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Cover Page Footnote

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From Individual Difference to Political Analysis: An Emerging Application of Critical Theory in Student Affairs

Anna L. Patton, University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Abstract

This literature review presents a bridge between current use of critical theories in student affairs and contemporary political critiques of higher education. Critical theories in student affairs have been used in professional philosophy statements, student development theories, as well as new works of research exploring student experiences and campus practices. Particularly, Critical Race Theory (CRT), feminisms, and queer theory are salient in a number of works using critical theories in student affairs. Applications of critical theories in student affairs do not include a thorough interrogation of the political economic environment surrounding higher education and its relevant implications. Academic capitalism has been used to understand how shifting political conditions have encouraged universities to move closer to the market by taking part in market and market-like activities. Themes in research around emerging Academy-Industry Relations (AIRs) and their impacts present a number of patterns relevant to student affairs practice. Application of the themes in academic capitalism results in a number of areas for future consideration including equity and access to higher education, responsibility of student affairs professionals to navigate changing political climates, and a pressing need for philosophical examination of professional practice and relevance within the current political context of higher education.

Keywords

student affairs, critical theory, academic capitalism

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The aim of this literature review is to weave together critical theories used in student affairs with academic capitalism within higher education to offer a new, critical lens with which to examine the profession of student affairs by suggesting implications and areas of future study. Student affairs is an ever-evolving field responding to the needs of diverse student populations arriving on campus in order to provide relevant student support (Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). As higher education has developed over time, college campuses have enrolled a wider array of students across demographic groups—like race, religion, and physical ability. While enrollment does not signify equitable lived experiences once on campus, the inclusion of new populations contributes to demographic shifts on college campuses. As student demographics shift, student affairs professionals have needed new tools and approaches to augment the personal growth and inclusion of new populations of students on campus (American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2004). Critical theories have played an expanding role in student affairs research into applied practice, particularly its incorporation with student development theory. In student development theory, critical theories have incorporated queer, critical race, and feminist perspectives to suggest new ways to serve students across many identity boundaries (Abes, 2009; Bondi, 2012; Pasque & Errington Nicholson, 2011). Critical theories have also been used as reference in professional positioning statements (ACPA & NASPA, 2004) as well as new research projects (Broido & Manning, 2002). While individual difference approaches to critical theories are being steadily incorporated into student affairs practice, there is still a considerable opportunity for utilization of new critical perspectives in student affairs work—particularly with a turn toward the systemic.

One critical perspective that has been utilized to evaluate changes in a variety of areas in higher education is academic capitalism (Anderson, 2001; Deem, 2001; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). However, critical student affairs researchers have yet to explicitly incorporate a lens of academic capitalism in analyzing and critiquing the profession. Academic capitalism is the increasing engagement of the university in market-like activities through the corporatization of higher education (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). An ethos of commodification is pervasive at the modern American university, and it exists across academic affairs as well as administrative capacities such as departmental funding, intellectual property policies, financial aid laws, university branding, and even faculty promotion (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). In juxtaposition to the neoliberal market-based values of academic capitalism, student affairs literature largely supports holistic development and honors students' voices (Young, 1997). In line with Abes's (2009) call to traverse theoretical boundaries, the themes within literature on academic capitalism provide a critical new lens with which to expand the use of critical theories in student affairs. The purpose of this review is to provide one response to the call for an increased use of critical theories in student affairs by drawing on trends in academic capitalism to suggest implications and areas of future study for student affairs. This paper employs a both/and view of understanding the presence of critical theory in student affairs as both an organizing topic and a specific form of method.

The Current Role of Critical Theories in Student Affairs

Recently, critical theories are more prominently cited in documents incorporated into the profession of student affairs. More

specifically, critical theories are an expanding pathway to situate the profession philosophically, challenge and transform student development theory, and provide theoretical foundations for a variety of scholarly research projects.

Situating the Profession

In 2004, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) released a philosophical positioning paper, “Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience,” that emphasized the need to reexamine existing ideas of teaching and learning in college. Pulling heavily from Mezirow’s (1981) original work on critical perspectives of adult learning, ACPA and NASPA (2004) assert their organizational perspectives that learning is not simply the transmission of content knowledge. Learning is transformational when supplemented with critical reflection including both academic and developmental changes (ACPA & NASPA, 2004). Through the charge of transformational learning in ACPA and NASPA (2004), the national professional organizations of student affairs suggest an orientation open to and engaged with critical theories or perspectives. Since the publication of “Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience” (ACPA & NASPA, 2004), there has been a number of anecdotal, practical, and scholarly publications incorporating critical theories into a variety of outlets.

Student Development Theory

Critical theories have also been integrated into student development theory in addition to situating the profession philosophically at the national organization level. Student development comprises one of the many responsibilities entrusted to student affairs practitioners and seeks to impact students

in making positive, conscientious decisions about the self, learning, and life. Broido and Manning (2002) outline the prominent theoretical outlooks in qualitative student development research. Beyond the traditional objectivist paradigm of student development theory, Broido and Manning (2002) note student affairs researchers are incorporating more constructivist theoretical perspectives into student development theory: critical theories, postmodernism, critical race theory, queer theory, and feminist theories. Critical theoretical perspectives like queer theory, critical race theory, and various feminisms have remained prevalent in student development theory. Critical race theory is particularly challenging of existing student development theory in reconceptualizing identity by making oppression explicit across multiple areas of identity while also depending on situational identity salience (Patton et al., 2007). Scholars of critical race theory urge student development theory to move beyond a generic, one-size-fits-all model of identity to one that is nuanced, contextual, and systemically situated (Patton et al., 2007).

Torres, Jones, and Renn (2009) reshape the landscape of critical approaches in student development theory by providing a survey of current and future directions for student development theory. New directions in student development theory exist while noting the prominence of queer theory, critical race theory, and feminisms. Torres, Jones, and Renn (2009) provide suggestions for future identity development research that pays attention to the fluidity of identity categories, to the growing complexity of environments, and to the interaction of and with technology, as well as to the potential impacts of globalization on identity development. Social status, intersectionality, and multiple dimensions of identity are additional critical components to be considered in challenging existing student development theory.

Additional Critical Research in Student Affairs

In addition to projects focused explicitly on student development, studies seeking to understand a variety of student experiences, practices, events, and services on campus utilize critical theories as their theoretical foundation. A survey of current literature utilizing critical theories reveals a tendency toward projects of critical race theory, various feminisms, and queer theory, with other approaches gaining traction as well.

Critical race theory. Critical race theory (CRT) is utilized in a wide variety of student affairs research. Stemming from critical legal studies, CRT emerged to explicitly address the racial realities of people of color in the United States. At its core, CRT asserts that racism is normal and pervasive in the United States, that lived experiences of people of color can serve as counternarratives to this status quo through storytelling, and that Whites are the prime beneficiaries of civil rights legislation (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Further, Ladson-Billings (1999) notes that CRT possesses important potential applications within education including CRT-based teacher preparation programs, grounded theory research projects, existing theory enhancement, and challenging existing theories. Student affairs scholars (Bondi, 2012; Garcia, Johnston, Garibay, Herrera, & Giraldo, 2011; Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, & Platt, 2011) connect CRT to student affairs work, while Ladson-Billings (1999) focuses on K–12 education. To those ends, CRT has been utilized within student affairs in a variety of ways.

One way CRT has been implemented within student affairs research is to examine systemic racism within the field. Bondi (2012) uses CRT to examine the ways whiteness is preserved in higher education—particularly in student affairs graduate preparation pro-

grams. Centering whiteness as property and a right, Bondi (2012) employs semi-structured interviews with eight White, recent graduates, four men and four women, of a student affairs master's program at a predominantly White institution. The interviews were interpreted, and the author identified three main themes: the use of White privilege to prioritize personal learning over potential negative impacts, White privilege as justification for individual contributions being centered and valued in class discussion, and whiteness as means of maintaining segregation through exclusion (Bondi, 2012). In moving beyond the individual to the systemic, Bondi (2012) also adds to the individual interview interpretation by contextualizing interview findings within the history of the U.S. educational system. The systemic level of interpretation revealed whiteness is protected through a historical reliance on ideas of objectivity, traditional curriculum development, historical exclusion, and institutional discourse on inclusion. Bondi (2012) responds to Ladson-Billings's (1999) call to make racist practices and institutions transparent through interrogation of graduate preparation programs.

Other research projects utilize CRT to highlight individual experiences or events on campus. Harper, Davis, Jones, McGowan, Ingram, and Platt (2011), for example, address the limited research into the experiences of Black male leaders to explicitly racialize the encounters of Black male resident assistants (RAs) at predominantly White institutions (PWIs), especially regarding claims of neutrality and acknowledging experiences of people of color. Semi-structured qualitative interviews illustrated three major themes. For Black male RAs, a great amount of energy was spent in combating racism and racial stereotypes. They felt isolated as a result of a lack of other Black male RAs or administrators of color to serve as resources or support and were repeatedly left frustrated and angry

by inconsistent expectations between racial groups (Harper et al., 2011).

In addition to utilizing CRT to better clarify the lived experiences of individual students, CRT also creates a framework for understanding campus events. A recurring concern on many college campuses is racially motivated bias incidents, including racially based parties (Garcia et al., 2011). Using a lens of CRT, racially themed parties, any campus event where partygoers are asked to dress like or mock a particular racial or ethnic group, are understood as overt manifestations of covert racism (Garcia et al., 2011). Ultimately, parties that are racially motivated are rooted in oppressive stereotypes of marginalized communities, which CRT makes clear. Foregrounding the racialized experiences of students of color on campus, CRT constructs critical narratives about student affairs practice and provides a compelling critical vantage point to continue inquiry.

Feminisms. As CRT strives to illuminate the racial dimensions of the lived experience, feminist perspectives strive to question the gendered aspects of experience. Rather than one monolithic approach, there exist a multitude of feminisms that provide unique lenses with which to interrogate the ways gender is experienced such that “marginalized groups are brought into the conversation ... multiple identities of women (and men and transgender persons) are important to consider in our research and practice” (Pasque & Errington Nicholson, 2011, p. 329–330). As with the variety of feminisms, there are a numerous amount of feminist epistemologies, methods, and aims to each feminist research project. Feminist research may encompass varying ontological and epistemological stances including, but not exhaustively, feminist empiricism (Anderson, 1995), feminist standpoint theory (Pasque & Errington Nicholson, 2011), Black feminist thought (Collins, 2000), or intersectional feminist perspectives, as well

as use of flexible feminist methodologies that seek to work from the margins of research (Wright, 2003).

Student affairs research into the gendered experiences of students on campus have incorporated a variety of feminist research aims. Black feminists sought to speak to the intersections of race and gender in the lives of women because the experiences of women of color were omitted from emerging feminism in the second half of the 20th century (Collins, 2000; Narayan, 2004). Henry (2010) provides an example of using Black feminist theory to understand feminist hip-hop as a tool for young, Black college women’s identity development. Although commercial hip-hop currently venerates sex, violence, and misogyny, hip-hop holds its roots in social critique. Utilizing a shared standpoint of Black women, hip-hop feminism serves as a critical route for expression of Black feminism because it calls for cultural analysis (Henry, 2010). Giving voice to previously marginalized individuals, hip-hop feminism resists the degrading and complicated messages mainstream hip-hop sends to Black women by recentering the lived experiences of Black women as valuable, meaningful, and important. In addition to supporting young, Black college women’s development, hip-hop feminism holds implications for student affairs practice through empowering Black women’s voices, enhancing campus programming, engaging underrepresented populations, and creating a network of campus allies (Henry, 2010). In addition to Black feminist thought, additional layers of feminism have called attention to the varying experiences for women of color as colonized individuals.

As women of color push back against feminisms that do not speak to intersections of race and gender, postcolonial feminisms resist Western-dominated feminisms (Narayan, 2004; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Postcolonial feminisms focus on highlighting non-West-

ern as well as indigenous experiences and ways of knowing while illustrating the ways colonialism still impacts people today through oppression, racism, and colorism (Hunter, 2002). Postcolonial approaches retell the stories of European colonization of African and other indigenous peoples around the world from the lens of the colonized rather than the colonizer. Retelling the implications of skin color hierarchies, Hunter (2002) uses multivariate regression analyses on national data to illustrate how historical hierarchies of skin color established during colonization and slavery continue today for both African American and Mexican American women. Through statistical analysis of self-report data, Hunter (2002) demonstrates lighter skin was a predictor of higher levels of educational attainment, higher personal earnings, and for African American women, higher spousal status. In the study, lighter skin color was more closely aligned with White beauty ideals and conferred a source of social capital on women with lighter skin than for women with darker skin resulting in measurable stratifications in education and income (Hunter, 2002). Postcolonial feminisms add an additional layer of understanding of the gendered aspects of educational attainment and experiences.

Feminisms have also been employed in a number of other projects in student affairs. For example, Pasque and Errington Nicholson (2011) utilize feminist approaches to address a host of topics in their volume “Empowering Women in Higher Education and Student Affairs: Theory, Research, Narratives, and Practice from Feminist Perspectives.” Moving from the abstract world of general feminist theory, the chapters use feminist research and theory to situate and understand current issues on campus such as the role of women’s centers, Title IX, and sexual assault (Pasque & Errington Nicholson, 2011). Pasque and Errington Nichols (2011) curate a work that applies feminist perspec-

tives on the current state of women in higher education, new understandings of gender identity, and establishing and maintaining work–life balance, as well as intersections of gender and race, class, and sexual orientation. In addition to direct applications to practice, feminisms have also been employed in nonscholarly, anecdotal works. Nicolazzo and Harris (2014) examine ways in which women’s identity centers can be spaces for lived feminist practice through duoethnographic dialogue. The authors’ dialogue reasons that by applying feminisms as embodied actions, women’s centers can become open spaces for a variety of lived feminisms; further, women’s center professionals can redefine whom they serve via detangling sex and gender (Nicolazzo & Harris, 2014). Employing a nontraditional approach, Nicolazzo and Harris (2014) provide an interesting application of critical work and methods by reinterpreting ways feminisms can be employed by practitioners through evaluation of current practice.

Queer theory. Queer theory and queer pedagogy call for an understanding of limits created through knowledge constructions based on binary constructs in order to “exceed their own readings, to stop reading straight” (Britzman, 1998, p. 226). Connected to questions of gender, queer theory moves to address power, dominance, and oppression as they relate to sexuality and gender. Queer theory also resists the definition of fixed identity, opting for a more fluid understanding of identity that is contextual and situated within related power structures (Jones & Abes, 2013). The number of research projects that explicitly involve college student experiences utilizing queer theory is still growing as many works currently focus on other aspects of higher education, such as pedagogical and curriculum concerns (Jones & Abes, 2013). However, the queer theory lens is incorporated into research with college students by some projects of note. Abes and Kasch (2007) use a queer theory case study approach to

further understand the identity development of lesbian college students. Whereas identity development has typically been approached from a constructivist viewpoint, queer theory opts for a shifting perspective on fixed, heteronormative identity development, refusing to accept, identify, or oppose an ideal of normalcy (Britzman, 1998; Shlasko, 2005). Abes and Kasch (2007) emphasize that a queer theory approach recasts identity as a process of social change for lesbian students. A queer understanding of identity allows for self-authorship as a deconstruction of societal norms and hegemonic social meanings of gender while creating a personalized understanding of identity (Abes & Kasch, 2007). Abes and Kasch's (2007) work with queer theories have also been integrated into deeper understandings of other critical lenses such as the multiple dimensions of identity model (Jones & Abes, 2013) as well as feminist works including Pasque and Errington Nichols (2011).

Building on Abes and Kasch's work in 2007, Abes (2009) furthers the project of queer theory in student affairs research by using multiple theoretical perspectives of interpretation. Abes (2009) addresses insights and considerations from partnering queer theory and constructivism to interpret research on lesbian college student identity development, holding that any single theoretical perspective is incomplete. Instead, Abes (2009) suggests experimentation with theoretical borderlands, or third spaces of both/and, as a way to address shortcomings of a single perspective. Working from the border between two potentially incompatible perspectives, the research project employs interdisciplinary bricolage (Abes, 2009). Bricolage seeks to break traditional discipline boundaries of knowledge and research by incorporating tools from diverse, distinct, and creative perspectives (Denzin, 2010; Steinberg & Canella, 2010). After using a constructivist perspective to understand students' self-perception of

development, Abes (2009) then uses queer theory to contextualize sites of power and oppression in students' development with a focus on heteronormativity, performativity, and liminality. Coupling seemingly incompatible theoretical perspectives creates space for student development research and identity theory to expand current understandings of identity and development.

Other critical theories. CRT, feminist theories, and queer theories represent areas of critical perspectives that have gained a larger amount of traction over time within student affairs. However, there are other works that speak to different critical theory approaches brought into student affairs work. Building on CRT, Latino critical theory (LatCrit) is emerging as a means of researching the racial realities for individuals of Latina/o descent. Sólorzano, Villalpando, and Oseguera (2005) analyze data across the educational pipeline from primary to higher education for Latina/o students to better demonstrate how educational attainment and subsequent occupational success varies greatly within subgroups of Latina/o individuals as well as and from other ethnic/racial groups. Sólorzano, Villalpando, and Oseguera (2005) home in on understanding the disparity in completion of a baccalaureate degree for Latina/o students and suggest three key findings: the difference in two- and four-year enrollment with more Latina/o students enrolling in two-year programs, low transfer rates from two-year to four-year programs, and a lack of retention or graduation efforts at any level of postsecondary education. In its application to student affairs, educational attainment differences for Latina/o students at the baccalaureate level can be understood as a reflection of current practices and policies in higher education that encourage de facto segregation (Sólorzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005).

In addition to the LatCrit outgrowth from CRT, other works have integrated a discursive

approach to examining social class differences in college students. Discourse analysis provides a critical approach to understanding how language and social practice are interrelated and constructed. Stuber (2006) explores impacts of social inequality in White college student experiences by investigating how college students talk about social class. Two important elements in Stuber's (2006) work include students' class awareness, or the measure of one's ability to conceptualize and recognize the existence of classes in society, and students' class consciousness, or levels of understanding about the importance of these different classes in everyday life. Students' ways of talking about class demonstrated that students from the upper- and middle-class tended to have more difficulty confidently talking about the impacts class differences have on students' experiences beyond a superficial group identification (Stuber, 2006). Additionally, students from all class backgrounds spoke about the boundaries between their particular social class and the class stratification or stratifications above them (Stuber, 2006). With important implications for how class differences are reproduced, the combined effect of upper- and middle-class students' inability to speak to the impacts of social class on experience and the tendency for students to fixate on the boundaries of those of more privileged positions suggests a need for educators and students to explore and unpack experiences of class further (Stuber, 2006). Without transparent exploration of social class and its impacts on college students, education runs the risk of continuing to replicate the blind spots of those from more privileged backgrounds while foreclosing on possibilities for social change that ceases discounting and further silencing individuals from marginalized social classes. Utilizing a discursively based approach represents a unique opportunity for student affairs to gain a better understanding of the mechanisms behind and within particular social practices.

Within the field of student affairs, critical theories are making ways to resist existing theories and practices regarding college students and their experiences. A survey of critical work in student development theory as well as additional student affairs research reveals a growing commitment to generating new understandings of college student experiences and identities outside the traditional objectivist paradigms. However, critical theories encompass a range of additional perspectives, such as critical trans*politics or crip theory (Squire, Garvey, & Linder, 2015), not yet widely incorporated into student affairs works. Recognizing the number of critical voices in student affairs not published by existing journals, the profession of student affairs has a new journal dedicated to projects that utilize critical theories. With its first issue currently in press, the *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs* "provides a venue for international, interdisciplinary scholarship that examines higher education and student affairs through the explicit use of critical frameworks" (Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs, 2015). While critical theories have a growing influence on the field, the uses of critical theories in student affairs still tend to focus on making sense of individual professional practice or student identity differences before, during, and after college. The next step in integrating critical perspectives into student affairs is a shift from an individual focus to a perspective that analyzes the larger political system surrounding the profession.

Emergent Themes in Academic Capitalism

One strand of inquiry in understanding changes within higher education is academic capitalism. Academic capitalism speaks to economic and political changes in, most

prominently, public universities. More specifically, academic capitalism is higher education's move toward the marketplace through strategies like academic-industrial relationships, entrepreneurial research projects, and fundraising plans (Anderson, 2001; Bousquet, 2008; Deem, 2001; Nelson & Watt, 1999; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000). Rhoades and Slaughter (1997) articulate this shift further in that "universities are not just servants of or suppliers to the marketplace. They are active players in the marketplace" (p. 13). As the connection between higher education and the market strengthens, literature on academic capitalism cites a number of impacts on individuals, institutions, and the world. Although outside the scope of this review, academic capitalism has strong ties to the increasingly global nature of neoliberal markets and economies as well as the ways in which higher education serve to support this expansion (Deem, 2001; Nelson, 2010; Rhoades, 2001; Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997). Academic capitalism's impacts on students and on various institutional practices are of particular relevance for student affairs consideration.

Students

In examining the impacts of academic capitalism across and within institutions, one major theme is how academic capitalism connects with students. Academic capitalism repositions students from engaged collaborators in inquiry into a convenient revenue stream, consumers of a private good, and a raw product for the market. As state funding decreases at many institutions, universities use students as a method to compensate for budgetary deficiencies. Students become targets for replacement revenue streams through increased tuition, student fees, and service costs (Nelson & Watt, 1999; Rhoades, 2001; Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997). As costs to students increase, the reality of attaining higher education slips further away from students

who are not economically able to shoulder the burden. Indeed, Slaughter and Rhoades (2000) contend students are "expected to pay more for the privilege of getting a higher education, rather than view higher education as a right and public responsibility" (p. 74). The prohibitive cost of pursuing higher education contributes to a growing disparity in access to higher education by students of diverse backgrounds.

In addition to shouldering the financial burden of lagging state funding, students also become consumers of a commodity in an environment of academic capitalism. As consumers, students seek the product that will best position them to enter the market after graduation. Evidence of the student-as-consumer mindset is manifested in university practices such as course evaluations. Drawn from the idea of a customer satisfaction survey, student evaluations of teachers' performance and class experience emphasize a message of education as product. Drawing from Habermas, Singh (2002) highlights that student evaluations of teachers are a means of commodifying the academic labor of teaching and reinforcing the mentality of students as consumers. Further, the consumer positioning of students has a number of additional, unintended results. Singh (2002) notes that customer measures of satisfaction have the effects of making students passive recipients of the educational product, enforcing instant gratification and satisfaction, replacing intellectual curiosity with measures of efficiency, and reifying a one-sided power dynamic between teachers and students. As academic capitalism rises in higher education, students are situated as consumers of an educational product rather than partners in educational inquiry.

Finally, academic capitalism recasts students as products available for consumption by the marketplace. Slaughter and Rhoades (2000) discuss that as academic capitalism turns higher education toward the market, there has similarly been a turn from liberal

arts studies toward vocational preparatory education. With students as raw products to be transformed, “instruction is redefined as workforce preparation more than as personally and socially enhancing educational experience” (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000, p. 74). In a climate of academic capitalism, businesses are placed as the ultimate stakeholders investing in the product of higher education—its graduates. Students become the raw products to be input into an educational process designed to create outputs of hireable professionals (Bousquet, 2008; Nelson, 2010; Slaughter & Rhodes, 2000). Coupled with students’ needs to pay for tuition, Bousquet (2008) illustrates how companies utilize this stream of raw material for cheap labor in exchange for tuition remission. Noting a correlating restriction of freedoms, Prash (2011) explores the impacts on students when the market’s need for well-trained individuals supersedes the need for well-educated critical thinkers. For example, intersecting with the rising costs of higher education, students as products are entering the business market with high levels of student debt. Graduating with substantial student debt limits students’ risk taking and increases industrial participation after completing higher education, which greatly benefits businesses that have invested in securing newly minted educational products (Prash, 2011). With the realities of academic capitalism’s ascendancy in higher education, the impacts on students are striking as students are viewed as raw products ready to be prepared for market consumption.

Institutions

Coupled with academic capitalism’s influence on students, academic capitalism also has numerous impacts on institutional practices including both budgetary and subsequent administrative practices. In recent decades, fiscal policy administrators in the United States have increasingly adopted a stance of

neoliberalism—with markets as the center of control (Nelson, 2010). Government moved away from providing financial support for social service focused programs, including higher education; and instead, government invested in areas closer to the market (Nelson & Watt, 1999; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000). The drastic changes in higher education budgets are one of the precipitating factors in the development and proliferation of academic capitalism. As government provided less and less financial support to higher education, universities or university members began engaging in market or market-like activities in order to secure additional funds (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). These newly formed academy–industry relations (AIRs) are not encompassed only by private, industry-funded research projects, but they also include a “greater presence of commercial entities on campuses” like research parks, student athletics, and other student activities (Anderson, 2001, p. 229). Increasingly, institutions are seeing AIRs as filling in the gaps of decreased state subsidies but not without corresponding complications.

Developing AIRs through entrepreneurial and market-like interactions has had profound results on funding within higher education beyond simply adding new monies to the bottom line. First, the neoliberal move toward the market and augmented market-like behavior in higher education alters departmental funding priorities with higher financial investment in departments closer to the market. In receiving institutional funding, areas with strong potential connections to the market, such as biotechnology or engineering, are disproportionately supported over public service areas, like education (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000).

Interestingly, women represent a larger portion of the potential student revenue stream due to women enrolling in higher education

in greater numbers than men, yet institutional funding is being moved to fields with traditionally fewer women (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000). As well as altering departmental funding priorities, academic capitalism has reconfigured what happens at the completion of a research project, especially for results that have potential market value. Rather than being released to the public, market-relevant outcomes, results, and breakthroughs accomplished through AIRs are moved to the private sector for further development through technology transfers. The rationale for the transfer is that “public interest is said to be served by directly involving public entities in the private sector and by fostering the pursuit of private profit” (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997, p. 13). Technology transfers become a way “to maximize the spillovers from a university to the local and regional economies” (Renault, 2006, p. 238). In order to maximize potential market gains, academic capitalism redirects budgetary priorities like departmental funding and research dissemination while compelling faculty members to undertake increased fundraising responsibilities through entrepreneurial and market-like activities.

Changes in funding expectations and priorities thus create drastically different experiences for faculty members and administrators across the disciplines. For example, Rhoades and Slaughter (1997) provide the example that there is more money for recruiting and retaining graduate students in market-oriented fields than for salaries for some tenure-track faculty in service-oriented areas. Beyond differences in salary resources, the market-like behaviors expected and necessitated by academic capitalism shift how faculty productivity, accountability, and value are determined. Productivity has typically been understood to be measured as an individually and “centrally located stream of production” of a faculty member’s research and teaching (Rhoades, 2001). To produce in a climate of academic capitalism where state funding is

low, faculty members are encouraged to seek out research projects with potential market value, which can draw faculty away from teaching. Having to strike a delicate balance between researching and teaching is thus a major challenge for faculty (Anderson, 2011; Nelson, 2010; Rhoades, 2001). An additional area of increasing emphasis in faculty productivity is engagement with technology transfers. As the vehicle for moving research to the private domain, there is a call for “interventions at the beginning of the process to ensure that faculty understand the process, support the process, and have the appropriate incentives to participate in the process” (Renault, 2006, p. 238). It is important to note that faculty members’ attitudes regarding academic capitalism, entrepreneurial activities, and technology transfers are complex. Faculty members who are skeptical of academic capitalism and have a strong belief in traditional values of the academy as centers of inquiry for the public good are less likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities or complete related technology transfers (Renault, 2006).

In addition to productivity, the questions of accountability and value are mounting, particularly for faculty in areas considered further from the market. Throughout all levels of education, conversations about accountability measures and quality assurance are prominent. However, there is little agreed upon definition for either quality or accountability, so assessments and evaluations have defaulted to language and perspectives of the market (Singh, 2002). Without clear direction for quality or accountability, academic capitalism increases uncertainty about future job security for full-time faculty members in fields not as valued by neoliberal markets (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997). Finally, within a regime of academic capitalism, “the academy itself daily enacts and expresses social relations of capitalism and heightened managerial control grounded in a neoconservative discourse” (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997, p. 33) for faculty

and administration as administrative decisions fall in line with new budgetary goals.

Implications and Future Directions for Student Affairs

Academic capitalism provides a critical lens to understand the political climate surrounding higher education in the United States and its interplay with the experiences of students, faculty, staff, and administration. Although used primarily in discussions of other areas of the university, the themes documented above pose interesting applications for student affairs professionals as well as related questions for future consideration. One major area of concern and application to student affairs involves the disparity of access. Academic capitalism limits access to those who are able to afford its rising cost (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000). With that in mind, student affairs practitioners must deeply interrogate the implications of who is and is not arriving on campus. How do changes in student populations as well as subsequent institutional responses drive and alter student affairs practice? Should it? Additionally, practitioners should also focus on examining, analyzing, and critiquing the larger systemic shifts driving funding disparities impacting student affairs budgets, and ultimately, student costs. While systemic analyses are scrutinized and published, a philosophical question facing student affairs professionals is to critically assess our own work for the interplay between student affairs programming and rising student expenses. As students are expected to shoulder rising programmatic costs, how can student affairs continue offering critical, impactful student development opportunities without contributing to the limiting of access for students? For student affairs professionals, students are the espoused center of professional work. However, as changing paradigms and perspectives in higher education transform students into raw products ready for development (Slaughter & Rhoades,

2000), what is the responsibility of student affairs? As professionals plan programs for job readiness or essential business skills, what messages are implied? Should and how would student affairs advocate that students are not raw products?

A growing trend within student affairs practice is reliance on assessment data as justification for the field's continuation. However, as Singh (2002) aptly notes, assessment can reinforce commodification if rooted in customer satisfaction. As student affairs professionals, do assessment methods seek to understand student learning and development, or do assessment means simply reinforce a consumer mindset? As student affairs works to justify its impacts on campus, a "smaller proportion of the student affairs budget than of the academic budget is provided by state monies in public colleges and universities" (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000, p. 76). As faculty turn toward AIRs to fill in these growing budget needs, what does the future hold for student affairs professionals facing mounting budget concerns? Do AIRs become a strategy in student affairs? If so, to whom does that make student affairs responsible? In consideration of the multitude of changing relationships in higher education, Rhoades and Slaughter (1997) powerfully articulate that "(re)alignments may also be possible in the academy, but will require new forms of organization and activity that bridge the disparate structures of profession and laity" (p. 34).

Engaging institutions of higher education with the local community has potential to open up spaces for potential resistance to academic capitalism. Even as public higher education is engaging in entrepreneurial activities, universities remain open to criticism because they are still connected to the state (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000). In that opening, can student affairs become an agent that actively challenges and resists the rising trends of academic capitalism? What

strategies would student affairs employ to do so? Through research? Through facilitation of student programming that is critical, outspoken, and radical such as the students who protested their university logo being printed on garments made in sweatshops (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000)? Additionally, academic capitalism has facilitated a turn toward the vocational (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2000) that no longer focuses on preparing students for a shared world but rather to live an individual life (Giroux & Giroux, 2004). Even before the articulation of academic capitalism, educational philosopher Hannah Arendt (1968) spoke to the dangers of privileging an education aimed simply at living one's life removed from a connection to the larger political community. The concern for the world and developing the freedom to engage in it is forgotten and is replaced with what Arendt (1968) names as the social sphere—or the private made public—as education focuses on the preoccupation with life (p. 185). Will student affairs work to refocus on an education for freedom to act in a shared world? Or will student affairs practice replicate academic capitalism's focus on vocational preparation to live? Student affairs is indeed positioned in a precarious decision point: to remain unaware of the vast reach of academic capitalism, and thus, become subsumed by it, or to seek a lens of critical reflection that challenges, resists, and subverts academic capitalism's pulls. Ultimately, the challenge for student affairs is to actively involve the profession in analyses of academic capitalism because it has already had profound impacts on other areas of higher education.

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