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A Reflexive Interrogation: Talking Out Loud and Finding Spaces for Works of Public Good

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Abstract

Over a year, we engaged in an ongoing dialogue about what it means to be a professor and how we might do a better job of making the public contributions of our work more explicit. Throughout our dialogue, we continually discussed how we, as faculty members, must always work within the institutional constraints that allow the professoriate to exist in the first place. This conceptual essay, which is anchored by a critical theoretical perspective, is poised to make a contribution to the scholarship on faculty careers, professorial understandings of the public good, as well as the practice of faculty evaluation.

Introduction

Academia has long been the target of criticism. Over time, and especially recently, these critiques have led to heightened surveillance and accountability systems *(O'Meara, 2011)*. State governments, activist boards, think tanks, and other commentators continually attack the tenure system, arguing that it is not a profitable or sensible way to conduct the "business" of higher education *(Olivas, 2004; Riley, 2011; Shrecker, 2010)*. Attempting to get a handle on faculty productivity, many of these same commentators assess faculty work as if it were akin to manufacturing looking at inputs, outputs, and returns *(O'Donnell, 2011)*. Such critics suggest that their commentary is justified because, it seems, most professors seem all too willing to sacrifice teaching at the altar of research although "the instructional function of higher education [is what] most endears higher education to the public . . ." *(Hearn, 1992, p. 21)*.

Inside academia, however, scholars of the professoriate suggest that these critiques simplify a complex problem *(O'Meara, 2011)*. Primarily, these scholars point out that faculty are embedded in a system where research expectations, grant writing, and obtaining grants for research are the activities for which they are rewarded. In fact, Melguizo and Strober *(2007)* argue that professors are rewarded for these activities because they function as indicators of excellence, legitimacy, and prestige for colleges and universities *(Archer,*

2009; Gonzales, 2013; O'Meara, 2002). Other scholars suggest that it is unfair to quantify the contributions of faculty with measures that are derived from the logics of business and neoliberalism *(Archer, 2009; Gildersleeve, Kuntz, Pasque, & Carducci, 2010; Sauder & Epseland, 2009; Tuchman, 2010)*. And yet, even among academia's defenders, some accept that most of us fail to demonstrate our contributions in ways that are meaningful to a broader public *(see especially Boyer, 1990; Kezar, 2004)*.

We, a first-year professor and an up-for-tenure professor, have wondered about the aims of the critiques launched at our profession. We have tried to figure out how, as faculty members, we might do a better job of demonstrating the contributions we make through our work. Our awareness of these critiques and desire to respond to them reflect our having entered the professoriate hoping to serve the public good—a notion that we wrestle with in this conceptual essay. We made our way into academia because there were people, including professors, who were willing to invest in us and take chances on us. Since we have been given so much, each of us has always aimed to "give back." Yet, the mounting critiques against this career give us pause and make us wonder if we are, in fact, serving the public good.

In this essay, we share a yearlong dialogue in which we have grappled with this very question. The essay is anchored in critical theory and in particular aspects of critical race and critical feminist perspectives, which place narrative, experience, and the recognition of power relations and positionality at the core of critical scholarship *(Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Gildersleeve et al., 2010; Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2011; Urrieta, 2008; Yosso, 2005)*. Following the aim of these critical traditions, we hope that this essay can serve as both a conceptual and practical tool for other faculty members who are struggling with these kinds of questions.

After sharing large portions of our dialogue, in which we work on clarifying for ourselves what serving the public good means, we present an analysis of promotion and tenure guidelines to highlight opportunities as well as hindrances to serving our conception of public good. Here, we explicitly deploy the agentic elements of critical theory to explore how faculty might negotiate their most immediate constraints in order to serve the public good. In this way, we agree with Córdova *(1992)* who wrote, "the university as an institution is a key arena where 'legitimate' knowledge is established. While discourses of power may have qualities of constraint and repression, they are not, nor have they ever been, uncontested" *(p. 18)*. We acknowledge that contestation requires one to engage

the structures, take them in to understand them and simultaneously to modify them. Because of this, much of our dialogue is also a demonstration of how we grapple with our own position in academia, and how in order to contest we must engage.

Literature Review

To set the context for this essay and situate it in a body of scholarship, we first discuss the literature that addresses faculty work and faculty evaluation practices. Our goal is to illustrate how faculty evaluation practices and traditions often encourage faculty to engage in forms of work that are more distant from what the public might perceive to be important functions of the professoriate, such as teaching and service to the community (e.g., public schools, local businesses).

Extant literature, anchored in diverse methodological approaches and perspectives, has documented how faculty evaluation processes privilege particular kinds of work, which can deter faculty from investing deeply in teaching or service *(Boyer, 1990; Jaeger & Thornton, 2006; Kezar, 2004)*. For example, Fairweather *(2005)* examined the relation between faculty productivity and faculty rewards. In this replication of several earlier studies, Fairweather again determined that across all institutional types, even liberal arts colleges, professors were rewarded more when they produced research rather than when they invested time in teaching or service. This "publish or perish" culture not only has been shown to constrain faculty *(Bowen & Schuster, 1986; Boyer, 1990; Fairweather, 1996; 2005; Fairweather & Rhoads, 1995; Lewis, 1996; O'Meara, 2002),* but it also frustrates public constituents who believe that faculty ought to focus disproportionately on teaching and perhaps service to nearby communities *(Boyer, 1990; Fairweather, 1996, 2005; Fairweather & Rhoads, 1995; Finkelstein, Seal, & Schuster, 1998; Lewis, 1996; O'Meara, 2002)*.

Connected to the "publish or perish" culture described above, scholars have shown that faculty members are highly aware of a prestige maximization model *(Melguizo & Strober, 2007)* that drives the evaluation of their work. The prestige maximization model that Melguizo and Strober conceptualized has been described in many ways and written about extensively *(Alpert, 1985; Clark, 1978; Jencks & Riesman, 1968)*. The consistent and central premise is that higher education organizations operate from a prestige (rather than profit) maximization perspective. Melguizo and Strober explained that prestige is awarded via professional disciplines, publication

outlets, accreditation or other ranking bodies, and reward/resource-awarding entities *(Gonzales, 2013)*. This means that a professor must be concerned not only with producing scholarship, but also with producing research that discipline-based peers are likely to consider a contribution to their larger conversations. For example, more prestige and legitimacy is often attributed to publications in "high-impact journals" whose chief audience is academic *(see Hart & Metcalfe, 2010; O'Meara, 2002; O'Meara, Rice, & Edgerton, 2005)*.

Frustrated with the research-dominant approach to the evaluation of faculty work and highly sensitive to the critiques launched at the professoriate with regard to the "publish or perish" culture, higher education leaders like Ernest Boyer *(1990)*, in his capacity as the president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, sought to create new methods and mechanisms to assess faculty work. Bringing legitimacy to all forms of faculty work was the underlying goal of the "redefining scholarship" movement sparked by Boyer's *(1990)* book, *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Boyer adopted this approach because he was cognizant that how faculty are evaluated, or perhaps more accurately, how faculty members are legitimized, matters and gives shape to how they carry out their work.

Subsequent to Boyer's work was Eugene Rice's effort to construct a national, interdisciplinary, and ongoing forum to discuss faculty roles and rewards. Complementing the faculty forums, private foundations sponsored research and partnerships aimed at supporting the development of a distinct brand of scholarship, which connected faculty more directly to the public through efforts that are now referred to as "engaged scholarship" *(Driscoll & Sandmann, 2001; Ellison & Eatman, 2008; O'Meara, 2008)*. To this end, scholars have developed a robust literature to consider what engaged scholarship means. Inherent to this scholarship is a consistent reference to notions like "the public good," "civic engagement," and "service" as well as "community." Yet, always attempting to avoid dense normative prescriptions, most scholars accept that being "engaged" means many things *(Ellison & Eatman, 2008; O'Meara, 2008)*. O'Meara *(2008)*, one of the leading scholars on the topic, asserts that faculty-community engagement is

> work that engages a faculty member's professional expertise to solve real-world problems in ways that fulfill institutional mission and are public, not proprietary. . . . [and that] the term engagement is used inclusively to mean forms of service-learning, professional service,

> community-based research, and applied research that engage professional or academic expertise in partnership with local expertise to address real-world issues. *(p. 8)*

In our review of the literature, we found that flexible parameters have been established and accepted to describe how faculty might carry out a more publicly engaged kind of career. One of the additional themes in this literature is that broadening scholarship demands a particular epistemological stance, not only among those who wish to carry out such work, but also among those who evaluate such work *(Schön, 1995)*. With engaged scholarship, the faculty member acknowledges and appreciates the value of constituents external to academia and recognizes them as holders and constructors of knowledge. Of this, Sandmann, Saltmarsh, and O'Meara *(2008)* noted:

> This [epistemological] shift raises critical questions of how knowledge is constructed and what is accepted as legitimate knowledge in the academy. It is marked by movement away from traditional academic knowledge generation (pure, disciplinary, homogeneous, expert-led, supply-driven, hierarchical, peer reviewed, and almost exclusively university-based) to engaged knowledge generation (applied, problem-centered, transdisciplinary, heterogeneous, hybrid, demand-driven, entrepreneurial, network-embedded, etc.). *(p. 48)*

Because of the difficulties involved in such epistemological shifts, scholars have developed national standards, handbooks, and exemplary cases to demonstrate how, on the one hand, one might "package" engaged scholarship, and how, on the other hand, a colleague might evaluate such work *(see Driscoll & Sandmann, 2001; Sandmann, Saltmarsh, & O'Meara,2008)*. Yet, when scholars have examined the extent to which "revised" evaluative guidelines and approaches are actually used, the results are disappointing (*Driscoll & Lynton, 1999; Gonzales & Rincones, 2011; O'Meara, 2002; O'Meara, Rice, & Edgerton, 2005)*. Such findings consistently reflect that efforts to broaden the definition of scholarship have not taken root in faculty evaluative practices, which points to the central role that we academics play in the perpetuation of narrow faculty evaluation practices. Additionally, is also suggests that unless there are academic spaces and academics who see such scholarship as legitimate

kinds of faculty work, engagement and the epistemological stance that underpins it will not be institutionalized *(Driscoll & Sandmann, 2001; Jaeger & Thornton, 2006; O'Meara, 2002; Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz & Gildersleeve, 2011)*.

In the next section, we present our dialogue in which we take a reflexive position on the many issues presented thus far. We wrestle with our position in academia in relation to power, privilege, and responsibility. We grapple with our preconceptions about what our careers would be like, how our careers are unfolding, how we consume, but also how we aim to negotiate the processes that govern our work.

Situating the Dialogue

This work grows from dialogic inquiry *(Pasque et al., 2011)* and is also an example of a counter narrative. Counter narrative is a form of narrative inquiry derived from critical theory, which has gained particular prominence within critical race and feminist scholarship *(Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Urrieta, 2008)*. In short, counter narrative inquiries require researchers to position themselves in relation to the texts that they put forward and to account for the import of experience in relation to one's ethic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. In dialogic inquiry, the exchange, itself, is used to assess, analyze and interrogate a particular problem *(Carducci, Kuntz, Gildersleeve & Pasque, 2011; Pasque et al., 2011)* and it also requires an acute sense of positionality and power relations. Both methodological approaches assert multiple ways of knowing. Both suggest that there are always spaces and possibilities for resistance and agency. Of such spaces, bell hooks *(1990)*, a critical race scholar, asserted the possibilities for agency even in a system that pushes one to the margins, wrote, "I am located in the margin. [Yet] I make a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance—as location of radical openness and possibility.,"*(p. 153)*

To this end, we begin by situating our personal history, which is impossible to untangle from our work and position as scholars. We work to consider our position in academia, in what ways we have held up or tried to negotiation what seems to count as valuable, legitimate knowledge, faculty work, and faculty roles.

Leslie's Story

It is impossible for me to disentangle my history and experiences when I examine issues of higher education, particularly in relation to the construction and legitimization of knowledge *(Delgado Bernal, 2008)*. Perhaps most powerful for me is the influence of my mother and father and the life they made for me. My father and his family, like so many Latino families, moved around the southwest with the rhythms of the planting and harvesting seasons. My mother, the daughter of a cook and a maid, stayed home with me to teach me my ABCs, my numbers, and everything she could to ensure that I was "ready" for kindergarten. As much as it pained them, my parents made the conscious decision to teach me English instead of Spanish because they were worried that any sign of Spanish might have led to my marginalization in school.

Thus, it has always been clear to me that my parents made deliberate decisions about my "formal education." I was advised by them to always respect my teachers, and to be thankful for my education and for the opportunities that would follow my education, if I studied hard enough. This perspective of deference is common in Latino families *(Valdés, 1996; Yosso, 2005)*. I believe that this deep respect for schools and education has shaped my views on schooling and college. It also gave impetus to my intrigue with faculty careers, how faculty members intersect with universities, and how we construct and legitimize knowledge, and how we put such knowledge to work for our communities-near and far.

Although I can now question and interrogate professional knowledge, I clearly remember being a student at a small, comprehensive university sitting in class in awe. I listened carefully and I read everything my professors assigned, always juggling one and sometimes two jobs with my studies. Eventually, I learned about graduate school; I thought it sounded right for me. I was not too sure what a master's degree was or what I would do afterward, but it was an opportunity to extend my learning. While writing my thesis under one of my most steady academic mentors, I learned about scholars like Ana Castillo and Sandra Cisneros, and about other writers who questioned normative views and dominant forms of knowledge carried in grand narratives. Through their work, I was given license to do the same, to assert why—despite my love for learning and school—I had never truly seen myself nor understood how I fit in the canons of political science, sociology, history, public administration, or law. Exposed to such exciting and new areas of scholarship, I felt compelled to continue my education.

Perhaps it is because I spent some of my time straddling the luxurious world of questions and theories, and the rest of my time scurrying between work and school, that it always made sense to me that the work of academia should have resonance and connection to real life, and to the world of work and practice. Perhaps this is why I found myself seeking a doctorate in higher education. In some ways, the educational field represented a space, to me, within academia where one's work was inevitably connected to practice—through interacting and learning with practitioners inside the classroom, and through the wide range of outlets that allow one to publish work for the "pure academic audience" as well as for "communities of practice." Taken together, all of these experiences "make" me, and shape how I understand the roles and responsibilities of university faculty. Next, James describes his starting point and how it shapes his view of the world and faculty roles.

James' Story

My feelings, desires, and level of understanding for the wider field of education have developed over time, and are shaped from a long line of educators. Perhaps this is why, while most people tend to put stock in the prestige of a place (e.g., college or university), I find myself rooted in the pedigree of ideas. One of the most formative ideas for me is from a conversation that I had with my mentor in graduate school. I clearly remember my mentor saying, "As you develop your ideas and begin to socialize students, you must remember whose shoulders you stand on." As a result, I realize every day my ideas about education and the role of faculty are rooted in George Brown's *(1971)* notion of "confluent education" and Laurence Iannaccone's *(1975)* understanding of the "politics of education." More than anyone else, though, my father, who earned his Ph.D. in community education in the late 1960s, shaped my ideas and beliefs about the purposes of education.

Now a professor, I recognize my own privilege. That privilege is not, however, traditional in the sense of being born with a level of privilege. I believe my privilege is rooted in being able to negotiate multiple worlds. I believe that attending a historically Black college and university as an undergraduate, working at a historically Black college and university, attending graduate school at a predominantly White institution, and starting my faculty career at a Hispanic-serving institution, prepared me for a life as a faculty member. My education experiences ground my philosophy about faculty life, which is that faculty members should be more con-

cerned with the development of others and less concerned with the development of self.

Our Dialogue

Our dialogue began around the time that I (Leslie) was hired, and just as James was about to begin the promotion and tenure process. Our conversations often turned to concerns that most early-career tenure-track professors have: work-life balance, the mystique of promotion and tenure, and how to do meaningful work. In one of these conversations, James, who is one of my mentors, said something to the effect of "Well, it is important for you to know what kind of faculty member you want to be." Although a simple statement, these words fueled a serious discussion about the nature of the professoriate and the different "kinds" of professor one can be.

In our conversations, I (Leslie) described research as a critical strategy to affect how people conceptualize problems. I have always been anxious to talk with formal and informal leaders, such as teachers, administrators, or policy makers, to ensure that they are exposed to perspectives, theories, and research that challenge the all-too-common deficit views of Latina/o communities, for example. I believe that reading just one article can really shift and challenge one's perspective.

At the same time, I (James) found myself revisiting why I had come into the professoriate as I spoke to my new colleague, Leslie. I talked about entering the professoriate to develop individuals and educational leaders. I also talked about the kind of faculty member that my father was when he was in academia. My father's work has always inspired me. I like to talk about how my dad took action, got out there into the community. It was not just about sitting and writing-there was an action piece expected of faculty. I think we are missing the action piece today. When we first started this project, I had a stale sentiment about my work as a faculty member. I remember saying in one of our early conversations that I just wanted to "do something already."

As we worked through these early conversations, we realized we had similar aspirations for our careers: to contribute to the public good, but we envisioned different ways of achieving this common goal. We also realized as we talked about this notion of serving the public good that faculty members across different disciplines may have different conceptions of how their work contributes to the public good *(Pasque, 2010)*. For example, whereas O'Meara *(2008)*

notes that engaged scholarship should not be proprietary, it is possible that business, engineering, or other science faculty members have complex compensatory contracts in which most of their work is "compensated." However, perhaps it is through these compensated relationships that they contribute in other ways *(see Mendoza, 2007; Powell & Colyvas, 2008; Slaughter, Archerd, & Campbell, 2004)*.

After several casual conversations, we decided to be more pointed in our discussion, working in the lines of dialogic inquiry *(Pasque et al., 2011)*. We structured conversations to answer the following questions: (1) What does it mean when we say we want to do work for the "public good"? and (2) How can we ensure that we are, in fact, doing such work? In practice, how do we value it or not? Below, we present notes from our structured conversations. The italicized words or phrases in this section denote particularly important ideas for us.

> **Leslie**: So, when we talk about serving or the public good and wanting to do the public good, what do we mean?
>
> **James:** Well, I think of the idea of our work *being good to the society as a whole*, where it is *not just about me*, but about the whole state of society. You know, human rights, like the right to work, the right to [collectively] bargain, the right to education. I see that, too. The public good is about protecting those kinds of ideas.
>
> **Leslie:** You know, this is hard because we can say it, but what do we really mean? And, without being prescriptive, how do we say this. I think, first and foremost, *the public good cannot hurt others*—I mean, like *medically, emotionally, educationally*. I also agree it has to be something like working towards things bigger than us. For me, it is about *openness in a lot of ways*. Although some people do, I don't really get stuck on the idea about teaching versus research when we talk about the public good, but more about the, kind of, underlying purpose, philosophy of your work, *the willingness to be critical and to pose hard questions* is what I want to do. Access, equity, opportunity, critical understanding, taking the place or the position of others, having my students do that, so that they get beyond parochial ideas and norms and views of the world to understand and learn from

others, especially since they are school and university leaders.

James to Leslie: But, why does it matter to you? Why do you think we should think about those things or do those things?

Leslie: I feel like I—for sure—need to do those things! We are so privileged in this work. I see how hard my parents work. I mean my *Grampo* [*Grampo*, rather than Grandpa, is representative of the northern New Mexican dialect that characterizes Leslie's linguistic heritage and familial past], my Grandma, my tios [uncles]: they drive a bus. They have always driven because it was an important contribution. No one gets rich doing it . . . but it is a way of getting us kids, the rural, ranch kids, to school. And, here I am. I just feel like I have such a privilege, such a responsibility to ask hard questions, to ask people to think about class, color, race, gender, especially in education, we need people who can lead with a critical eye for the problems that they confront.

James: Well, for me, *it is less about me and more about others,* but my approach does not fare well in terms of evaluation in academia—especially in research universities. I have to try not to hide, but to go unnoticed, under the radar, kind of.

Leslie to James: Talk about going unnoticed.

James: Unnoticed or maybe under the radar, yeah. Sure, I can produce quality scholarship but since the university is not quite at the top yet . . . I can really focus on what I like: student productivity.

Leslie: So, is student productivity how you see your public good contribution? What does that mean?

James: Producing the next wave of knowledge producers—*the scholarship of teaching and learning; shaping "clinical scholars."* There are many ways to describe it. You know, academia rewards us like this is about the development of self, but I think it should be about *the development of others*.

Leslie: That is really interesting. I guess I never thought about the development of others versus self; like, never juxtaposed it like that. I mean, I don't see them as really exclusive, but it's all where you put the accent, right? I wonder, so, do you see the research as selfish—about "self-development"? Because I think about it and I love the research, the writing because I feel like we can ask some important questions. In my research, I feel like I ask them. *I am always concerned about the recognition of power relations, you know, how someone earns legitimacy in academia—you know.*

James: Yeah, but I think the action is lost in higher education. It's sad. All we are doing is producing people that function off perspective of self. It is important to do the research, but there is no *do.*

Leslie to James: No *do*?

James: There are no action items. We look down on action research, on applied research. We do. I am not saying we need to only do action research, but if we write something, *there has to be an actualization of the work,* I think. . . . When I work with students: that is when I feel like I am self-actualizing. *The "do" for me is sending people out there, helping them develop their ideas*. . . . For me, my doing is about developing students, not just in the strict academic sense, but helping them build a network. You know, we talk about prestige of institution and how that amounts to the prestige of a student or scholar, but to me there is an important aspect of pedigree in terms of a school of thought, and less about institution. *I want to make sure that my students are part of an academic family, for their ideas and also for their connections*.

Leslie: So, this kind of work is how you feel you are doing your part—making sure that your students are part of an academic family.

James: Well, yes, it is valuable, and it's how I see me doing the public good, but to be clear, it's not tenurable. You know, starting at [former university] gave me time to learn what kind of professor I wanted to be. It taught me, it showed me what was important. Like, I

had all these dreams for myself, you know, like being an international scholar, and then I realized at [my first institution] that I was really good at helping other people actualize their goals, and that I was better at that than at some of my own goals. I almost took a step back and like, you can fight it, you can try to fight it. And I did, you can try to suppress it, but when you are a teacher, and a person comes to you and says, "I don't know, and I know I don't know. Help me." Only a jerk does not help. *And that's when I realized that there are other ways to do a faculty career, and developing my students was what mine was going to be about.*

Leslie: Tell me a little bit about you trying to fight it.

James: Oh yeah, *you fight it because that is not what academia is about because academia is about the development of self rather than the development of others.* There are no "real" deliverables. Again, no real "do."

Leslie: So, then, do research questions always have to be practice focused? Are only those who like to teach doing the public good? I mean, can't we do the public good by asking our students or peers hard questions, whether we are in classrooms or in a journal article. I mean, what about the idea of giving back by helping to develop a critical citizenry? You know, like C. W. Mills (1959) or, I think, of some of my own mentors?

James: Right, research and research questions do not always have to be practically driven, but they should be *practically explained.*

Leslie: Ah, that is interesting, really interesting. I like that. *Unpacked?* We should unpack and use what we know for public ends? So, like, I am a professor, and I am interested in organizational development and behavior, I can write about it for my peers, but maybe the public good is in the *writing for others locally or in practice focused newsletters or maybe going to help an organization through a planning process or collecting data* and working with them to help them think through the data? When I did that back home, I felt like it really mattered.

James: Right, right. But, we don't value that.

Leslie: For me, yes, that is really important and a way that I can see myself doing the public good—aside from writing and trying to study important issues. Like, I think about my dissertation work, and I am happy that I sent my participants a summary and did a member's check because that gave me an opportunity to go and "unpack" the analysis and illuminate the common interests and tensions. And I am glad that I went back and presented to the formal leadership, even if it was difficult and stressful. I shared the work in a practical and directly meaningful way.

Conceptualizing Public Good through Dialogic Inquiry

We took our conversation, some of which is captured above, and analyzed it to develop a conception of the public good that resonated with both of us. Specifically, after looking at the body of data that we generated, we agreed that it was unlikely we would ever completely agree with one another about all of the ways that faculty might serve the public good. For example, I (Leslie) clearly suggest that scholarship, in and of itself, can be a contribution to the public good. James sees the need to unpack one's scholarship for audiences in a more direct manner via talks or by working in hands-on ways with communities of practice. We also view scholarship in slightly different ways. James suggests that the "publish or perish" culture facilitates "development of self" rather than "development of others" (students), but I (Leslie) do not see "development of self" and "development of others" as mutually exclusive. Our willingness to allow the very notion of "serving the public good" to be fluid reflects the kind of epistemological bent that is necessary for critical work, which values multiple ways of knowing and doing as long as there is consistent commitment to social justice, equity, and the recognition of power relations *(Pasque et al., 2011).*

Ultimately, through standard qualitative data analysis (reading, rereading of data, and cursory coding) *(Creswell, 2008)* and dialogic techniques (talking extensive and notating those talks to articulate arguments/points) *(Carducci et al., 2011),* we developed a conception of the public good that we could agree on. The features of this conception are presented in Table 1. Many of these features are reflected in the literature that addresses engaged scholarship, which we referenced earlier *(Driscoll & Lynton, 1999; Kezar, 2004; O'Meara, 2002;*

O'Meara, Rice, & Edgerton, 2005; O'Meara, 2008; Sandmann, Saltmarsh, & O'Meara, 2008). In the table, we display features along with supporting excerpts from our narrative. Note that our agreed-upon features are italicized in column 1 along with supporting sources from the literature while key exemplary excerpts from our narrative are italicized in column 2.

Table 1. Serving the Public Good

Types of Engagement Work	Excerpts from Dialogue, Notes, or Literature
Efforts that *advance democracy, in its social* rather than its liberal conceptulization *(Gildersleeve et at., 2010)*	**James:** our work *being good to the society as a whole*, where it is *not just about me,* but about the whole state of society. Leslie: I also agree it has to be something like *working towards things bigger than us…*
Doing the public good cannot *hurt or violate others (Slaughter et at., 2004: Shrecker, 2010)*	**Leslie:** I think, first and foremost, *the public good cannot hurt others*—I mean, like *medically, emotionally, educationally.*
The public good can *unfold in many kinds of work*. The public good is not the province of teaching, researching, or service. Works of public good come in diverse forms *(Pasque, 2010: Pasque et al., 2011).*	**Leslie:** It is about *openness in a lot of ways*…it's more about the, kind of, underlying purpose, philosophy of your work. **James:** *And that 's when I realized that there are other ways to do a faculty career, and developing my students was what mine was going to be about.*
Working toward the public good promises safe spaces for *critical inquiry,* disrupting what is perceived as normal *(Gildersleeve et at., 2010)*	**Leslie:** We are so privileged in this work. I see how hard my parents work. I just feel like I have such a privilege, such a responsibility to ask hard questions, to ask people who can lead with a *critical eye for the problems that they confront.*
Works of public good include the attempt to *communicate with different constituencies, especially those most impacted by one's area of work/expertise (Driscoll& Lynton, 1999; O'Mera, 2002, 2008; Pasque, 2010).*	**James:** *work does not have to be practice driven, but it should be practically explained.*

Reflecting and Learning From Our Dialogue: Towards Praxis

We started this project unknowingly. Engaged in what seemed to be casual conversations about the tensions in faculty careers, we realized that as faculty members who claim to want to serve the public, we needed to take a reflexive position, interrogate and understand better what we mean by serving the public good, and consider the ways in which we are or are not working towards such conceptions ourselves *(Gildersleeve et al., 2010)*. For example, as we have noted throughout, achieving legitimacy in academia requires that one earn the "approval" of individuals and groups at many levels, and within academia, especially, sometimes the norms for earning legitimacy are removed from ideas of serving the public good as we have defined it. Similarly, as has been noted many times

in the literature, the work that "counts" in academe is the work that can be counted (e.g., publications, grant dollars, number of students taught) *(Archer, 2009; Huckaby, 2008)*, and yet, as academics, we are part and parcel of this evaluation process, which means that we must take an active and reflexive stance as we participate/intervene *(Pasque et al., 2011)*.

To this end, following the tenets of critical work, which prized praxis or application of scholarship *(Pasque et al., 2011)*, we examined how our conceptions of serving the public good compare to the promotion and tenure guidelines that are administered within our own working context. Specifically, we asked ourselves, "What are the moments, the phrases, or the frames already embedded in the promotion and tenure guidelines that govern our work, which we might deploy in order to frame our work for those carrying out the evaluative process?" We also asked, "What are the hindrances to the conception of serving the public good?"

I (Leslie) analyzed the guidelines first for spaces and hindrances. Then, James read my analysis of these documents. Again, drawing from dialogic inquiry practices, we revised and talked through the coding work. On one hand, we aimed to more carefully consider the opportunities and hindrances embedded in our own evaluative context, but the ultimate goal was to demonstrate for other faculty members how we worked through this process and to provide a tool that might be used by others who want to make sense of how they might serve and frame their work in the face of constraint while simultaneously negotiating what might be viewed as legitimate and valuable work.

Spaces and Hindrances for Serving

As we examined the evaluative guidelines that govern our work, we sought to illuminate spaces that reflect our conceptualization of the public good. We also sought to recognize the hindrances to such work. We found several such spaces, as well as hindrances to serving the public good. Like most evaluative documents pertaining to faculty work, these guidelines made clear that the faculty role is constituted by three major tenets: research, teaching, and service. We reviewed each of these areas in relation to our conception of the public good.

One of the guiding principles for the promotion and tenure team at our school is that "applied fields require grounding in authentic settings across faculty responsibilities for research, teaching, and service . . . which demand integration of research, teaching, and

service within practical contexts" [Tenure & Promotion Guidelines *(College of Health, Education, and Human Development, 2008, hereafter, p. 2)*]. Immediately, this language seemed a useful entry point for faculty who want to carry out locally and regionally grounded research *(Driscoll & Lynton, 1999; Sandmann et. al., 2008)*. If a scholar focuses on and/or prefers action research and working directly with communities of practice as James suggested in his narrative, that scholar's tenure dossier should refer back explicitly to this language. This is one of the most important spaces that we found in our comparative review of the guidelines and our conception of the public good.

We continued our reading of the guidelines, which begin with a discussion of research. The guidelines state that to receive tenure and promotion to associate professor, a faculty member must be able

> to provide evidence that his or her accomplishments in the [research] area are well-recognized by peers and have begun to have had a national impact. Evidence of such contributions includes publication in refereed, nationally distributed, and abstracted/indexed journals; publications of books, book chapters, and monographs (refereed and indexed); and external funding for scholarship and research *(College of Health, Education, and Human Development, 2008, p. 7)*.

Given its presentation as the first area of faculty responsibilities addressed in the guidelines, research clearly has primacy. Continuing the description of research, the guidelines incentivize faculty to employ narrow rather than diverse dissemination of their scholarship. For example, the guidelines noted that to evaluate the quality of a candidate's research and scholarship, the tenure and promotion team will consider the

> reputation of the journals in which the candidate has published, the acceptance/rejection rates of the journals in which he or she has published, the frequency with which the candidate's works are cited in the literature (e.g., citation index), the reputation of funding sources, the acceptance/rejection rates of funding sources, and the amount of external funding *(College of Health, Education, and Human Development, 2008, p. 7)*.

Furthermore, junior faculty members are advised to organize and present their scholarship by placing their international and national publications atop the list.

The guidelines describe how research is appraised according to a three-pronged classification: (1) competence, (2) achievement, and (3) achievement with distinction. Under each classification are examples for these various levels of achievement. Competent scholarship includes "presentations at state or regional conferences or articles published in refereed state and regional journals, technical reports, and university grants." Achievement includes "(co)-principal investigator on external grant (funded); publications in national refereed professional journals or monographs (abstracted/indexed); book chapters, presentations at national or international professional conferences (evidence of refereed process); or national impact of electronic or technological tools." Finally, "achievement with distinction" will be earned by demonstrating

> sustained contributions in *nationally recognized professional* journals (refereed and indexed) and edited books; national recognition for publications (e.g., awards, articles in national newspapers); editorial board member for *nationally recognized,* refereed journal, or invited presentations at *national or international conferences*. [emphasis added] *(College of Health, Education, and Human Development, 2008, p. 8)*.

To this end, tenure-track faculty members are advised to organize their dossiers in ways that highlight their most valuable achievements or what are referred to as "achievements with distinction."

These guidelines make it evident that national renown or impact is highly important to earning legitimacy. On the one hand, this is understandable. Faculty members work on and produce specialized bodies of knowledge that are "checked" for relevance or soundness by other scholars working across the country on similar issues. However, as Sandmann, Saltmarsh, and O'Meara *(2008)* noted, there are other interested and capable constituencies that consume and also produce knowledge. Refusing to give space and/or legitimacy to these external knowledge consumers/producers (policy bodies, nonprofit organizations, practitioners, etc.) inherently marginalizes them, as pointed out in the recent work of Pasque *(2010)*. Furthermore, as González and Padilla *(2008)* argue, what other professional academics view as important and legiti-

mate may not be relevant to local or regional communities, communities of practice, and so forth. For example, González *(2008)* described how he reached a point in his professorial career where he no longer looked to national agencies or professional colleagues to help him formulate research questions. Instead, he looked to local community members, schools, and other organizations to see how he might serve in the ways that they needed and in the ways that made sense to them. Thus, like González and other scholars *(Driscoll & Lynton, 1999; Gonzales, 2010; Jaeger & Thornton, 2006; O'Meara, 2008)*, we argue that if scholars are encouraged to publish in high impact, national and international outlets, then it becomes difficult or risky for faculty to spend time crafting research agendas anchored in local matters with the help of local and external constituencies. In other words, exclusive reliance on tight circles of professionals from within academia can impose limits to other forms of faculty work, such as unpacking scholarship in practice or policy briefs.

Still, it is important to point out that the evaluative guidelines do highlight multiple kinds of outlets. For example, as evidence of "competent scholarship," the guidelines refer to practice, local, regional, policy-focused, and/or technical reporting forms of work. The spaces for inserting such work are limited and suggestively categorized as less valuable, or less legitimate; nonetheless, these spaces do exist. A scholar might frame local and/or practitioner-oriented publications by quoting language from the guidelines. For instance, a tenure-track scholar with multiple practice or locally oriented products might write: "In serving all audiences connected to my career as a professor serving in a land-grant university, I have published essays that are relevant to regional, community-based organizations as well as state-oriented policy reports and national and, of course, peer-reviewed journals." In fact, Ellison and Eatman *(2008)* suggest that faculty who are engaged in multiple forms of scholarship provide names of practitioners who may have used their work or their services in some capacity. These practitioners could then provide additional letters or other evidence reflecting the scholar's contribution.

We have just discussed the prominence assigned to the research aspect of faculty work and how legitimacy is distributed to tenure-track professors based on scholarly dissemination practices. Given the preference for high impact publications evidenced in the tenure and promotion guidelines, it is informative and important to consider the work of Hart *(2006*) and Hart and Metcalfe *(2010)*. For instance, when they compared citation yields gathered from the

conventional and dominant ISI Web of Knowledge (*see Hart & Metcalfe, 2010, p. 146)* and Google Scholar search engine, which they argued is a much more inclusive source of scholarship, they found that "reliance upon the [conventional] citation indexes as tools to determine academic quality has the potential to further *marginalize feminists and likely, other nontraditional groups in the academy*" (*p. 157;* emphasis added*)*. Given Hart and Metcalfe's insights, we argue that the references to citation counts/impact rates as measures of quality and impact implicitly privilege conventional rather than critical scholarship. This, then, is a clear hindrance. Furthermore, drawing from other scholarship such as the work of Delgado Bernal and Villalpando *(2002)*, Carducci et.al, *(2011)*, Lather *(2004)*, and Urietta *(2008),* we suggest that critical inquirers and/or works that are intended to disrupt the status quo may not fare as well in "high impact" mainstream outlets. Thus, we see the utilization of impact rates as a potential hindrance to our conception of public good, especially the notion that works of the public good must not, in any way, be harmful.

Regarding teaching, the guidelines note, "teaching is the fundamental responsibility" *(College of Health, Education, and Human Development, 2008, p. 9)* of a faculty member. Moreover, the guidelines go on to expound the many elements of teaching, outlining that teaching also includes advising, mentoring, and improving one's pedagogical approach through professional development or perhaps action research and reflection. These are additional spaces or opportunities to outline the complexities involved in one's teaching work as a public good. Faculty would do well to take this language and refer to examples of each of the elements of teaching (advising, mentoring, professional development, etc.). By doing so, faculty might be able to elevate the development of their students through innovative practices and intense mentoring.

With regard to service, the guidelines define service as "non-compensated consultation, products developed for a variety of media/technology, performances/products/services for the arts, professional reviewing activities, in-service activities, service related grants and acquisition of resources" *(College of Health, Education, and Human Development, 2008, p. 12)*. This reference to service reflects our agreement that service should not be based on profit or compensation. Such service includes using one's research skills to conduct much needed research or using one's knowledge base to inform policy conversations. The entire conceptualization of service is broad enough to insert many efforts that fit our notion of public good.

Yet, it is important to note that when evaluating service contributions, the tenure and promotion guidelines also classify service as "competent," "achievement," and "achievement with distinction." Earning "achievement with distinction" in the area of service requires extensive and high-level involvement in national or international professional associations or at least holding the presidency of major state organizations and/or policy bodies. Meanwhile, "competent service" is defined as "contributions to committees in college, to area program of study; invited class presentations . . . attending local meeting . . . contributions to local program of work . . . contributions of professional expertise to the community" *(College of Health, Education, and Human Development, 2008, p. 12)*. It is evident that the most valued forms of service are described as those activities that faculty deploy at a national level, whereas the most locally oriented ones are viewed as competent. Despite the language that describes how faculty work in applied fields should be grounded in practical contexts, limited value seems to be assigned to service carried out at the local level, meaning that the kind of "unpacking" that James stressed is not as valuable as service given to the "profession."

Finally, unfortunately, there was little, if any, explicit reference to the role that faculty might play in building or serving democracy, civic responsibilities, or those features of the public good which we named. Perhaps the closest example of the social democratic potential in faculty work or roles was the following line: "[Our] tenure-track faculty members serve for the good of their respective programs to meet [our] land-grant mission in the state and region." Using this language, a faculty member interested and engaged in works of the public good, similar to our conceptualization, might advance his/her work by explaining, "Given the democratic and public service underpinnings of land-grant universities, I have served on the [insert specific example of task force or civic group, etc.]. In my role on this [task force], I use my research skills and transcribe notes to ensure. . . ."

Clearly, faculty must work to insert and assert the importance of work that speaks to our multidimensional notion of public good, but it is possible to negotiate the evaluative process by leveraging particular language from the evaluation guidelines. We see this as a viable space and opportunity for agency and resistance as did hooks *(1990)* and Córdova *(1992)*.

Conclusion

In this essay, we displayed our dialogue and related notes, as we worked to clarify our notion of the public good. We showed the complexities, convergences, and divergences that we ran into within our own conversation. Ultimately, we developed a conception of the public good that resonated with both of us, and then we compared it with our tenure and promotion guidelines to think through ways that we and others might negotiate their evaluative context in order to frame their works of public good.

We argue that faculty must attempt to frame their works in ways that speak to a broader public good. On the one hand, this is a response to the critiques and commentaries we first described in our essay. As we noted, faculty must take a more active role in shaping the perception and discourses around their roles and contributions. On the other hand, we recognize that faculty members often face complex constraints related to the profession and the field itself. We wanted to provide an example of the ways that faculty might think through their own conception of the public good, how they might read the evaluative documents that govern their own work carefully, and then exploit potential spaces for public good by using these spaces as frames of legitimacy.

Of course, as with any study, our project has its limitations. We did not seek multiple sets of tenure and promotion guidelines to "test" our conception of serving and how it might fit (or not) in other places. This is because our work is a project stemming from critical epistemological and ontological paradigms, narrative and dialogical inquiry, meaning that it is valuable precisely because it is framed by our particular situated experiences and that our ultimate hope is to resonate with others through our explicit reflexive practices and the steps we took to provide contextual details alongside scholarly sources *(Carducci et al., 2011; Pasque et al., 2011)*.

Thus, we offer up our narrative as well as our analysis of the tenure and promotion guidelines for others to consider—hoping that this work might lead readers to see the possibilities that lie within the strictures of accountability, prestige maxim models, and narrow forms of legitimacy that faculty simultaneously face. In other words, rather than simply conform or "give up" on aspirations to serve the public good, we hope that others will see that there are ways to serve and to frame one's work by strategically reading and utilizing spaces provided in evaluative policies themselves.

This is but our first step on what we believe to be an important and potentially fruitful line of inquiry. Other than a few pieces

that examine organizational documents *(Gaffikin & Perry, 2009; Wangenge-Ouma & Langa, 2010*), we are unaware of other scholarship that has sought to inspect tenure and promotion policies so carefully with the intent of seeking out spaces to insert works of public good. On that note, we believe that our conception of the public good can be juxtaposed and refined by joining it to other scholarship, such as Pasque's *(2010)* extensive report on the ways that the public good is conceptualized in higher education, as well as other personal narratives and experiences. We understand and see the notion of "serving the public good" as fluid and hope others take a moment to talk out loud and reflexively narrate the possibilities.

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