaining patterns they see in the data (attributions). Bertrand and Marsh encapsulated an important component of this theme in noting that the "complex intersection of implicit beliefs—reflecting broader discourses—about … socially constructed difference may influence the ways in which teachers interpret and act on data."[74] By highlighting this point in examples related to English-language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities in particular, the authors demonstrated a more general point as well. Educators' multiple implicit beliefs reflect broader societal discourses and come together in complex interplay to inform their sense-making and use of data.

As we interpret educational data in practice, we interpret students' and our own identities and positionalities intersectionally, and all at once. In these interactions, we are not always just interpreting the categories of experience implicated and inferred in the data, but our own inferences, associations, and expectations about various aspects of students' identities and experiences.[75] On the other hand, even in instances where educators attribute test-score gaps to student demographics, interactions around data can present meaningful opportunities, as Datnow and Park note, "to address some teachers' deep-seated beliefs about race, social class, and student achievement, as well as bring to light promising practices of other teachers."[76] Studies in this field have shown that teacher expectations and deficit-model biases in particular, influence student outcomes, especially for students of color.[77] They also specifically recommend, "future studies on data attribution should consider the racial identity of the teachers."[78] Moreover, just as teachers' sense-making was found to be socially situated and informed by cultural norms and sociocultural and economic power, data coaches' lived experiences in these interactions are similarly shaped by pragmatic structures, cultural norms, as well as sociocultural systems of privilege and oppression naturally bearing on equity.

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[74] Ibid., 862.

[75] Ibid., 888; Nelson, Slavit, and Deuel, "Two Dimensions," 27; Kim Schildkamp and Wilmad Kuiper, "Data-Informed Curriculum Reform: Which Data, What Purposes, and Promoting and Hindering Factors," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26, no. 3 (2010): 494.

[76] Datnow and Park, "Data Use—For Equity," 49.

[77] Clark McKown and Rhona S. Weinstein, "Teacher Expectations, Classroom Context, and the Achievement Gap," *Journal of School Psychology* 46, no. 3 (2008): 245; Gary L. St. C. Oates, "Teacher-Student Racial Congruence, Teacher Perceptions, and Test Performance," *Social Science Quarterly* 84, no. 3 (2003): 520.

[78] Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking," 889.

This final theme has implications for future research on equity data-use in postsecondary contexts. It supports a theory of data-use that includes faculty and administrators' previous experiences, positionalities, and their beliefs and expectations, as informed by broader patterns in sociocultural power, privilege, and oppression.

Applying CRQ and CRT: Implications for a theoretical and methodological framework

The aim of this analysis is to describe the discourse from across this literature and glean insights to inform (1) a theory of data-use in higher education and (2) methodological implications for future research. As noted in the introduction to this paper, concepts drawn from CRT and CQR can help to focus these insights for use in understanding data-use for equity in postsecondary institutions. The review of P–12 data-use research revealed three main themes discussed above. The themes are interrelated and can be summarized as follows:

1. Practical supports for and features of effective data-use are foregrounded in the literature, although these points ultimately implicate microprocesses;
2. In order to understand data-use practices, research needs to focus on microprocesses;
3. Sociocultural context shapes multiple aspects of microprocesses at the center of data-use.

Concepts drawn from CRQ allow us to extend and focus descriptions of microprocesses. As instances of communication, educators' interactions around data are propelled and partially constituted by inference. Educators implicate and infer meaning within a field of possible meanings.[79] In the process, participants use interpretive schemes and concepts that are informed by their own experiences and by broader sociocultural context. More specifically, pragmatic structures (e.g., norms, ideologies, discursive styles, constructed identities) and systems (e.g., social structures, financial resources, infrastructures, inequalities, formal policies, laws) inform our experiences as agents in interactions surrounding educational data. These structures shape and partially constitute all of our experiences in social sites, but sense-making around data and around equity are specific instances of this.

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[79] Carspecken, *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research*, 95–96; Carspecken, "Basic Concepts in Critical Methodological Theory," 46.

In critical social theory and research, we often talk about social power and aim to make positive change in society by exposing and disrupting the inequities that are held in place in complex ways by this social power. *System relations* is part of this concept.[80] Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action[81] identifies multiple forms of social power that create and perpetuate inequities, especially those defined by race, socioeconomic class, and gender. Some aspects of social power take the form of institutions and practices that operate outside of our own subjective experiences (e.g., residential segregation, inequities in school funding, formal policies, laws, school buildings, infrastructures). While these structures surely shape how we think and even how we understand ourselves, nevertheless, we typically experience them as external barriers or resources, existing outside of our selves. Other forms of social power work mainly via our need to secure our identities socially, and via our own subjective experiences with language and other forms of communication. While the first type of social power is often termed the *social system*, the second type is identified as *discourse*. Discourse is recursively informed by the social system, and vice versa. More specifically, the discursive expressions of these social structures become part of interactions and sense-making with data, partially via our subjectivity (previous experiences, tastes, preferences, interests, values, etc.) and our positionality (how others assign meanings to stable aspects of our social identities, e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic class).[82] Our discursive experiences, therefore, internalize aspects of the broader social system in this way. When critical researchers analyze this interplay between our experiences in communication-based interactions on the one hand, and the broader power structure on the other, they call this dynamic *system relations*.[83] This concept is highly relevant to understanding how the broader system shapes practitioners' discourse and interaction surrounding equity.

Critical-Race Theory, in turn, can provide a set of conceptual resources that enable us to understand more concretely how constructions of race and racialized identities play a part in everyday interactions, including educators' interactions with educational data. For example, CRT concepts can help to highlight the everyday relevance of various forms of institutional racism in

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[80] Carspecken, *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research*, 39.

[81] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action, Vols. 1 and 2.*

[82] Kathleen St. Louis and Angela Calabrese Barton, "Tales from the Science Education Crypt: A Critical Reflection of Positionality, Subjectivity, and Reflexivity in Research," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 3, no. 3 (2002): para 4.

[83] Carspecken, *Critical Ethnography in Educational Research*, 39.

making meaning of educational data.[84] Similarly, calling attention to White-ness[85] and Whiteness-as-property[86] frames can help us understand the various ways educators might use deficit models in making sense of assessment data, and likewise how the cultural biases built into assessments may at times be elided or rendered invisible. Singleton's[87] concept of Whiteness can help us understand the complexities that may emerge, for example, since Whiteness as a discursive resource may sometimes be used by educators of color as well as by white educators. Building on the discussion of the social construction of race as outlined in the introduction, I discuss the application of systemic racism and interest convergence concepts in further detail below.

Systemic racism.
Understanding the pervasiveness and foundational nature of racist structures and ideologies in U.S. society is an essential first step in analyzing data-use in education, and especially when considering efforts to improve equity. Applying this principle is important because it helps us to avoid the pitfall of assuming that racism is implicated only when explicitly observed in consciously chosen direct statements of animosity or bias. Racist ideas are often, even usually, implicated in far more subtle ways, often implicit and indeterminate in meaning. Likewise, incorporating this principle supports us in seeing that racism is not enacted solely in unusual circumstances by unusual people, but rather is so pervasively sewn into multiple aspects of culture, social structures, and discourse in the United States that it is like the air we breathe, and involves all of us. As educators, our actions, our communication, and the meanings we infer, are informed and shaped by racism as business-as-usual in U.S. contexts. It is most certainly implicated in the inequities that are the topic of data-use and sense-making in education. However, it does not end at the inequities themselves; it conditions our interactions more broadly as well. As we interact and communicate with students and colleagues about education data, systemic racism is a meaningful part of the landscape.

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[84]   Patton, "Disrupting Postsecondary Prose," 325; Ladson-Billings, "Critical Race Theory—What It Is Not!," 36–37.

[85]   Robin DiAngelo, *What Does It Mean to Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy.* New York: Peter Lang, 2016; Glenn E. Singleton, *Courageous Conversations about Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2014).

[86]   Ujju Aggarwal, "The Ideological Architecture of Whiteness as Property in Educational Policy," *Educational Policy* 30, no. 1 (2016); Cheryl I. Harris. "Whiteness as Property." *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (1993): 1715–1744.

[87]   Singleton, *Courageous Conversations.*

Whiteness.

Harris and DiAngelo have both pointed out that systemic racism entails the elevation of white social identities and practices, in addition to the oppression of people of color.[88] This elevation is where Whiteness and Whiteness-as-property come in. Whiteness works by carving out a discursive space that is inferred as unracialized and universal, while at the same time being defined only (albeit implicitly) by the construction of race (e.g., centering European culture as the default—and implicitly, superior—culture). In U.S. contexts, discourses and participants prevalently center Whiteness. It is important that a theory of data-use for equity include explicit attention to this phenomenon because of the central place that Whiteness holds in the definitions and assessment of learning in the United States. For example, wherever standardized test scores are used to assess student learning or by extension, equity, in practitioner interactions, it is necessary to raise questions about the extent to which measures may be culturally biased, centering Whiteness in the content and assumptions built into assessments.

Interest convergence.

The concept of interest convergence can be useful in understanding data-use because it is one prevalent route through which the broader structures of white supremacy may shape our experiences in everyday interactions, via norms. Literally, the interests of privileged social identities are tied to institutions and broad social practices such as education and the inequities built into them. As Kendi has noted, the economic and political purposes for racist structures have historically come first, with the racist ideologies emerging later to legitimate and reinforce those structures.[89] The principle of interest convergence is relevant in analyzing educational practices and can introduce important context to our understanding of policy shifts and efforts to improve equity. Examples of interest convergence can be seen in policy debates that legitimate efforts to improve racial climate, or equity in access, retention, experience, and completion on the one hand, by tying them to the economic competitiveness of the institution, state, or country, on the other. Arguably, interest convergence is similarly evident in arguments that legitimate more equitable access to higher education for students of color by showing how interaction with racially and culturally diverse peers benefits white students.

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[88]   DiAngelo, *What Does It Mean to Be White?*; Harris, "Whiteness as Property."

[89]   Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2017).

The result of applying these concepts and frameworks together is a theoretical framework that describes multiple complexities and contexts informing the process of data-use and sense-making around data. The features included in this emerging picture of the process encompass: (1) the centrality of micro-processes, including inference and multiple meanings, which educators navigate in their interactions surrounding data; (2) the role of educators' previous experiences, cultures, and expectations in interpreting data; (3) the role that broader sociocultural context, including racialized inequalities, privilege, and oppression, can play in data-use, and in data-use for equity in particular. The resulting theoretical model and its methodological implications are illustrated in Figure 2, and are presented in the next section.
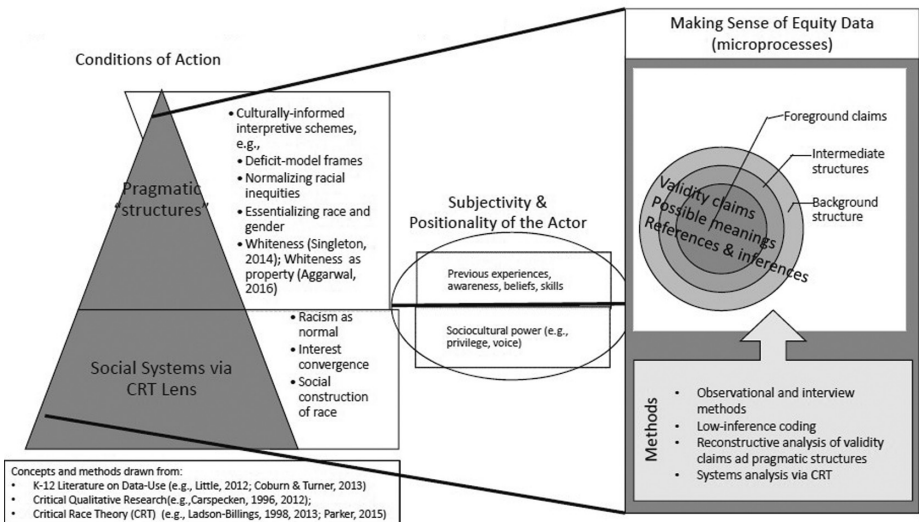

Figure 2

A Theoretical and Methodological Framework

As shown in Figure 2, the model takes account of the social system, especially those aspects that pertain specifically to racialized privilege and oppression, using concepts drawn from CRT. In the lower left, the figure includes key concepts from CRT as a part of the sociocultural context that condition educators' actions in data-use as a social practice. The other component of the sociocultural conditions of action, is shown in the upper left of the figure, which focuses on what Carspecken and others call pragmatic structures (e.g., interpretive schemes, attributions, cultural norms). The social systems and pragmatic structures inform interactions around data directly, as they are part

of the context all participants are drawing on in implicating and inferring meaning within the exchange. In addition, however, these conditions of action also play a role in and through each participant's subjective experience, as shown in the center of the figure.[90]

Drawing also from the P–12 data-use literature, the model further incorporates the subjectivity and positionality of the actor (i.e., the faculty, administrators, or practitioners making sense of the data), including previous beliefs and experiences[91] as well as positionality in systems of social power articulated by race, gender, socioeconomic class, and other broadly relevant social identities. Moreover, because local social contexts also shape communication and inference, data-use and related microprocesses will work differently for data-users in different institutional roles, or with various levels of power and status within an organization. Accordingly, this is built into the model as well. St. Louis and Calabrese Barton distinguish between subjectivity—that is, actors internal experiences, emotions, preferences, and interests—and positionality (the social meaning and power that the actor themselves and others infer, based on constructed but stable aspects of identity such as race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class).[92] Sociocultural power is internalized in both subjectivity and in positionality, and participants also use pragmatic structures (e.g., cultural norms) to navigate these internal experiences.

Finally, as shown at the right side of the figure, the theoretical framework focuses on the local experiences (or microprocesses[93]) of participants on the ground, as they create and infer meaning from data. The model uses CQR concepts to extend this idea to explain more specifically what microprocesses entail. Namely, the use of validity claims to communicate and navigate meanings is highlighted as the principal vehicle for constructing meaning from information presented as data. Validity claims can be foregrounded as explicit statements or claims, but also could include backgrounded (or implicit) claims.[94] Educators navigate possible meanings in this way[95] as they make

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[90]　Of course, the framework must also account for institution-level conditions of action, for example the institution's capacity and resources for data-use, the norms and epistemologies underlying data collection as well as interpretation, the quality of the processes used in collecting and constructing data, access to data, and the presence or absence of open and participatory processes. Insofar as these conditions shape communication and inference, they can largely be understood under the categories of social systems and pragmatic structures.

[91]　Bertrand and Marsh, "Teachers' Sensemaking," 862.

[92]　St. Louis and Calabrese Barton, "Tales from the Science Education Crypt," para 4.

[93]　Little, "Understanding Data Use," 145.

[94]　Carspecken, *Critical Ethnography*, 105.

[95]　For more detailed explanation on this application of TCA, see ibid., 93–120.

sense of data, and these inferences and actions naturally have implications for individual praxis and institutional climates affecting equity.

Methodological Implications

Along with the theoretical framework explained above, a set of methodological guidelines can be derived from the three source literatures (CRT, CQR, and research on P–12 data-use). These implications for future research include a focus on observational methods and as well as interviews for exploring and understanding microprocesses.[96] The recommendation to focus on these methodological points are summarized in the lower right corner of Figure 2. The well-supported recommendation favoring observation methods arising from this literature naturally leads to the use of video data as a way of extending those observational methods. This in turn raises important methodological questions related to how best to collect, construct, and analyze video data. Additional ethical considerations may arise as well.

Just as Datnow and Park noted that "Data-informed decision making must contribute to teaching professionalism—not threaten it," it is relevant to draw a parallel implication here for postsecondary institutions.[97] Equity-focused data-use needs to support and leverage educators' professionalism. Even as we (facilitators, colleagues, researchers) work to challenge deficit-model frames and other interpretive schemes that may be informed by institutional racism, Whiteness-as-property frames, or other forms of privilege and oppression, this research points to educators' professional judgment as a vehicle for transforming assumptions and recentering discussions on instructional practices that support equity. Any research approach supported by critical research epistemologies—which naturally center on participants' meaning-making and experience directly—is bound to point in this direction as well. Nevertheless, it remains true that data-use discussions can cut both ways. While positive collaborative engagement with data for equity can help institutions and educators improve practice and affect student outcomes, when data interactions are not effectively focused and supported, they can just as easily foster inequity. Given these tensions, it is important for research in this area to incorporate Socratic or maieutic interviewing approaches and reflection, as well as observation.[98] These interviewing approaches draw on participants' "active subjectivity" and engage researchers and participants in co-constructing an understanding of data-use, both engaging and challenging participants' expertise.

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[96] Ibid., 145; Coburn and Turner, "The Practice of Data Use," 103.
[97] Datnow and Park, "Data Use—For Equity," 53.
[98] Svend Brinkmann, "The Interview," in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018).

Importance for the Field of Higher Education

This theoretical work—along with the studies it enables—can help to shed light on the processes through which institutions, faculty, and practitioners can improve in practices related to educational equity. First, researchers can gain insight into the substantive and methodological issues to be considered in designing studies in this area. Building on this, institutional leaders may also benefit from the findings, as they will provide insights, grounded in research and critical social theory, on how individuals in organizations can build productive understandings and collaborations grounded in equity data. Extending the work of current initiatives such as the Equity Scorecard, further insights will likely emerge for creating processes that move individuals away from deficit-model thinking about student achievement, and toward proactive thinking about how their institutions and programs can make a difference in improving equity outcomes. State policy makers and policy intermediating organizations interested in supporting educational equity will likewise benefit from future research along this line, as it potentially may show the way toward data structures and reporting formats that will support (1) faculty, administrators', and practitioners' understanding of data related to access, retention, stratification, and opportunity gaps and (2) their use of data to improve equity at their institutions.

At a more basic level, generating a theoretical framework based in CRQ and CRT is a promising way around the dangers of performativity, helping to address the tension outlined in the introduction above. Employing concepts from CRQ and CRT, this is an approach that can (a) make sense of inference and meaning in interactions; (b) analyze how participants navigate within policies that implicate performativity (i.e., without itself buying into performativity in a way that renders it invisible); and (c) strike a balance between (i) acknowledging and exploring the potential of data or even performativity to be useful in supporting tangible improvements for equity, on the one hand, and (ii) exploring these phenomena from a critical (and nonpostpositivist) epistemological stance. In a broader sense, therefore, it is an approach that can harness the potential of critical social theory and research to explain how, as Habermas has stated it, systems colonize everyday interactions[99] surrounding data and equity, and the complex ways we as educators navigate that terrain in practice.

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[99] Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2*, 356.

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