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Forces in Tension: The State, Civil Society and Market in the Future of the University*

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* In press, in Gibbs, P. & Barnett, R. (eds.) Thinking about Higher Education. Dordrecht: Springer Publications

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Recibido el 10 de marzo del 2014; aprobado el 11 de abril del 2014

KEYWORDS

University/State/Civil
Society/Market/
Higher Education

Abstract

The future of higher education will be determined by a contest between four forces that are perpetually in tension: the State, the civil society, markets, and the efforts of postsecondary institutions themselves. This essay suggests that in the neo-liberal era, States and institutions have aligned themselves closely

with market forces, and that in shaping higher education organizations and policy they have neglected civil society organizations and disenfranchised actors. This turn to the market has weakened higher education in the broader, global political economy. To meet this challenge, a new balance of forces needs to be created.

Although it is one of our oldest social institutions, the university today finds itself in a quite novel position in society. It faces its new role with few precedents to fall back on, with little but platitudes to mask the nakedness of the change. Instead of platitudes and nostalgic glances backward to what it once was, the university needs a rigorous look at the reality of the world it occupies today...

Clark Kerr, *The Uses of the University*, 1963

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of Clark Kerr's Godkin Lectures at Harvard University, published in the first edition of his influential work, *The Uses of the University* (Kerr, 1963). Then president of the University of California system, Kerr set out a remarkably thorough and prescient vision of the research university, its challenges and its potentials. While in subsequent editions Kerr offered new perspectives on a number of functions and adjusted some of his priorities, he remained convinced of the need for a better understanding of the political life of the university, and the ways in which it would be shaped by powerful internal and external forces. In delivering the original lectures in 1963, Kerr noted, "Beyond the formal structure of power, as lodged in students, faculty, administration or 'public' instrumentalities, lie the sources of informal influence. The American system is particularly sensitive to its many particular publics" (2001, p. 20). In a 2001 addendum, he added urgency to his claim: "The most critical pressures will be on those who handle the flow of transactions between universities and the external society's power centers. Will they know enough, care enough, be vested with sufficient high-level, long-term judgment to manage the flow effectively?" (Kerr, 2001, p. 225).

In his first Godkin Lecture, Kerr also noted the lack of scholarship on the university. In many respects, that challenge has been redressed. Scholarship on postsecondary policy formation and implementation, organization and governance, research, access, student success and finance is far more prevalent than a half century ago. That work generally draws on economics, sociology, organizations studies, and, to a lesser degree, political science, and has long been dominated, though not exclusively driven, by rational choice and pluralist approaches (Pusser, 2008; Pusser & Marginson, 2012). However, half a century later, relatively little has changed in the amount of

research in the United States on the role of Kerr's "external society's power centers" in shaping the research university. The university remains a dynamic terrain of social, political, economic, discursive and symbolic contest, yet research and scholarship relying on critical perspectives or applying the fundamental theories of the state and political economic contest are too rare.

In contemporary scholarship, as in Kerr's day, a missing element for understanding the future of the university is a conceptual model of the relationship of the university to three essential spheres of contest that exist in tension with one another: the state, the civil society and market forces. Such a framework calls for a contextualization of these contests within a broadly defined political arena, in which power and interests loom large and acknowledgement that universities themselves have agency and some authority to make, or resist, alliances with actors, interests and associations in each sphere (Pusser, 2008, 2011; Rhoades, 1992). The aim of this chapter is to sketch the boundaries of a critical theoretical model of the university centered on the role of the state, civil society and market relations, as a guide to some ways in which new understandings of the university may be realized.

The State and Higher Education

The state has not been a frequent unit of analysis in the study of universities, or in the scholarship of the broader arena of higher education in the United States (Barrow, 1990; Ordorika, 2003; Parsons, 1997; Rhoades, 1992; Slaughter, 1990). The traditionally decentralized approach to providing education in the U.S., which has vested considerable authority and responsibility for resource allocation to each of the country's fifty individual states, has obscured the importance and utility of state theoretical approaches to understanding universities and the national higher education system. However, the most useful question for understanding the future of the university in the U.S. is the same as in the rest of the world: what is the fundamental role of higher education in the state project? The answer provides a pathway to understanding the missions, institutional forms, regulations, patterns of subsidy and patterns of student access that shape higher education in unique contexts.

The role of the state in education is fluid, shifting at various points in the history and evolution of the national project. Scholars argue for some universal understandings, including that the state is an arena of contest over the essential

purpose of education, and that the role of education in the state is determined by demands from the civil society, market forces, and the state itself (Carnoy & Levin, 1985). Those competing demands reflect distinct visions of the role of education in the state that vary according to history, context and power, where the state is seen as both enhancing economic development and redressing historical and contemporary inequalities emerging from market activity (Carnoy, 1984). Contest over the role of education in the state takes place in a variety of ways and venues, including the political arena, social movements, and through the efforts of the state and its institutions. Sheila Slaughter, in her own work (1990) and in collaboration with others (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), has defined the essential role of higher education in the contemporary state as “academic capitalism,” where higher education is an extension of the fundamental orientation of the broader political economy to the creation and preservation of capital. David Labaree (1997) has set out three fundamental goals for education in the U.S.: the preparation of democratic citizens (democratic equality), the preparation of skilled laborers and professionals as part of a broader commitment to economic development (social efficiency), and to be a source of opportunity for individual economic advancement (social mobility). While Labaree does not address higher education specifically, his conclusion that the social efficiency and social mobility goals are dominant in the elementary-secondary realm is similar to Slaughter’s findings for the postsecondary arena.

From a critical-theoretical perspective, public universities can be conceptualized as political institutions of the state (Ordorika, 2003; Pusser, 2008). Given the key role of the state in chartering, regulating and providing subsidies for private colleges and universities, many of the same conditions of contest and control apply to those institutions. Under state charter, colleges and universities generate significant public costs and allocate scarce benefits, in a process made possible by public authority and subsidies. The processes by which they garner legitimacy and resources, and by which they allocate costs and benefits, are adjudicated through political, social and economic contest. At the same time that it serves as a site of contest over the role of education in the state project, the university plays a relatively unique role as an instrument in broader political contests (Ordorika, 2003; Pusser, 2004). The symbolic importance and visibility of universities assures that major national and international struggles over equity, resource allocation, opportunity and social justice are played out in debates over policies and practices at colleges and universities, on occasion before they emerge in the wider political economy (Cohen, 2002).

The state charters or licenses nearly every type of postsecondary education in the United States. It shapes the university through three fundamental

functions that vary in degree and kind depending on context and the demands of the broader society: provision, subsidy and regulation. The state may provide higher education directly through public, nonprofit institutions. It may provide subsidies to public, private, nonprofit or for-profit institutions, and it has the power to regulate the activities of every type of postsecondary institution. In many cases, the state relies on some combination of these three functions to shape the missions, provide financial support and ensure compliance with the social, political and economic demands placed on universities. The state, in concert with the judicial branches of government, holds authority over universities in the United States, yet it is the political arena that shapes demands from various interests into the policies that guide the activities and outcomes of universities of all types. While all of the forces discussed here shape the contemporary university, in the neoliberal moment the market has become the dominant force (Pusser, Marginson, Ordorika & Kempner, 2012).

State-Centered and Civil Society Institutional Alignments

Moving to a more precise understanding of the university and the state calls for revisiting the dominant typology for understanding the institutional array. Scholars and policy makers in the United States have long relied on a basic distinction between “public” and “private” postsecondary institutions, in which oversight of the former is controlled by state-level legislative bodies and political actors, and the latter by their own trustees. The federal government’s primary site for postsecondary data collection, the Department of Education’s Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (Department of Education, 2102) makes the distinction this way: “Institutional Control: A classification of whether an institution is operated by publicly elected or appointed officials (public control) or by privately elected or appointed officials and derives its major source of funds from private sources (private control).”¹ More recently, scholars have noted increasing commonality in governance (King, 2007) and finance (Geiger, 2007), along with a growing convergence of purposes in each sector (Enders & Jongbloed, 2007; Marginson, 2007).

¹ IPEDS further divides institutions under “private control” into three smaller categories, *Private Not For-Profit*, *Private Not For-Profit – Religious Affiliation*, and *Private For-Profit* (IPEDS Glossary, 2012-2013).

The traditional public-private institutional typology is intuitive, but conceptually limiting. It obscures the sources of resources and legitimacy the sectors share, and the ways in which they are similarly shaped by political contest. As one example, many private, for-profit colleges in the United States receive some 80- 90 percent of their revenue from federal student aid (United States Senate, Health Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, 2012). It is also the case that many private, nonprofit universities receive millions of dollars annually in federal research grants. Institutional lobbying to secure federal funding is common to both public and private nonprofits (Savage, 1999), as are commercial activities, university-industry research partnerships, and the pursuit of support from private foundations (Cook, 1998; Geiger, 2004; Weisbrod, Ballou & Asch, 2008).

A more nuanced way to think about postsecondary institutions in political-theoretical terms is to categorize them by their orientation to the state, civil society or market. From this perspective, public universities in the U.S. can be thought of as state-centered institutions, created by the state to provide higher education in the public interest. As state-centered institutions, public universities maintain linkages to the civil society through social, professional, and community organizations, and they also maintain powerful alliances to the market sector. Private nonprofit colleges, in contrast, emerged from, and remain more closely aligned with, the civil society, although they are generally chartered, regulated and subsidized by the state and also maintain close ties to various market activities. Private, proprietary institutions operate on market principles, with essential subsidies from the state, and produce education from which they can make a profit. At the same time, all three institutional types influence one another through competition for students and resources, legitimacy within the broader state project, and for positions in postsecondary prestige hierarchies.

The State-Building University

Scholars focused on emerging higher education systems have also pointed to an interdependent relationship in the contributions of universities to the capacity and legitimacy of the state itself. These “state-building universities” are charged with credentialing the professional classes, establishing intellectual centers for the development of law and policy, and providing research in the public interest (Ordorika & Pusser, 2007). In doing so, they prioritize some state goals over others. The privileging of the research function, with its outsize impact on global prestige rankings (Pusser &

Marginson, 2012), is an increasingly prominent strategy. Given the variation in contexts and the array of unique demands in each national setting, the widespread aspiration to prioritize high levels of basic, applied and revenue-generating research is a subject of some debate (Altbach, 2007; Baatjes, Spreen & Vally, 2011, Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004).

The Market and Higher Education

For a twenty-first century scholar of higher education, one of the most remarkable aspects of Kerr's Godkin Lectures is that in the nearly 100 published pages there is virtually no mention of the market. Kerr was one of the more experienced and thoughtful leaders in American higher education, as he described the postsecondary landscape past, present and future. The state looms large in the work, and the civil society – particularly the obligation of postsecondary institutions to engage with society – is invoked in some detail. While Kerr does note the increasing competition between institutions and the influence of student demand, there is little indication of tension between the market and higher education.

What a difference fifty years can make. Few topics have generated more controversy over the past few decades in research and practice in higher education than the concept of a market in higher education. Studies of the market and the university can be divided into two broad categories: research on the degree to which higher education is appropriately understood as a market arena (Marginson, 1997; Weisbrod, 1998) and a much larger body of research on such topics as the impact of emerging competition (Kirp, 2003), the changing nature of financial support for higher education (Ehrenberg, 2000; Zumeta, Breneman, Callan & Finney, 2012), faculty labor (Rhoades, 1998), commercialization (Bok, 2003), the monetization of university research (Geiger, 2004), and the impact of competition on university mission (Weisbrod, Ballou, & Asch, 2008). Despite considerable work on the civil society throughout the social sciences, the contest in the broader political economy of the United States over the role of public institutions in general, and universities in particular, has become increasingly binary: state vs. market. Nor has the tension between the two forces been presented in a particularly nuanced fashion. Morrow suggests that in many instances the discourse has been reduced to “the simplistic thesis that everything to do with the state is *bad* (inefficient, paternalistic, undemocratic, oppressive, etc.) and everything to do with unregulated markets is *good* (efficient, empowering, democratic, liberating, etc.),” (Morrow, 2006, p. xxix).

The narrowing of the space for critical discussion of markets is so pronounced (Sen, 2000) that it serves as an example of Lukes's third dimension of power, in which the terms and conditions of a concept become so thoroughly instantiated that individuals and institutions rarely imagine another set of possibilities (Lukes, 2005). Similarly, Alexander suggests that conflating market and civil society is conceptually problematic: "The identification of capitalism with civil society, in other words, is just one example of the reductive and circumscribing conflation of civil society with a particular kind of non-civil realm" (Alexander, 2006, p. 35). In the scholarship and practice of higher education, the market sphere has effectively subsumed the civil society, an arena which must be analytically restored to the center of conceptual models of postsecondary education, in order to understand the future of the university.

The Civil Society

Given the lack of attention to the state in research on universities in the United States, it is no surprise that the alliances between universities and associations in the civil society has also not been studied in detail. There is a great deal of work on developing civic responsibility through higher education (Geary Schneider, 2000; Sax, 2000), on university students and civic engagement (Ehrlich, 2000), and considerable work on social capital, yet there is little attention to the role of formal associations, political contest or the state in that work. Scholars of international and comparative education have turned attention to education and civil society in national and global contexts, work that is largely focused on elementary secondary education (Mundy and Murphy, 2001).

Simply put, the concept of the civil society and the university has been largely subsumed by the focus on the market and the university. In terms of policy enactment and public discourse, this is not a new development. The creation of the land grant colleges entailed a variety of competing forces that included elements of the state, market and civil society (Rudolph, 1965). Barrow (1990) notes a shift generated by the industrial revolution in the early twentieth century, which generated a stronger bond between the state and economic interests in the governance of higher education. By the 1970s, models of organizational behavior in higher education were focused on the interactions of politics, markets, and institutional interests (Berdahl, 1971; Clark, 1983), and more recently, essentially markets and institutions (Weisbrod, Ballou & Asch, 2008).

The shifting relationship between the state, market and civil society in social thought extends well beyond higher education (Edwards and Foley, 2001). Jeffrey Alexander (2006) divided the history of the civil society into two phases. In what he termed “Civil Society I” (late 17th century), civil society was “a rather diffuse, umbrella-like concept referring to a plethora of institutions outside the state” (2006, p. 24). The nascent conception of civil society was understood to encompass capitalist markets, as well as voluntary religion, social organizations and associations, and “virtually every form of co-operative social relationship that created bonds of trust – for example, currents of public opinion, legal norms and institutions and political parties” (2006, p. 24). Initially, the elements of the civil society, including market activities, were understood as an essential counterbalance to state authority. By the mid-nineteenth century, a new conception of civil society emerged. Alexander defined that period as “Civil Society II.” In response to the excesses and inequalities of economic markets at the time, the relationship between civil society and the market, as delineated in social theories and related political philosophies, was radically altered. According to Alexander, “Shorn of its cooperative, democratic and associative ties, in this second version (CSII), civil society came to be pejoratively associated with market capitalism alone” (2006, p. 26).

In the aftermath of the Great Depression, and the implementation of the New Deal, the relationship between the state, civil society and the market in the United States was reshaped again (Sunstein, 2006). Through the New Deal, the state exercised considerably greater regulatory control over a failing market sector and demands from the civil society helped to expand protections for individuals and organizations in a range of social locations. Through the GI Bill and the Higher Education Act of 1965, civil society organizations in concert with political leaders and state agencies increased access and affordability in higher education. During the the social movements of the 1960s, elements of the civil society, including labor unions, churches, and community-based organizations played significant roles in the transformation of the relationship between the state and society. In each of these instances, universities served as sites of contest and spheres of influence.

Academic Civil Society

One of the most influential intellectual innovations in the study of universities in the United States over the past two decades has been the development

of models of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). While this work has been remarkably useful in pointing to the ways in which market forces have reshaped university activities to privilege economic development, it also opens space for thinking about the changing relationship of the academy to the civil society. Research universities in the U.S have been lauded in the political arena for enhancing economic development, a process generally seen as generating both public and private benefits (Geiger, 2004). They have gained considerably less attention for other efforts in the public interest, including contributions to the development of civil society, although student access, civic engagement, and success remain central points of political and policy discussions (Pusser, 2008, Sax, 2000). Not only do postsecondary efforts to facilitate economic development dominate the discourse of university contributions to society and foster institutional connections to commercial enterprises, they often place universities in partnerships with those civil society organizations that fundamentally address economic interests (Slaughter, 1990). In doing so, the institutions may distance themselves from those elements of the civil society essential for political legitimacy, but not distinctly related to market activity, such as associations that support basic medical research, community engagement and public health initiatives. Given the relative decline in legislative funding for public institutions, and the struggle to preserve federal support for student aid over recent decades, it appears that the university ties that are central to academic capitalism have not been effective in building and preserving political-economic support for other university purposes.

The Institutional Role

Scholars of higher education have also long been challenged to model the interests of the institutions themselves in social and political contests. Early work based in the study of public administration placed the institutions and their leaders as articulators of competing demands (Baldrige, 1971), with considerable work on the importance of institutional autonomy (Berdahl, 1971). Political scientists later turned attention to the structural politics of education and pluralist interest group competition (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Moe, 1996), frameworks increasingly adopted in postsecondary research (Doyle, 2012; Parsons, 1997). Burton Clark brought elements of organizational sociology to his triangle of coordination (1983) in which he posed the state, markets and an institutional oligarchy in tension, with

efforts to seek greater autonomy, control of knowledge production, resources and professional norms as key drivers of the institutional interest. More recently, scholarship has focused on the degree to which institutional interests exist alongside, or in tension with, demands from the broader political economy (Bok, 2003; Kirp, 2003; Pusser, 2008).

It is increasingly the case that state-centered institutions and those that originated in the civil society have divergent missions, and different roles in the political economy of higher education. This has become quite apparent in the rankings of universities. U.S. News and World Report began ranking colleges in the United States in 1983. As recently as 1987 there were eight public universities ranked in the top 25 institutions (Van Der Werf, 2007). In U.S. News and World Report's 2012 National University Rankings, there were no public institutions in the top 20, with three in the top 25. The disparity in ranking is understandable in light of the great concentration of financial resources for research, scholarship, and student support in the country's most elite private institutions. There is little to suggest that public, state-centered institutions will gain comparative advantage any time soon; more likely they will continue to lose position in the rankings. Whether or not such institutions should be ranked on the same basis as private universities that originated in the civil society remains an important question that calls for a reconsideration of the relevance of such comparisons, in light of the unique histories, missions, and obligations of universities (Pusser & Marginson, 2012).

The Future of Higher Education: Contest and Tension

Understanding the evolving relationship between universities, the state, civil society, and the market will be essential for determining the shape of the university moving forward. There are important elements of each of the key spheres that will likely explain what unfolds, with the civil society taking on increasing importance. As L. David Brown noted, effective civil societies are essential for an effective state and effective markets (Brown, 1998).

The Future of Higher Education and the State

Despite four decades of neoliberal policy proposals designed to reduce the size and influence of the state (Feigenbaum, Henig & Hamnett, 1999; Harvey, 2005), public institutions in the United States currently enroll more than

two-thirds of all postsecondary students, and are of central importance in the political economy of higher education (Zumeta *et al.*, 2012). Through demands for research and training in the national interest (White House, 2009), a commitment to increasing the percentage of the population holding postsecondary certificates and degrees in general, and in STEM fields in particular, state-centered institutions will play a vital role going forward (Demos, 2012).

The Neoliberal Moment

It is also virtually certain that contest over the role of state-centered institutions will continue, as long as neoliberal ideologies and policies remain potent forces on the postsecondary landscape. Despite the global financial collapse in the first decade of the century, a robust political movement in the United States continues to push for policies that reduce tax support for public institutions, while further privileging markets and private sector provision of essential services. This approach was central to recent national political struggles over health care and has long been linked to arguments that state provision is inefficient. In this climate, state subsidies for teaching and service in state-centered institutions will be hard won (Ehrenberg, 2000; Rizzo, 2006). A key aspect of this policy struggle is the question of whether or not higher education should be considered a public or private good (Marginson, 2007; Labaree, 2000). Advocates of the private good model (Friedman & Friedman, 1980) have argued that those who directly benefit should pay the cost of attendance, and that state contributions to most forms of student aid should be reduced. While considerable effort has been recently devoted to developing student subsidies at the state and federal level as part of efforts to increase college completion, they have fallen short of increases in tuition, and the future of state subsidies for students and institutions remains uncertain.

Redistribution

Another emerging shift in the approach to financial support for universities is the increase in policy proposals and legislation designed to limit the degree to which public postsecondary institutions may redistribute tuition revenue to students in need of financial aid (Kiley, 2012). The allocation and redistribution of costs and benefits in various forms have long been

core elements of the finance of higher education in the United States. Such practices as setting ratios for in-state and out-of-state admissions, selectively building cohorts from large applicant pools, discounting tuition, and using a portion of tuition revenue to provide financial aid for those with higher financial need, all differentially allocate costs and benefits in higher education. The allocation of need-based aid has taken on increasing importance, as the student cohorts at the nation's most selective universities have become increasingly economically stratified (Astin & Oseguera, 2004). At the same time, the state fundamentally redistributes revenue for higher education through the collection and allocation of tax dollars for the support of postsecondary institutions and students. This process affects all institutional types, as state-centered universities, those based in the civil society, and proprietary institutions benefit from student financial aid provided through the state. It is not overstating the case to suggest that fundamental aspects of higher education in the United States will be determined going forward by the contest over the appropriate state role in the generation and redistribution of financial support to students and institutions.

The Future of Higher Education and the Market

The U.S. has long been characterized as one of the most market-driven higher education systems in the world (Clark, 1983; Geiger, 2004). There is a rare degree of consensus in the scholarly community on the power of market ideology in shaping the contemporary politics and practice of higher education (de Sousa Santos, 2006; Marginson, 1997; Pusser, 2011; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). The future of market approaches to higher education will depend on social, economic and political contests that will determine the degree to which market competition is seen as a legitimate model for providing postsecondary education, the nature and force of regulations governing proprietary institutions, the utility of market mechanisms as a driver of organizational practices in state-centered institutions, and the effect of the market as a force shaping equality and success for individuals and communities. A key aspect of the rise of market-driven policies and practices in higher education has embodied a process described by Bachrach and Baratz, following Schattschneider (1960), as the "mobilization of bias" (1970, p. 8). This concept is one that Steven Lukes incorporated in his analysis of the second dimension of power (Clegg, 1989; Lukes, 1974, 2005), which suggests that the creation and instantiation of discourse, symbols, rituals and beliefs around a particular ideology over time lead to

a hegemonic positioning of the ideology that becomes difficult to dislodge through pluralist contest. While the last few decades have been shaped by the construction of the inevitability of markets and competitive behaviors in universities, the nature of postsecondary education in years to come may well be determined by the emergence of new discourses that challenge the discourse and policies privileging markets in higher education.

There are a number of reasons to predict that the long and accelerating instantiation of neoliberal policies in the global political economy will slow over the coming decades (Harvey, 2010). First, the financial collapse of 2008 and subsequent economic austerity have caused many individuals and organizations to rethink the limits of de-regulation and privatization, and to endorse a larger regulatory role for the state going forward (Galbraith, 2008). Second, as the neoliberal project has matured, and the impact of increased competition, the shift of costs from the state to individuals, and the effect of commercialization and privatization on postsecondary institutions becomes more clear, a number of scholars and policy makers have begun to question the efficacy of such practices in higher education (Baatjes, Spreen & Vally, 2011; Rhoads & Torres, 2006; Rodriguez Gomez & Ordorika, 2011; Valimaa, 2011). At the same time, students, civil society organizations and political interest groups have organized to resist tuition increases and to support increases in state funding for higher education. Despite a significant state deficit and recessionary challenges in 2012, voters in the state of California approved a tax increase that could provide as much as \$30 billion for higher education over the next decade (Kiley & Fain, 2012).

Another challenge to understandings of market provision in higher education came in 2012, with the release of a comprehensive report prepared by the majority committee staff of the United States Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. The report addressed activity in the for-profit higher education sector, the fastest growing and most market-driven arena in higher education in the United States. The document included the majority committee staff report and additional accompanying minority committee staff views. While the report presented achievements and challenges in the proprietary sector, its title reflected many of its findings: "For Profit Higher Education: The Failure to Safeguard the Federal Investment and Safeguard Student Success" (United States Senate, Health Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, 2012). The majority staff report noted high levels of student drop-out in some institutions and problematic levels of student loan debt in portions of the sector. It called for higher levels of federal oversight and additional regulation, predicting, "In the absence of significant reforms, that align the incentives of for-profit colleges to ensure colleges

succeed financially only when the students also succeed, and ensure that taxpayer dollars are used to further the educational mission of the colleges, the sector will continue to turn out hundreds of thousands of students with debt but no degree, and taxpayers will see little return on their investment” (United States Senate, Health Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, 2012, pg. 2). While the Senate committee report also included a more positive view of the sector held by some members of the committee, and the majority staff findings generated rebuttals from the for-profit industry, the release of the report is likely a harbinger of additional regulation and some reconsideration of the state role in subsidizing for-profit provision in higher education.

The Future of Higher Education and the Civil Society

The ability of universities to forge stronger, mutually supportive bonds with associations and movements within the civil society will depend on new partnerships within higher education institutions, and beyond their borders. As he envisioned a new conceptual approach, one that envisions civil society as a “solidary sphere,” Alexander argued “to the degree that this solidary community exists, it is exhibited and sustained by public opinion, deep cultural codes, distinctive organizations--legal, journalistic, and associational--and such historically specific interactional practices as civility, criticism, and mutual respect” (2006, p. 31). It can be argued that one of the ‘distinctive organizations’ in which those elements come together is the university. Looking ahead, universities’ abilities to maintain connections to the civil society through community engagement, research in the public interest and alliances with a variety of associations and interests will be imperative for building stronger coalitions in support of higher education.

Various aspects of Alexander’s solidary sphere also constitute aspects of contemporary models of the university as a public sphere (Ambrozas, 1998; Marginson, 2011; Pusser, 2011; Smith, 2010), the vision of the university as a site for knowledge creation and critique that maintains a high degree of autonomy from the state, market the civil society and the political arena. Such a public sphere through higher education is not an end in itself; it also may serve as a common space for learning and community building at a time when a number of scholars see the civil society in the United States in need of renewal (Putnam, 2003; Skocpol, 2003). To achieve a public sphere through higher education, universities will need to balance their own efforts to fulfill state missions and contribute to economic development, with

a clearer and more concerted outreach to elements of the civil society, including community-based organizations, labor associations, professional societies, civic associations, and a wide range of advocacy groups. Through broader coalitions, universities have the potential to both build support in the civil society and, increase their salience in the political arena. Focusing university research, scholarship, teaching on such fundamental elements that shape relations in the civil society as public opinion, service and engagement (Alexander, 2006), will be essential to building an academic-civil society alliance as robust as that embodied by academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997).

The Future of the Institutional Role

The future of higher education as a sphere of influence cannot be separated from the future of universities themselves. Here too, the impact of neoliberal and market ideologies looms large, in demands for increased efficiency, accountability, assessment, and private streams of revenue. Much of the contemporary conversation on institutional transformation in the scholarly and policy communities revolves around how best to respond to competitive pressures to introduce new forms of course delivery, branding strategies and commercial activities within nonprofit institutions (Clotfelter, 2011; Engell & Dangerfield, 2005). Despite the attention to emerging technologies, new organizational missions and managerial practices (Reed, 2002), it is more likely that contest in the political arena between state, civil society and market interests will have the most influence in determining appropriate functions in the higher education arena going forward. This has often been the case in the history of higher education, and again points to the need for the university to strike a balance between key constituents and interests in the wider society. Seeking balanced alignments throughout the political economy of higher education has been easier said than done, as universities have struggled to increase revenue. As state-centered universities have suffered losses in funding, some have endeavored to gain additional autonomy from the state, with modest degrees of success (Pusser, 2008). At the same time, they have sought to garner additional revenue through higher tuition, private philanthropy, and various forms of academic capitalism, a set of responses that has found mixed support in the political arena and the civil society. As state-centered universities and those located in the civil society have moved closer to the market, they have further challenged their own ability to expand engagement and create additional alliances with a

broad range of civil society associations, individuals and social movements (Cohen & Arato, 1992; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004).

In a heightened competition for resources and legitimacy, universities will also need to prioritize and attend to specific missions and purposes. This is not the first time that strategy has been suggested, there is an established literature on the importance of distinctive missions (Clark, 1970). Yet with regard to state-centered research universities, there may be reason now to reconsider the further pursuit of prestige and legitimacy through high levels of funded research and increasingly selective admissions. While research, and the universities' historic roles in leadership development need to be acknowledged and supported, attempting to rise in prestige hierarchies as presently constituted isn't a project that is likely to prove successful for very many institutions. At the same time, it may compromise other elements of these universities' fundamental missions, particularly those traditionally associated with public benefits (Pusser & Marginson, 2012). While the declining position of state-centered institutions in prestige rankings comes as a disappointment to many key constituents, it also offers an opportunity to more deeply commit institutional contributions to the public good, research in the public interest, student access, affordability, community service and engagement. These qualities may ultimately prove to generate more legitimacy and resources than does moving up in prestige rankings or creating further market alliances.

Conclusion: A Question of Balance

The future of the university in the United States will be determined through a new process of institutional evolution. The challenge is clear: create and disseminate new knowledge, increase student diversity, access and success, reduce economic stratification and increase social mobility, and perhaps most important for the preservation of the institution itself, build a public sphere through higher education where critique and creation can flourish beyond the control of the state, civil society or market. To accomplish this, higher education institutions will need to build more equitable and balanced alliances with each of those essential spheres. There are precedents for such a transformation: the land grant movement of the 19th century, the expansion and diversification of the student body after World War II, and the vast restructuring of norms of financing access to higher education that accompanied the passage of the Higher Education Act. In each of these cases, the state, associations in the civil society, market interests

and postsecondary institutions collaborated in complex, meaningful social and institutional change processes. The implementation of these initiatives fundamentally altered both the landscape and the national sense of the potential of higher education. As Fredrick Rudolph noted with regard to one effect of the land grant movement, "Vocational and technical education had become a legitimate function of American higher education, and everywhere the idea of going to college was being liberated from the class-bound, classical-bound traditions which for so long had defined the American collegiate experience" (1962, p. 263).

Public universities in the U.S emerged to provide functions that would not necessarily be produced by institutions emerging from the civil society, or the proprietary sector. The longevity and effectiveness of the fundamentally non-profit, non-market, and increasingly state-centered higher education system in the U.S. over the past two and a half centuries needs to be recognized and celebrated by the institutions themselves and their constituents. The essence of the neoliberal argument in higher education has been that the market can produce a full range of positive outcomes in higher education more effectively than can the state (Friedman & Friedman, 1980). In a contest for resources and legitimacy that has been increasingly zero sum, it isn't clear how effectively those two visions can co-exist. The interests of a broad array of constituents in the civil society, in the political arena, those who see a legitimate state role and those who believe a successful future depends on market provision of higher education, along with those who are not aligned with any of these spheres, need to be heeded, as part of a comprehensive debate over the role of higher education in the national project, how to pay for it, and how to sustain its essential purposes.

Just as universities have served a role as state building institutions and as partners in academic capitalism, so too can they become central to a renewed civil society. This will require alliances with associations and social movements in the wider society, and increased consideration of the role of the university in the production and transmission of social capital. Contemporary universities have proven adept at creating alliances with commercial interests, leaders in the political arena, state actors, and civil society associations devoted to economic development. An intentional strategy linking future research, scholarship, teaching and outreach in pursuit of benefits for the civil society is called for. It will require alliances with associations and individuals working in such areas as public health, community restoration, environmental sustainability, global education, and human rights, to build on work already being done in postsecondary institutions and to expand into new areas. Mindful of its role as a key site for the creation

of social capital, the university will need to continue to work to broaden access and diversity the postsecondary student population. Taken together, the benefits of such strategies will go beyond the university's increased contribution to civil society and the public interest. The university's ability to carry out its core missions depends to no small degree on its legitimacy in the political arena. A strengthened relationship between universities and the civil society, and the increased civic participation that would generate, will also better position postsecondary institutions, both state-centered and those with origins in the civil society itself, for greater success in the political arena going forward.

The university of the future will need to bring together its constituents to more directly engage in an informed conversation on the nature of the state, the civil society and the market, and by doing so, serve as a public sphere through higher education, a site where each of these central forces can be contested, debated and strengthened. And it should contemplate its own purposes and performance, in order to better understand the brilliance of the institution at its best and the deep disappointments attending its limitations. At the conclusion of his remarks in the Godkin Lectures, Clark Kerr posed this question: "We have been speaking of the City of Intellect as a university city with its satellite suburbs. The City of Intellect may be viewed in a broader context, encompassing all the intellectual resources of a society, and the even broader perspective of the force of intellect as the central force of a society - its soul. Will it be the salvation of our society?" (2001, p. 92). A half-century later, the question is every bit as relevant as it was in 1963. The future of higher education remains linked to the future of society, the vitality of the university a key source of strength, its contests reflecting society's struggle, its potential no less than society's collective aspirations.

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