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Implications for higher education leaders
advancing social justice agendas



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Abstract: *In this chapter, authors discuss the core elements of neoliberalism and their impact on higher education. They examine the ways in which neoliberal ideologies have permeated the culture of higher education. The chapter concludes with implications for higher education leaders who seek to advocate for social justice within neoliberal contexts.*

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Navigating Neoliberal Organizational Cultures: Implications for Higher Education Leaders Advancing Social Justice Agendas

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In the spring of 2017, the National Institute for Transformation and Equity organized a panel of national leaders in education to discuss how educators could advance social justice within the context of existing social and political turbulence that characterized the national climate. During this discussion, the facilitator posed the following question: Why do we avoid conversations about the need for some people to make sacrifices in order to advance equity? The panelists reacted with comments that we should not view equity as a zero-sum game, and they argued that sacrifices do not necessarily need to be made because equity is good for everyone. The facilitator agreed that people should not espouse the perspective that we are in a zero-sum game and the panel moved on to the next topic of discussion.

While it is true that equity should not be viewed as a zero-sum game and a more equitable world is a positive thing for all who exist within it, such arguments are rarely effective when engaging people who must give up the power and resources that they have gained through existing systems of oppression in order to make society more equitable. Most people often or always see such redistribution of resources as a sacrifice. Thus, the argument that equity is “good for all,” has limited utility in a neoliberal world at best.

Equally important is the reality that our tendency to avoid conversations about sacrifice can perpetuate misperceptions that power can shift from those in positions of privileged to oppressed communities without the former relinquishing some control and resources that they have disproportionately accessed and now hold. In reality, such surrendering is necessary for a redistribution of resources to be feasible. As the editors of this volume suggest in its introduction, to better understand these realities and have more fruitful conversations about advancing equity, those of us who advocate for social justice *must* consider how neoliberalism buttresses systemic oppression and our own psyche, as well as how these processes diminish the efficacy of social justice efforts. The current chapter aims to contribute to this more thorough engagement of neoliberalism in discussions about equity.

Given that social justice is sometimes interpreted and applied in varied ways, it is important to define it before moving forward. Throughout this chapter, we use the term *social justice* to refer to efforts to resist systemic forms of oppression and cultivate a more equitable world—one that centers democracy as a primary core value and in which everyone has equal opportunity to thrive regardless of their backgrounds and situations. In the last decade, college and university leaders¹ have increasingly found themselves at the center of heated debates about social justice. Some of these leaders developed their careers through advocating for justice, and many did not. Regardless of their backgrounds, these leaders are facing progressively turbulent times as they remain embedded in structures of systemic oppression and are confronting increased pressures to resist those systems from the diverse communities that they serve.

There is a long history of social movements challenging the role of institutions of higher education in reinforcing systemic oppression and demanding that these organizations adapt to better serve diverse communities and advance democratic ideals. In the 1960s and 1970s, for example, the Third World Liberation Front and other college student coalitions organized movements to advocate for college environments and curricula that did not simply reinforce the status quo but responded to the challenges face by oppressed communities (Grosse, 2005; Umemoto, 1989). The fact that those advocating for social justice today are voicing these same—or at least very similar—concerns highlights the durability of systemic oppression and how it shapes institutions of higher education. These realities also underscore the weight of the challenges faced by those advocating for social justice within the academy.

What is not the same as the 1960s and 1970s, however, is the political economy that provides the context for current student movements. Specifically, over the last 50 years, society's elite has effectively advanced a neoliberal agenda and system within which we are currently embedded (Giroux, 2007, 2008, 2011). While capitalism is an ideology that prioritizes free markets and consumer choice over state regulation, neoliberalism can be described as a paradigm that permeates every aspect of society at the expense of moral imperatives. Neoliberal ideologies shape political economies that permit few private interests to maximize control over power, resources, social life, and political processes through the exploitation of the vast majority of society (McChesney, 1999). In turn, the concentration of power among the elite allows them to further maximize their own economic profits and other resources. This vicious cycle of exploitation is at the core of the neoliberalism regime.

The limited understanding of the role of neoliberalism in shaping systemic oppression and constraining efforts to advance justice within higher education is significant for multiple reasons. First, neoliberalism is inextricably intertwined with and reinforces other forms of systemic oppression, such as white supremacy and heteropatriarchy (Goldberg, 2009; Inwood, 2015). Second, neoliberalism has permeated just about everything that happens on college campuses and heavily determines what is (il)legitimate knowledge and action within institutions of higher education, valorizing investment of energy and resources in efforts that reinforce this system and diminishing the desire to make investments in agendas of advanced social justice (Darder, 2005).

¹ Throughout this chapter, we use “leader” broadly to refer to those who assume positions of power and authority within institutions of higher education, including (but not necessarily limited to) executive administrators and members of executive leadership teams and committees.

Moreover, the neoliberal regime creates institutions that reward agendas and efforts that conform to core tenants of neoliberal logics, ensuring that even work that is designed to advance equity often simultaneously reinforces neoliberal rationalities, thereby reifying the very systems that they are designed to disrupt, deconstruct, and combat. The question then becomes, how do leaders advance social justice if they are embedded in a system that prioritizes, legitimizes, and sometimes only permits behaviors that reinforces neoliberal ideologies? Put another way, how do higher education leaders advocate for social justice in a time of growing corporatization and a declining value of education for democracy?

In this chapter, we seek to stimulate discussion aimed at answering the aforementioned question. In the next section, we briefly discuss the historical origins and core tenants of neoliberalism. Then, we provide an overview of some key ways in which neoliberalism has shaped the culture of institutions of higher education and the cultural barriers that leaders must face as they advocate for social justice. Finally, we provide some recommendations for leaders who view social justice as a top priority.

The origins and core tenets of neoliberalism

The historical emergence of neoliberalism highlights the ways in which it is inextricably bound with other systems of oppression (Goldberg, 2015; Inwood, 2015). As discussed in the introduction of this volume, the neoliberal regime arose as a consequence of economic crises and social movements calling for justice in the 1960s and 1970s. Keynesian economic theory, which promotes embedding government and corporate activities in social and political networks to limit economic exploitation of working classes, dominated the mid-20th century. In the 1970s, however, Keynesian policies were increasingly perceived to be failing. In addition, the civil rights movements were challenging white supremacy and heteropatriarchy. The economic crisis provided an opportunity for the conservative machine to promote alternative strategies that emphasized the deregulation of markets and mass privatization, which gained increased public support in the 1980s during the era of Reaganomics and provided the foundation for the emergence of neoliberal values and policies. These efforts silenced liberal calls to hold both public and private institutions responsible for contributing to the strengthening of democracy and displacing them with expanding free-market mentalities and consumerism discourses (Giroux, 2007). In this way, at its roots, neoliberal ideology was a response to, and suppression of, the increased democratization happening during the civil rights movement.

Neoliberalism has been described as sophisticated, evolving, and adapting to various contexts, but there some key elements of the neoliberal apparatus (Adsit, Doe, Allison, Maggio, & Maisto, 2015; Buford, 2017; Darder, 2005; Darder, 2005; Davies, 2005; Giroux, 2008, 2011; McChesney, 1999; Morrisson, 1993; Muehlebach, 2013). They include the following:

- *Consumerism*: Neoliberalism is founded on ideals of consumer choice, contributing to a culture in which the value of people, actions, and priorities are determined by how much revenue they might generate. Those who engage in behaviors that reinforce neoliberal systems through such revenue generation are valorized;
- *Competitive individualism*: Neoliberal ideologies prioritize free-market *individualism and competition*, which reinforce false beliefs in meritocracy, and create a culture in which every person prioritizes their own self-interest;

- *Surveillance*: While neoliberalism promotes free markets and individualism, perceived individual autonomy is fabricated, as the neoliberal regime constructs dehumanizing systems of surveillance (e.g., monitoring and reporting) to ensure that members of the system comply with neoliberal ideals, and trust is eradicated;
- *Precarity*: As neoliberal forces economically starve and place responsibility of fiscal sustainability on individuals, the latter finds themselves in a precarious existence and feel an increased need to fight for their own survival;
- *Declining Morality*: The aforementioned neoliberal structures converge to reinforce an increased focus on fiscal exigency and profit-making, while eradicating beliefs that government and social institutions have any responsibility for the public good.

While neoliberalism is certainly an ideology that permeates larger society, it is clear that neoliberal philosophies have been both forced upon institutions of higher education by external pressures and fully uncritically embraced by many within higher education. In the following section, we discuss some of the ways in which neoliberalism has contaminated higher education and permeates the cultures that exist within U.S. colleges and universities.

Neoliberalism and the culture of higher education

Neoliberalism has shaped the U.S. system of higher education in myriad ways. While a comprehensive analysis of these effects is beyond the scope of the current chapter, we briefly discuss those that are most relevant to the experiences of leaders advocating for social justice within institutions of higher education. Specifically, we discuss how neoliberal ideologies have shaped the *cultures* that exist on college and university campuses. This discussion is informed both by existing literature and our observations working with over 100 institutions across the nation to advance the diversity and equity efforts on their campuses.

Culture has long been recognized as a force that significantly shapes behavior within organizations and a worthy focus of analysis (Geertz, 1925; Tierney, 1988). Culture is developed and transmitted throughout history and has been described as an invisible tapestry that holds an organization together (Kuh & Witt, 1989). It is grounded in shared assumptions held by members of an organization, and reinforced by the values, traditions, and artifacts that serve as markers of institutional identity (Schein, 2010). However, culture is also comprised of ceremonies, rituals, symbols, heroes, and stories that facilitate the entry into, and continued membership of people who belong to, a given culture. Geertz (1925) described culture by asserting that people are “suspended in webs of significance” that they themselves have spun.

While organizational theorists have identified culture as a major domain of scholarly analysis over three decades ago, the study of culture was not central to higher education research at that time (Tierney, 1988). It could be hypothesized that the decline of cultural analyses is itself an effect of neoliberalism on higher education scholarly agendas and research activity. After all, culture is a complex concept that is difficult to understand (Kuh & Whitt, 1988), and investing the intellectual energy required to analyze complex community and organizational cultures can be (mis)perceived as a liability within the context of neoliberal systems of surveillance and expectations that reward large numbers of easily quantifiable and monitored outputs regardless of their depth and impact on society (Giroux, 2007, 2008). Thus, it could be argued that engaging in an analysis of culture is an act of anti-neoliberal resistance in and of itself.

Most higher education leaders understand that culture is important (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Tierney, 1988). This is because culture drives the behavior and decision-making of members of organizations, even in ways that they do not fully understand. Therefore, in the current discussion, we unpack how neoliberal forces shape institutional culture, in order to better understand how these influences might consciously or subconsciously influence leaders' reinforcement of, or resistance to, systemic oppression.

Given the complexity inherent in analyzing the concept of culture, identifying clearly defined elements that help make sense of organizational cultures can aid in understanding them. To designate such concepts for this discussion, we draw on Tierney's (1988) framework of organizational culture, which delineates six foci of cultural analysis within higher education organizations: the institution's environment, mission, information (or knowledge), socialization, strategy, and leadership. The following sections focus on five of these six concepts, given that *leadership* is the overarching focus that permeates the entire discussion.

Neoliberal environments: External economic and political pressures

Institutions of higher education and their leaders are constantly bombarded by neoliberal pressures. After the acceleration and growth of neoliberalism in the 1980s, state governments divested from systems of higher education (Bonds, 2006). Neoliberal ideologies promoted perspectives that college education is a private good, leading to declining beliefs and the role of higher education serving the public. In line with these perspectives, conservative and some liberal politicians advocated for the de-funding of higher education.

While most states continue to diminish the proportion of the budget that is allocated to their higher education systems, one of the most extreme recent examples of state fiscal starvation of these systems comes out of Wisconsin. Between 2015-2017, the Republican-controlled government slashed the University of Wisconsin budget by \$250 million and instituted a performance funding plan that increases competition among campuses, even though there is little evidence that such programs have any positive impact on educational outcomes (Hillman, Tandberg, & Fryar, 2015; Tandberg & Hillman, 2014). These actions contributed to an institutional precarity, and system campuses developed proposals to cope with the budget cuts. Not surprisingly, several institutions began constructing plans to eliminate academic programs within the humanities and social sciences that were less revenue-generating and have historically been charged with preparing college graduates to live and lead in a diverse democracy (Conde, 2018; Kaeding, 2017). Under neoliberal regimes, academic programs that are designed to advocate for democracy and social justice are often the first entities that are downsized or eliminated in times of perceived economic hardship, because they typically generate less revenue and are devalued by neoliberal agendas and those who adopt them (Darder, 2005).

Just as neoliberalism and precarity create conditions where individuals feel forced to fight for their own survival, neoliberal forces have led to a climate of institutional precarity in which administrators are pressured to invest energy and resources in activities that will generate revenue and (they hope) will bolster their reputation and prestige. In addition, national systems and structures, such as institutional rankings, have emerged to reify and fuel such organizational behavior. In a never-ending quest to rise in the rankings and boost prestige, higher education

institutions funnel increasing amounts of resources away from education processes that strengthen democracy, diverting them to activities that will generate more money.

Such efforts are often viewed as benign, but a deeper analysis of examples in which communities have fought back tells a different story. Take, for example, the case of San Francisco State University, where the current administration decided to funnel resources toward creating science and technology departments and athletic programs at the expense of ethnic studies. When the university's administration announced significant budget cuts to the school of ethnic studies in 2016, hundreds of community members, faculty members, and students waged protests that lasted weeks to voice their discontent, and the handful of students went on a hunger strike that lasted until one of them was sent to the emergency room. When a life could have been lost and the potential damages outweighed the benefits of prioritizing neoliberal agendas over community needs in the eyes of university leaders, the latter acquiesced to protester demands to replenish the budget of the school of ethnic studies. This example also demonstrates how democratic processes, such as protest, can pressure administrators to advocate for social justice despite constant and pervasive neoliberal influences.

Institutional precarity also makes organizational leaders more susceptible to external pressures from direct sources of revenue, such as the web of donors that influence institutional behavior (e.g., corporations and alumni). Indeed, researchers have found that diversity agendas can be met with resistance from members of the institution, as well as sources of power and influence that are external to the institution (Kezar, 2008), and our ongoing work with campuses across the nation confirms that leaders seeking to advance justice continually face such resistance. Thus, when collective resistance to institutional oppression emerges on college campuses, external demands to maintain the status quo are likely to surface as well.

Neoliberal missions: Espoused, but not enacted, justice values

While institutions are driven by their mission to varying degrees, few would argue with the notion that these missions have some influence on culture and behavior on these campuses. Mission statements are perceived to be important enough that institutions spend significant amounts of time revisiting and revising them to ensure that they guide campus communities in the right direction (Association of American Colleges, 1994). Specifically, institutional missions help organizational members decipher campus priorities from secondary or peripheral interests and cultivate a shared sense of purpose grounded in the former (Hartley, 2002; Keller, 1983). Thus, college and university missions provide a guide that informs notions about what is valued and where energy should be invested within an organization.

So, what do institutional missions tell us about neoliberalism, campus culture, and social justice? Evidence suggest that institutional leaders routinely espouse missions and strategic plans, that tout values of diversity and creating welcoming environments for students, but these espoused commitments are often not coupled with adequate redistribution of resources to combat oppression and create a more equitable world (Ahmed, 2012; Iverson, 2006, 2010; LePeau, Hurtado, & Davis, 2018; Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012). One does not need to look far to identify the ways in which mission statements reinforce neoliberal rationalities at the expense of social justice agendas. Case in point: Princeton University, currently ranked #1 among research universities according to U.S. News and World Report, has a mission that emphasizes how

it “advances learning through scholarship, research, and teaching of unsurpassed quality, with an emphasis on undergraduate and doctoral education that is distinctive among the world’s great universities, and with a pervasive commitment to serve the nation and the world.” Explicit in the statement is Princeton’s position that it is “among the world’s great universities” and does work “with unsurpassed quality,” thereby clearly and explicitly centering the capital and prestige that accompany the Princeton name and affiliation. While the mission statement does mention “a pervasive commitment to serve the nation,” there is no clarity regarding what this phrase means. Such a statement could just as easily mean serving society’s elite by advancing neoliberal rationalities, as it could signify advocating a social justice agenda.

The intent here is not to suggest that Princeton University is more responsible for perpetuating neoliberal systems than other institutions, especially given the reality that this type of rhetoric is reflected in mission statements among prestigious campuses across the United States and world. Nor is our goal to perpetuate perspectives that prestigious universities are more worthy of analysis and attention. Our aim is to show that universities perceived to be society’s *model* educational institutions often espouse missions that reinforce neoliberal logics and lack clear focus on equity, providing little direction and leverage for leaders who seek to advance social justice. Moreover, because so many institutions seek to emulate these campuses so that they too can garner more prestige and resources, the prestigious university’s neoliberal foci symbolize the belief that other institutions should strive in ways that advance neoliberal logics.

Neoliberal knowledge economy: Equating quality with revenue

Scholars have noted that different forms of knowledge are valued to varying degrees within higher education (Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015; Patton, 2016). For example, research documents the ways in which faculty from historically marginalized backgrounds regularly experience the devaluation of their equity-oriented research agendas. However, research and discourse on (in)equity in higher education often clarifies that knowledge from marginalized communities is devalued, without engaging in deeper discussions to unpack the underlying mechanisms through which such devaluation is justified within institutions.

Scholars highlight how neoliberal foundations inform the ways in which different types of information are valued, with knowledge that conforms to neoliberal agendas being more appreciated because of their capacity to generate revenue and prestige (Davies, 2005; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). As mentioned, neoliberal assaults in Wisconsin provide a stark example of how institutional precarity and the prioritization of neoliberal forms of knowledge converge to create a perilous situation for academic programs and scholars who do not conform to neoliberal ideologies. Typically, it is those programs that operate in the academic borderlands and directly challenge the status quo on a regular basis that are most vulnerable in such times (Darder, 2005). Indeed, in the 1980s and 1990s, when scholarly alliances designed to generate liberatory knowledge and support anti-imperialist struggles began to flourish in the academic borderlands, neoliberal forces equipped institutions of higher education with tools to weaken this expansion and suppress voices from the margins. Specifically, arguments to protect financial exigency and the need to cut budgets were increasingly used to justify eliminating programs, instituting hiring freezes, and rejecting tenure cases of radically progressive faculty.

Neoliberal forces have made their way into the academic borderlands as well (Darder, 2005; Davies, 2005). In some cases, academic programs and scholars in fields that emerged from the community, such as ethnic studies, have adopted more traditional research agendas and methods to earn legitimacy within the neoliberal system. It is also worth noting that such conformity sometimes happens subconsciously. This is not surprising, given that one of the ways in which pervasive systems operate is that they inculcate into us worldviews that solidify and normalize assumptions about what is (not) legitimate behavior. We begin to internalize such worldviews as early as undergraduate education, as we begin consuming scholarly research through college courses, but this indoctrination often accelerates in graduate education as future professionals in the academy become socialized to conform to neoliberal expectations. In turn, as the editors discuss in the introduction of this volume, the permeation of neoliberal logics in the professional psyche constrain and eliminate possibilities to advance social justice.

Neoliberal socialization: Planting seeds of oppression in future professionals

While some of the ways in which the neoliberal regime has infiltrated higher education are more difficult to identify, it could easily be argued that graduate student socialization is one area in which the effects of neoliberalism are clearly evident. Scholars have written about ways in which higher education reproduces itself through the socialization of those coming into the system (Bauder, 2006; Becher, 1989; Said, 1994). Given the pervasiveness of neoliberalism in higher education, these forces have begun to significantly drive socialization processes.

As future higher education administrators and faculty members are socialized into the academy, the systems and structures in place inculcate corporatized perspectives and behaviors into them (Darder, 2005; Mitchell, 1999; Smith, 2000). These perspectives reinforce neoliberal ideologies, and therefore carry the seeds of oppression. Future professionals who will eventually hold significant power within colleges and universities are pressured to eradicate their humanized connections with their communities and critical epistemological foundations that provide the potential to challenge neoliberal systems that serve the elite. Instead, they are initiated into a system that encourages or forces them to focus on careerist goals and priorities.

As a result, those who enter academia in order to advance social justice find it exponentially difficult to do so. Increasing intellectual energy gets invested in figuring out how to populate CVs with quantifiable evidence that one has met neoliberal expectations, students are taught to out-present and out-publish each other, and they face increasing pressures to learn how to secure money in addition to carrying out the democratic goals that drove them to academia. The outcomes of these processes are that young professionals experience heightened anxieties, as well as increased challenges pursuing collective agendas that have the power to advance social justice and help universities reclaim their commitment to democratic education (Mitchell, 1999; Smith, 2000; Solem & Foote, 2004; Willis, 1996).

Neoliberal Strategy: The Normalized Prioritization of Neoliberal Agendas Over Justice

Organizational leaders in higher education employ different strategies to advance social justice agendas. Some leaders recognize that they must make compromises in other areas in order to invest more resources in equity goals and initiatives, while others seek to invest the minimum amount of energy and time needed to pacify those who express discontent with the current neoliberal cultures that permeate their campuses. In many of these cases, however, strategies for

enhancing social justice are first assessed for the degree to which they are feasible—or desirable—within existing neoliberal contexts and through a neoliberal sensemaking framework. That is, institutional leaders often assess whether alternatives for advancing social justice might lead to compromising other priorities and initiatives that reinforce neoliberal structures. If the strategies are determined to compromise neoliberal agendas, they are deemed impossible or undesirable. We believe that this could be the greatest barrier to leaders meaningfully advancing social justice within institutions of higher education.

Of course, the idea that social justice conflicts with academic excellence is not new. In fact, we were writing about this assumption being a significant barrier to advancing equity many years ago (e.g., Jayakumar & Museus, 2012). However, the many ways in which such assumptions shape institutions of higher education not well-understood. We have observed institutional leaders make strategic assessments about the various ways in which institutional changes to advance equity might hinder neoliberal agendas. For example, organizational leaders will often focus on whether expanding access to their institutions will lower standardized test scores and compromise their standings in national rankings, administrators who are pressured to sever ties with donors publicly committing racist acts focus on the resources that will be compromised, institutional leaders who field calls to replace dehumanizing mascots or remove statues that valorize persons who committed heinous acts toward communities of color weigh the consequences of morality against the loss of donations from alumni, and recommendations to create new systems and structures that are more equitable are (more often than not) dismissed because they would require redirecting resources away from more revenue generating arenas within the institution (e.g., science and technology fields). These are just a few of the many ways in which existing neoliberal structures disincentivize leaders' advancement of justice.

Strategies to advance social justice in a neoliberal era

If leaders aim to seriously advance social justice agendas, they must figure out ways to navigate and circumvent the omnipresent barriers engendered by the neoliberal regime. In this final section, we offer a handful of recommendations that are grounded in the proceeding analysis and intended to start a conversation about how leaders can create space and opportunities for their constituents to engage in acts of resistance to neoliberal agendas.

Minimize the power and influence of oppressive external forces

As mentioned above, leaders are heavily influenced by external forces, and conversations about social justice rarely reveal how to minimize the impact of these external influences. While institutional leaders cannot control state government funding decisions, they can strategically make efforts to shape some external environments. For example, institutional leaders can promote the inclusion of social justice advocates on the Board of Regents or Trustees of their campuses. Leaders also have the capacity to determine how much they allow these external forces to influence their behavior. Campuses that truly value social justice must be willing to forgo contributions from donors who actively seek to uphold the status quo in order to prioritize equity over fiscal growth. Of course, we realize that compromising fiscal growth in a neoliberal society means risking one's own reputation and revenue, but we also know that such risks are necessary to advance justice. We return to this point later in the section.

(Re)Focus the mission and resources on advancing democracy and justice

The growth of neoliberalism within U.S. society has contributed to what we understand as an urgency for civic (re)awakening, which can be facilitated by institutions refocusing their missions on democratic education. Institutional leaders can engage campuses across the community in the process of (re)envisioning their mission to be more socially just, in order to maximize buy-in and investment in the mission across their campuses.

Leaders who live out such missions on their campuses must support faculty and staff in embedding social justice throughout the curricula, programs, and activities at their institutions. This can be done by supporting efforts to create support and reward systems that prioritize advancing social justice. Such systems might include research and teaching innovation grants, annual review processes, and promotion and tenure reviews that center the degree to which activities advance a social justice agenda as a core evaluation criterion. In addition, rather than investing their institution's resources in programs and activities primarily based on how much revenue they might generate, leaders can allocate funding based on whether these programs and activities help achieve a mission to advance social justice. This would mean rewarding academic programs that center these values in their mission.

Embrace and support resistance from the ground

Institutional leaders who experience campus unrest often focus their reaction and energies on how to regulate, temper, or suppress faculty and student activism before it “goes viral.” This reaction might be considered an effect of the neoliberal regime as well, as it is driven by the desire to limit damage to the institution's prestige and market value. Alternatively, however, some leaders view such resistance as a fundamental democratic process and interpret protestors' actions as applying the pressure that can create opportunities for change and allow leaders to more effectively enact a social justice agenda. Leaders who welcome resistance from the ground can inform alumni and other stakeholders of these pressures and explain how the changes they are making align with the mission for democratic education and a better world. They can also maximize the likelihood that social justice goals of leadership within the institution converge with those of those on the ground, which can function to increase the effectiveness of such efforts (Kezar, 2012; Pearce & Conger, 2003).

To proactively support resistance movements, educational leaders can teach students, faculty, and staff about how organizational decisions are made. If leaders create a culture of supporting resistance movements, everyone at the institution might better understand how discussing divergent perspectives and questioning decision-making can be a productive part of the cultural fabric of the campus, and those advocating for change might better understand the things for which they can and should advocate. Leaders can create educational opportunities to proactively teach about mechanisms available to enable people to bring campus community perspectives to administrators, strategies for creating forums to discuss contentious issues, and skills for approaching social change in culturally relevant and responsive ways.

Creates subversive structures of support, rewards, and socialization

Leaders can create subversive structures of socialization and support. For example, institutional leaders can construct committees charged with examining how to embed social justice into annual and promotion review processes. Leaders can also allocate resources to give faculty members course releases and release staff members from work time so that they can deeply study

critical forms of pedagogy, re-examine and deconstruct their courses and programs, and construct new ways of teaching for a diverse democracy. Institutional leaders can commit to being heavily involved in faculty and staff searches and ensure that equity is integrated throughout the entire process, including the construction of the qualifications and position announcement, selection of candidates, and interview processes.

Institutional leaders can also create socialization processes that deviate from neoliberal norms. For example, institutional leaders can support the creation of spaces of resistance where campus community members can critically examine existing problems that emanate from the neoliberal regime (e.g., publish or perish mentalities, the never-ending quest for external funding, mental health challenges that might result from never-ending neoliberal pressures), and explore questions regarding how they can cultivate more humanized educational environments that are relevant to the communities they serve (Museus, 2014). These types of processes could include spending significant time storytelling, critiquing the current support and reward structures on campus, and strategizing how to cultivate communities that can resist neoliberal pressures and advance social justice.

It is important for institutional leaders to counter the constant messages that socialize graduate students into the neoliberal culture that permeates academia. Institutional leaders should include graduate students—many of whom will become leaders within academic institutions—in the conversations and efforts outlined above. Moreover, we have observed the ways in which neoliberal forces, and the resulting constant pressures to produce greater numbers, create unrealistic and unhealthy expectations among graduate students, and institutions can ensure students receive information about realistic expectations of early career professionals.

Conclusion

We recognize that, in order for leaders to adopt some of the aforementioned recommendations, they must make sacrifices. Some of their constituents will not like such decisions. Leaders may be critiqued for propagating liberal agendas. Leaders may also fail to challenge neoliberal forces because it could jeopardize the immediate rewards that accompany conformity to the system. To advance social justice agendas, however, leaders must adopt and implement strategies that require immediate risk to achieve long-term equity goals.

Discussion Questions

In this chapter, we discussed some ways in which tenets of neoliberalism shape institutional cultures so that leaders can be more cognizant when they may be lured into making decisions that reinforce these systems.

- Of the neoliberalism tenets, which one causes tensions for you in your current work as a leader? Discuss these tensions with your peers or colleagues.
- What sacrifices have you made, if any, to advance equity efforts? What sacrifices do you think need to be made in your own context (e.g., organization, academic program, leadership) to advance social justice?
- Think about your own institutional context. Given the recommendations offered, what specific steps would be necessary to enact one or more of the recommendations?

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