Civic Engagement and Scholarship: Implications for Graduate Education in Psychology

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The goal of higher education should not be a database of facts, but the competence to act in the world and the judgment to do so wisely (Ehrlich, 2000, p. xxviii).

Historical perspectives of higher education

One of the great debates about change in higher education during the past decade, a debate that continues today, has been focused on the role of colleges and universities in our rapidly changing and increasingly global society, and within that context the nature of academic faculty work. Rice (2003, p. 2) provides an historical perspective to this debate by noting that: "American higher education has faced changes of this magnitude before. Since 1850, major turning points have come about every 50 years – every two generations – and what is striking about these changes is that at each point the dominant meanings of both *scholarship* and *engagement* (emphasis added) have been challenged."

Rice raises questions about the meaning of these two constructs, scholarship and engagement, in the context of questions about the responsibilities of our nation's diverse colleges and universities to society in general and their communities of reference in particular, and the implications of these responsibilities for the values placed on faculty work, the latter being broadly defined as scholarship. Although recognized traditionally as discoverers and stewards of knowledge, through their faculty of learned disciplines, colleges and universities have been the subject of criticism in recent years for their apparent lack of responsiveness as learned institutions to the complex needs of the non-academic community, especially that local to the institution's setting. A major exception to this criticism is the response of research universities to national and global needs for science, technology, and economic development, supported by public and corporate funding over the past 50 years.

Nonetheless, as Harkavy (2002) notes in reference to Astin's (1996) study of higher education institution missions, preparing students for responsible citizenship and future leadership in society is a typical goal of most colleges and universities within their stated mission. This observation is certainly consistent with the history of higher education institutions in America from Colonial days through the land-grant era to the research university of the 20th century, albeit a history characterized by different emphases of higher education institution missions to serve the public. By the 1980s, public concerns for greater

accountability of our nation's colleges and universities were being aired, frequently based on a public perception of the academy's detachment from society, its preoccupation with increasingly narrow and specialized scholarship, at the very same time during which complex environmental, social, economic, political, and moral problems were increasingly common globally and in our nation's communities.

As president of Harvard University, Bok (1990) discussed in a series of lectures the historical basis of these concerns, calling for more engagement of our universities in addressing the complex problems in our communities. Similarly, Boyer (1996) referred to the perception among citizens that work of the academy, as scholarly as it might be from the perspective of learned disciplines, does not seem relevant to the complex needs of our nation's communities. He challenged higher education institutions, therefore, to broaden the scope of scholarship to include the concept of "engagement," a connection of the academy and its disciplines with the social, civic, and ethical problems of society.

Some colleges and universities of quite diverse nature have heeded this call (Ehrlich, 2000). So too has the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in its strong support for civic engagement in the academy (http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/). Ehrlich's work is focused on academic institutions and their collaboration with the local community in defining and addressing problems of multidisciplinary complexity. Indeed, Harkavy (2002) argues for a shift from discipline-based to problem-solving learning at the undergraduate level of education as the strategic lever for engagement of the academy with the local community and advancing the goals of liberal and general education.

Along similar lines, Cherwitz (2004a and 2004b) challenges us to rethink the whole university in terms of academic engagement, *i.e*., service *with* and not *to* society. In advancing the notion of intellectual entrepreneurship in the context of the university's role in service with the community, he poses seven questions that pose a challenge to those aspiring to academic engagement. More to the point of this paper, in collaboration with his colleagues he addresses what it means to be a "citizen-scholar" (Cherwitz, Darwin, & Grund, 2001), proposes a vision for graduate education (Cherwitz & Sullivan, 2002), and speaks to ethical commitments, professional visions, and intellectual choices for the academy in meeting graduate student needs (Cherwitz, Rodriguez, & Sievers, 2003).

While not in disagreement with the value of problem-solving learning from a multidisciplinary perspective at the undergraduate level, others advance the thesis that disciplines also need an active role in this conversation, not only at the undergraduate level but in graduate education as well. For it is from the latter in particular that future stewards of the disciplines as well as those who will advance new frontiers of scholarship through multidisciplinary and

interdisciplinary work within and outside the academy, *i.e.*, the future scholars of society, will come. Certainly, if the academy itself is to change, it must be through the future professoriate from which its leaders will emerge; and for those whose future careers as scholars lie outside the academy, they will most certainly be challenged by the demands of community engagement in many contexts.

In this context, the question for graduate educators becomes "how might we best prepare our graduate students to become tomorrow's engaged scholars in whatever career paths they choose?"

The scholarship of civic engagement through academic disciplines

It is largely through the efforts of Campus Compact (http://www.compact.org/) that civic engagement initiatives through academic disciplines have been encouraged. Established in 1985 as an affiliate organization of the American Association of Higher Education, Campus Compact has invited the disciplines through national forums and grant support to become an active part of the civic engagement movement in higher education. The model of pedagogy through which civic engagement has been implemented most often is that of service-learning (Zlotkowski, 1998).

Service-learning models can be of various types. More often than not, they are likely to occur in a particular course offered in a particular discipline. On the other hand, alternative models might be considered as even more powerful, and more consistent with undergraduate general education goals, an example being a problem-oriented, multidisciplinary effort in partnership with local community agencies. Furco (1996) discusses various forms of experiential education in the community as representing a continuum from vocational internship to volunteer work, the focus of the former being predominantly on student learning and that of the latter on service. Service-learning, he contends, is in the middle of this continuum, integrating these two goals and outcomes.

Psychology, through the American Psychological Association (APA) Education Directorate, has been among the academic disciplines working with Campus Compact to advance the concept of civic engagement from a disciplinary perspective. In one of a series of publications sponsored by Campus Compact, Bringle & Duffy (1998) edited a publication on service-learning in psychology, an excellent primer for faculty interested in initiating or trying different models of such pedagogy in their undergraduate or graduate curriculums. Another useful reading for faculty interested in developing service-learning curricula is the writing of Bringle & Hatcher (1995). With support from Campus Compact for its initial development, the APA Education Directorate features on its web site a directory of civic engagement and service learning information (http://www.apa.org/ed/).

Campus Compact, while national in scope, is also organized with state chapters to facilitate initiatives with in-state colleges and universities. State chapters, in turn, have collaborated at a regional level to sponsor workshops and other initiatives to advance forms of civic engagement. Such events allow faculty from different colleges and universities in the same region to discuss opportunities for engaged scholarship within and between their institutions in collaboration with their local or regional communities. An example of this was the May 2004 workshop on "Service-Learning in Psychology" funded and conducted by the Upper Midwest Campus Compact Consortium held on the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh campus, for which the American Psychological Association was a co-sponsor.

Service-learning as a form of pedagogy is most commonly practiced by disciplines at the undergraduate level of education. The reasons for this are likely several, but certainly major among them is the intensive focus at the doctoral level on research and, in applied programs, preparation for professional practice of the discipline. Unless the service-learning model employed can be integrated with the work of faculty and graduate students related to these two major goals, it is not likely to take much root in practice at the doctoral program level.

Nonetheless, there are examples of good practice in service-learning at the graduate level in psychology. In these instances, the pedagogy of service-learning is integrated with the curriculum preparing doctoral students for careers in research and applied fields of psychology. One such example is that practiced at the University of Georgia as part of its Preparing Future Faculty in Psychology program involving graduate students from three graduate departments of psychology on that campus (Thomas & Landau, 2002). Faculty leading this initiative and the graduate students they engage in community learning projects have backgrounds in Industrial-Organizational, Educational, and Counseling Psychology. Another example is that practiced by Steven Danish at Virginia Commonwealth University having a background in Counseling and Community Psychology. His work was the focus of an *APA Monitor* article (Murray, 2002) highlighting what have been characteristic arguments among faculty who advocate for and against such pedagogy, especially at the graduate education level where research is of primary importance.

Graduate education context

In its introductory paragraph, the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) *Policy Statement on the Doctor of Philosophy Degree* (1990) affirms that this highest academic degree is a research degree, to be distinguished from other doctorates

designed for professional training or a focus on applied rather than basic research. This statement is followed immediately by the following: "The Doctor of Philosophy program is designed to prepare a student to become a scholar, that is, to discover, integrate, and apply knowledge, as well as communicate and disseminate it" (*op. cit.* p.1). This statement advances the concept of scholarship defined by Boyer (1990) in his landmark writing *Scholarship Reconsidered*. The CGS statement about the PhD degree also uses the word "research," a word sometimes used as synonymous with the word "scholarship." A distinction between these two words was drawn, however, by LaPidus (2000) who served as president of CGS from 1984-2000. He referred to research as something we do, whereas scholarship is the way we think about what we do and why. In extending this comparison further, LaPidus invokes Boorstin's (1980) notion that research is a process for obtaining information, while scholarship is a process for turning information into knowledge.

Thus, from this perspective, the traditional academic trilogy of faculty work -- teaching, research, and service – represents the types of activities in which faculty engage. It is how they reflect upon and communicate with others what they do, why they do it, and how these activities are integrated in their thinking and doing into a broader sphere of knowledge, that constitutes their scholarship.

We are expected to prepare our doctoral students to conduct research, to integrate what they learn from research with the existing body of knowledge, and to communicate what they learn to their peers through publication, to their students through teaching, to their clients through professional services, and to others of the general public in a variety of venues, including public policy. In each of these endeavors, doctoral students in our discipline should be prepared as scholars, that is as reflective practitioners of what they do whether it be research, teaching, or service, as well as in the integration of these activities.

The engaged scholar is the scholar whose research, teaching, and service is tempered also by a value orientation and purpose to link disciplinary with civic knowledge in community problem-solving. This requires in addition that one's reflective practices are not carried out in isolation of others, but rather in collaboration with others within and outside the academy, and within and outside the scholar's discipline. To prepare our doctoral students for this capability is a demanding challenge; but it is to such a challenge that today's scholars must be called.

Within the past decade or more, at the same time during which there has been a reformation call to higher education institutions in America, many scholars have called for the same in regard to graduate education in psychology from different perspectives (Altman, 1996; Bevan, 1980; Bickman & Ellis, 1990; DeLeon, 1988; Iscoe, 1984; Sarason, S.B., 1988 and 2001; and Schneider, 1990). Increasingly, the role of psychology as a scientific discipline and a profession in

the formulation and evaluation of public policy about social issues has been in the forefront of discussion and debate (DeLeon *et al*, 1995; Lorion *et al*, 1996).

Historical precedents in psychology

This diversity of perspective about the purpose and priorities of graduate education in our discipline is not new, of course. The history of psychology as an academic discipline is replete with diversity of perspective on issues of epistemology, pedagogy, and application of knowledge. More specific to issues of civic engagement, a small group of psychologists in the 1930s who referred to themselves as "a national group of socially minded psychologists" (Finison, 1986, p. 24) founded the Society for the Study of Psychology and Contemporary Social Issues. Their aim was to study psychology in the context of social issues prevalent during the Great Depression and pre-World War II years. The momentum of this small but distinguished group of psychologists was institutionalized in the formation of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), one of the first ten divisions established during the mid-1940s when the American Psychological Association (APA) was reorganized. It also established the *Journal of Social Issues*, a popular journal for the publication of social science research for nearly 50 years, and today sponsors a resident Fellowship at the APA to advance public policy on social issues from a psychological perspective.

By the 1960s our society once again was wracked with the turmoil of civic unrest. By this time, psychology had assumed a more prominent role in mental health services. It was during this period that another movement was begun by a small group of psychologists, once again having a community research action plan focused on the prevention of social and mental health problems, in contrast to what had become an individual or group psychotherapy orientation of most clinically trained psychologists. The institutionalization of this movement was effected with the establishment of an APA division in 1966, referred to presently as the Society for Community Research and Action: Division of Community Psychology, connoting the fact that the division has a broader focus than mental health, *e.g.*, a focus on social policy issues. Sarason *et al* (1966) wrote of the opportunities for psychology's civic engagement in numerous community contexts, clinical, vocational, educational, and social. Retrospectively, he wrote a few years later about missed opportunities, as well, in regard to community psychology and public policy (Sarason, 1984). As SPSSI had done, this APA division of psychologists also launched a journal, the *American Journal of Community Psychology*.

As with the founders of SPSSI, the community psychologists were guided not only by disciplinary knowledge but also by local knowledge in the community learned from working collaboratively with community leaders, residents, and agencies. In her discussion of knowledge without boundaries and a research university's role in civic engagement, Walshok (1995) refers to this form of

transaction as linking academic and civic knowledge. Similarly, Altman (1996) advances the notion that our curriculum should be guided by the needs of our students for *socially responsive knowledge* in addition to the more traditional focus on *foundational knowledge* and *professional knowledge*, the three forms of knowledge being related.

Although certain other APA divisions have some history of psychological research and practice in community contexts, these two divisions illustrate most clearly through their missions the breadth of community perspective and the types of civic engagement towards which higher education institutions and disciplines are being called today. The other patently relevant precedent in organized psychology's call to civic engagement was the establishment of the APA Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility (now called the Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest) in 1971, with its many issue-focused reporting committees. The early history of that board and the types of issues it addressed as a major APA governance body since its founding was summarized by Smith (1992).

American Psychological Association initiatives

The "9/11" tragedy of American experience was a wake-up call for many of our nation, including those of its higher education institutions, to the needs of our nation and local communities as well as to our responsibilities as citizens. Countless psychologists, in the immediate aftermath of that tragedy, volunteered their professional services *pro bono*, as many of them had done on other prior occasions of community disaster and continue to do today.

Continuing this public service call for psychologists, 2002 APA president Philip Zimbardo emphasized the need for our discipline to communicate more effectively with leaders and other citizens of our society about what we know and can do as psychologists, initiating a public series on scientific and professional achievements of our discipline of value to society. Among the presidential themes of 2003 APA president Robert Sternberg was psychology's usefulness as a science in education, schooling, and the assessment of learning. In 2004, APA president Diane Halpern has focused initiatives on ways in which psychology can contribute to our thinking about family, retirement, and international, multi-cultural learning.

For these initiatives to succeed and be sustained, however, it is not sufficient for our discipline simply to point others to the scholarly work published in our scientific and professional literature, or for us to apply our knowledge unilaterally to the solution of problems in the community. Rather, for effectiveness in action, such initiatives ultimately require the civic engagement of our discipline in active collaboration with national, state, and local community leaders and agencies. They require forms of action research and policy evaluation, the likes of which are central to the current call for colleges

and universities, their faculty and students, to discover and advance knowledge in social, cultural, political, economic, geographic and historical contexts of the community as well as in the archival repositories of knowledge from the past.

More than being transient themes of presidential initiatives, these themes have relevance for our discipline's future evolution as a science and a profession. As such, they serve as meta-thematic guidance for our graduate education programs from which will be graduated the future scientists, faculty, and practitioners of psychology, whatever their major professional roles and activities may be.

Opportunities for graduate departments of psychology

The APA Education Directorate is interested in identifying graduate departments and doctoral programs in psychology that in various ways are advancing the scholarship of civic engagement through the discipline of psychology. Starting in 2003, the APA Board of Educational Affairs in collaboration with the Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology (COGDOP) sponsors an annual recognition award for innovative practice in graduate departments of psychology. This is an opportunity to share developments in your graduate department, some of which may be related to the scholarship of civic engagement, including the preparation of psychologists for scholarly roles in shaping and evaluating public policy. Also starting in 2003, the APA Board of Educational Affairs is sponsoring an annual small grants award program to stimulate and facilitate workshops or small conferences focused on challenging issues of graduate and postdoctoral education and training in psychology. This too might be an opportunity for your department to examine issues related to the scholarship of engagement. Information related to these initiatives is available at http://www.apa.org/ed/graduate/homepage.html.

This web site of the APA Education Directorate will remain a site for communication about those who are advancing such practices in their graduate programs. As part of its involvement in the national initiative *Preparing Future Faculty*, the Education Directorate developed a faculty development bibliography, Section 3 (pp.7-8) of which has selected readings on Civic Engagement and Service Learning. We invite you and your graduate students to make use of this resource in your reflections on how best to incorporate into your graduate program the concept of civic engagement, the goal being to interest at least some of your students in the scholarship of civic engagement.

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