Civic Engagement across the Career Stages of Faculty Life: A Proposal for a New Line of Inquiry

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In a piece she wrote on the "engaged academy" that was published in 2000, Carol Schneider noted the discussion that scholars and others were having about the roles mediating institutions play in addressing public issues and problems in American society, including the problem of civic disengagement. In this discussion, she observed, "there has been surprisingly little attention to the role that higher education institutions in particular might play in the renewal of civic engagement." She went on to say that there is a "crucial need for exploration of potential connections between the core missions of colleges and universities as educational institutions and the quality of our civic life" (Schneider, 2000, pp. 99, 100).

The topic Schneider pointed to in her piece is vast and enormously complex. There are all kinds of roles that higher education institutions might play in the renewal of civic engagement, and all kinds of potential connections that could be made between core missions of colleges and universities and the quality of our civic life. In the American higher education studies literature, the conversation about such roles and connections often focuses on preparing undergraduate students for citizenship (e.g., Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007). This is important work, and it deserves our attention. But if we wish to both understand and improve higher education's roles in renewing civic engagement and enhancing the quality of our civic life, we also need to attend to the broader topic of the work of faculty members (and other academic professionals) as active participants in and contributors to civic life. The issues to be explored in relation to this topic are not only the roles faculty *might* play in civic renewal, and the *potential* connections they *might* make between core academic missions and the task of improving the quality of our civic life. They are also the roles and connections they *already have and are*

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playing and making as they step off their campuses and become engaged in civic life. Of course, the work of preparing students for citizenship through community service-learning pedagogies and courses can and often does engage faculty members as active participants in civic life (Jacoby & Associates, 2003). But faculty members have been and are engaged in civic life in many other ways, and for many other reasons.

Here, we come to the problem we take up in this chapter. Beyond service-learning as a means of preparing undergraduates for citizenship, much if not most of the civic engagement work and roles of faculty members has been overlooked as a topic of inquiry, assessment, and discussion, both in the organizational and administrative workings of academic institutions and in the American higher education studies literature. [By "the American higher education studies literature," we are referring only to books and articles published by scholars working in the official academic field of higher education studies. We are well aware of the fact that there are many books and articles written by scholars in other academic fields (e.g., sociology, political theory, history, cultural studies, and philosophy) that address the issue of the political roles and work of academic professionals.] Jane Wellman made this point in 2000, in the same book in which Schneider's piece appeared. Despite all the attention to assessment and accountability in American higher education, Wellman (2000, p. 323) observed, "the civic educational and service roles of higher education remain invisible, unreported, and largely undefined." We want to sharpen her observation by noting that the *political* roles and work of academic professionals and institutions in civic life remain invisible, unreported, undefined, and largely unexplored.

Our purpose in this chapter is to propose a new line of inquiry in the field of higher education studies that attends to this largely unexplored topic. The line of inquiry we propose is not designed to pursue the goal of establishing causal, statistically significant relationships between factors or variables in order to inform attempts by administrators, policy makers, or others to predict, control, and/or intervene for some specific end. Rather, it is designed to stimulate and contribute to conversations within and beyond the academy about the nature, meaning, significance, and value of civic engagement across the career stages of faculty life. Utilizing knowledge, methodological approaches, and theoretical frameworks and tools from several fields and sources, it is designed to catalyze and inform processes of institutional change and faculty and organizational development that contribute to the project of strengthening and deepening higher education's roles in renewing civic engagement and enhancing the quality of our civic life.

The Political Roles and Work of Academic Professionals in Civic Life

In both the American higher education studies literature and the organizational and administrative workings of academic institutions, words such as "political," "politics," and "civic engagement" are rarely used in the ways and for the purposes that we are using them. We therefore want to be clear about what we do and don't mean by these words. We also want to be clear about why we think scholars in the academic field of higher education studies need to open a new line of inquiry that attends to the political roles and work of academic professionals in civic life.

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With respect to the words political and politics, we aren't referring to elections, the legislative process, the workings of political parties and elected officials, or activities that are "partisan" in a political party sense. We aren't referring to personal and/or institutional behavior, as in "She's just being political," or "That's just politics." Rather, we are referring to public work, which Harry Boyte (2004, p. 5) defines as "sustained effort by a mix of people who solve public problems or create goods, material or cultural, of general benefit." Public work is pursued through what Boyte calls "everyday politics." Everyday politics is centered on people rather than government (Mathews, 1999). It is the means by which individuals and groups develop and exercise power in neighborhood and community settings as they seek to understand and address technical and social problems, stand for and further key normative ideals and values, and promote, consider, deliberate about, negotiate, and take action to pursue their self-interests, their common interests, and larger public interests.

The meanings we give to the terms politics and political shape our view of the meaning of civic engagement. For us, civic engagement means engaging in civic life by participating in the everyday politics of public work. When we refer in this chapter to faculty members' civic engagement work, we are not referring to their on-campus activities and work with students and others, even if such work has political dimensions and civic motivations, intentions, and indirect or future consequences. We are not referring to what faculty members do in their communities during their off-hours as "private" citizens. Rather, *we are referring to their on-the-clock, off-campus participation as professional scholars, educators, scientists, engineers, architects, designers, and/or artists in the everyday politics of public work.*

There is a robust conversation in several academic fields (e.g., sociology, political theory, philosophy, history, anthropology, cultural studies, science and technology studies) about the political roles and work of "intellectuals"—a category of people that includes academic professionals—in civic life (e.g., Mannheim, 1936; Znaniecki, 1940; Gramsci, 1949; Coser, 1965; Foucault, 1970; Habermas, 1972; Furner, 1975; Perry, 1984; Bauman, 1987; Rouse, 1987; Jacoby, 1987; Merod, 1987; Bender, 1993; Boggs, 1993; Eyerman, 1994; Said, 1994; Smith, 1994; Fink, Leonard, & Reid, 1996; Fink, 1997; Goldfarb, 1998; Tyrrell, 2005; Etzioni & Bowditch, 2006; Nichols, 2007; Recchiuti, 2007; Hale, 2008). Growing out of the epistemological and political transformations of the Enlightenment, intellectuals took up two main political roles in civic life. These are the distinctly different but related roles of expert and critic. Contributors to the conversation about how intellectuals have taken up these roles have explored two main themes. First, they have explored how intellectuals have served the interests of dominant social classes, groups, or powers by reproducing or legitimizing an oppressive status quo, and/or facilitating and legitimizing oppressive social change projects and agendas. Second, they have explored how intellectuals have served the interests of oppressed or marginalized social classes by resisting, subverting, undermining, and delegitimizing oppressive status quos and social change projects and agendas, and/or by facilitating and legitimizing emancipatory social change projects and agendas, including the project of creating and defending a public sphere that is devoted to open, free, and rational public debate.

ED: Strictly speaking, these should all be alphabetized, but that would destroy the author's obvious chronological purpose.

In contrast with other academic fields, until quite recently there has been effectively no conversation in the field of higher education studies about the political roles and work of

faculty members and other academic professionals in civic life. In every book reporting the findings of studies of the academic profession that we reviewed (e.g., Wilson, 1942, 1979; Finkelstein, 1984; Clark, 1987; Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Fairweather, 1996; Altbach & Finkelstein, 1997; Finkelstein, Seal, & Schuster, 1998; Graubard, 2001; Gappa, Austin, & Trice, 2007; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2008), the political roles and work of faculty members in civic life were either not mentioned at all, or mentioned only in passing. They are similarly absent from or only briefly mentioned in most contemporary studies of higher education institutions, including a recent book by Altbach, Berdahl, and Gumport (2005) that explores critical dynamics in the American higher education/society nexus in the twenty-first century.

In our review of the literature in the field of higher education studies, we also found that scholars in the field have given little attention to the related—but not synonymous—topic of higher education's "public service" mission. In his extensive review and synthesis of the literature on the academic profession in the post–World War II era, published in 1984, Finkelstein observed that "we know very little about faculty performance in their administrative or extra-institutional professional service (to the discipline and the community at large) capacities" (p. 127). A decade after Finkelstein's study was published, Blackburn and Lawrence (1995, pp. 125, 127) not only found that "there is almost no research on faculty in service roles," but also that "empirical evidence with respect to the role is nonexistent." Although scholars in the higher education studies field have begun over the past fifteen years to attend to the topics of outreach, engagement, and civic responsibility (e.g., Walshok, 1995; Tierney, 1998; Ehrlich, 2000; Ward, 2003; Kezar, Chambers, & Burkhardt, 2005), they have mainly done so in theoretical or hortatory ways. Beyond service-learning, few—if any—of the scholars working in the field of higher education studies have systematically examined the *political* aspects of faculty members' civic engagement work, roles, views, and experiences.

The reason why a new line of inquiry about the political roles and work of academic professionals in civic life is needed is not just because the topic has been neglected in the field of higher education studies. Rather, it is because such a line of inquiry can offer a powerful means of both understanding and improving higher education's roles in renewing civic engagement and enhancing the quality of our civic life at a critical moment in the nation's history. It can do so in two main ways. First, it can illuminate unwarranted presumptions and blind spots in the dominant framing of and narrative about higher education's public purposes and work. Centered on the concepts of "service," "outreach," and "extension," the dominant framing and narrative both overlooks faculty members' civic engagement work and obscures its political nature and significance. It provides us not only with an incomplete but also an untrustworthy and misleading view of the nature and value of American higher education's public purposes and work. Second, if—and in our view, *only* if—it is approached as action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Reason & Bradbury, 2008), a new line of inquiry can help to illuminate and stimulate a more complete fulfillment of the positive democratic promise and potential of the academic profession in every academic discipline and field, all institutional types, and each stage of a faculty member's career.

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Background

Before we lay out our design for the new line of inquiry we are proposing, we want to explain how we came to see that it was needed. In 2000, we launched a study of the practice of "public scholarship" in the state and land-grant university system (Peters, Jordan, Adamek, & Alter, 2005). [Some scholars (e.g., Mitchell, 2008) view "public scholarship" as being essentially the same thing as the "public intellectual" tradition. We do not. The central work of public intellectuals is to engage in social criticism by speaking to or writing for the general public about public problems and issues. Public scholarship, as we define it, is not limited to social criticism. It is not mainly about speaking to or writing for general public audiences. Rather, it is creative intellectual work that is conducted in the context of public settings and relationships, facilitating social learning and producing knowledge, theory, technologies, and other kinds of products that advance both public and academic interests and ends.] As a part of that study, in June 2001 we interviewed Don Wyse (his real name, not a pseudonym), a full professor in the Department of Agronomy and Plant Genetics in the University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences. During the interview, we asked Don to tell us about the origins and evolution of his academic career. In response, he traced his life story from his youth on a farm in northwestern Ohio during the 1950s and '60s to his present work as a full professor. About three-quarters of the way through the interview, he said the following:

> I would find it very difficult to go out and just conduct research on corn, soybeans, and wheat that would increase the yield of those crops. That's what most researchers do. Most researchers are basically in research programs that are designed to enhance the productivity per unit area of major crops. I think that's what they consider their role to be. The role is defined that way by a number of different messengers, like financial messengers that support research programs. At the state level, commodity organizations fund research. What are they funding? They are funding things that increase yield, and the stability of yield, and now new uses for those crops. It is basically a commodity-enhancement focus. Most of our federal programs, whether they are supporting basic or applied research, are designed to focus on those commodities. There's a full array of political and economic signals to scientists that that's their role. And it isn't just to the scientists; the signals come to administrators as well. Policies are built around those crops. That sends signals to administrators within institutions that if you're going to fill faculty positions, you fill them in the context of that model. But what I've learned in my experience here is that there is, in fact, greater opportunity than that—that we as land-grant scientists have a greater obligation and a greater opportunity. It's to look at the system as a whole and provide the framework for the conversation as to how you deal with social issues facing rural America, environmental issues facing rural America, climate change that is facing rural America, invasive species facing not only the United States, but the world, and on and on. It is, in fact, that level of conversation that I think land-grant scientists need to provide the framework for, because that's really the framework of the public trust that is historically placed in land-grant institutions: to look out for the public good and to provide leadership for the issues that are not going to be highlighted by the business sector, or in many cases by the political sector. We with tenure within land-grant institutions have an obligation to raise these issues for public conversation, to help determine a direction and approaches to these problems.

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As we read and reread the transcript of our interview with Don, we kept coming back to this passage. We found it to be both surprising and provocative, particularly when we considered the fact that according to his own self-description, Don is a "weed scientist." Most people (including us, before we interviewed Don) probably don't have the foggiest idea what a "weed scientist" is and does. Nor, for that matter, do they know much if anything about what *any* kind of scientist who holds a faculty position in a land-grant college of agriculture is and does. One might presume that the work and roles of such people are narrowly technical in nature: that is, that they are focused only on teaching technical knowledge and skills to students, and identifying and solving technical problems related to agriculture and horticulture in order to increase efficiency and/or productivity for the economic benefit of farmers, consumers, agribusinesses, states, the nation, and/or the world. Don effectively affirms this presumption in the foregoing passage. He tells us that most researchers think their role is "to enhance the productivity per unit area of major crops." He suggests that this role is not necessarily self-assigned. It is taken up, he claims, in response to "a full array of political and economic signals" from "messengers" external to the university, including agricultural commodity organizations and federal programs. According to Don, the "signals" from external messengers also influence administrators to set policies and hire faculty to fit and support a model of research that is focused on enhancing the productivity of commodities such as corn, wheat, and soybeans.

The most interesting thing to us about the quoted passage is the way in which Don situates himself as standing *against* this model of research. He tells us in the first sentence that he "would find it very difficult" to be limited to the model's narrow role of conducting research to increase the yield of commodity crops such as corn, soybeans, and wheat. Why does Don feel this way? Because he thinks that "land-grant scientists have a greater obligation and a greater opportunity." The greater opportunity he articulates is civic and political in nature. In Don's words, it is "to look at the system as a whole and provide the framework for the conversation as to how you deal with social issues facing rural America, environmental issues facing rural America, climate change that is facing rural America, invasive species facing not only the United States but the world, and on and on." Where does this greater obligation come from? According to Don, it comes from an institutional mission: from the "framework of the public trust that is historically placed in land-grant institutions: to look out for the public good and to provide leadership for the issues that are not going to be highlighted by the business sector, or in many cases by the political sector." It also comes from his view of the obligation that tenure provides. "We with tenure within land-grant institutions," Don says, "have an obligation to raise these issues for public conversation, to help determine a direction and approaches to these problems."

Although we find what Don tells us in this passage to be interesting, surprising, and provocative, by itself it doesn't hold much value. It's easy to dismiss as being preachy, politically correct, naïve, romantic, mere rhetoric (and thus inconsequential), or just simply wrong. And it's too thin to be of much use in serious inquiries about the nature, meaning, significance, and value of civic engagement in the academic profession. But there is a line in the passage that points to something that would be of great use in such inquiries. It's when Don says, "But what I've learned in my experience here is. . . ." When we read this line, we

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find ourselves wanting to hear not just the *lesson* he draws from his experience, but the *story* of his experience. The lesson by itself is not enough. We need to hear the story (or more accurately, stories) of Don's experience in order to understand how he came to draw his lesson about the greater opportunity and obligation of land-grant scientists, how—or if—he pursues it in his work, and most importantly, what its larger meaning, significance, and value may be.

Acting on our intuition rather than a deliberate design, we conducted our interview with Don as a life story interview (Atkinson 1998), with a focus on the origins and development of his work as a civically engaged academic professional. We invited Don to tell us the story of where he grew up and what it was like, how his experiences led him to decide to go to college and then on to graduate school, how he ended up on the faculty at the University of Minnesota, how he developed his research and teaching program, when, where, how, and why he has interacted and worked with people off-campus as he has performed his job, and how his academic work changed and evolved as he moved through the ranks from assistant to full professor. Inspired by Forester (1999), we edited the transcript into a "practitioner profile" that is composed only of Don's words, with our questions edited out. [On the development and use of practitioner profiles, see http://courses.cit.cornell.edu/practicestories.]

As we read and sought to make sense of Don's profile, we began to feel that we had accidentally stumbled onto something important. We started to see that the profile is heavily and densely *storied*. The profile as a whole is a story of the origins and evolution of Don's career. It also both includes or hints at many small stories from his life experience—stories about his youth on a farm, his father's teachings and influence, his graduate education, his early career as an assistant professor, and his current work as a full professor. But we found that the profile isn't just storied in a personal way. It's also richly storied in larger ways. It includes or hints at larger social, cultural, political, economic, and institutional narratives—narratives about struggles people have faced and are facing in rural Minnesota, battles and conflicts involved in the development of American agriculture, fights over the meaning of the land-grant mission and its implications for the work and roles of scientists, and more. Remarkably, Don links and relates these personal and larger stories and narratives in his discourse. He weaves stories about his father, his graduate education, his job interview, rural Minnesota, American agriculture, the land-grant mission, and his early career as an assistant professor together with the stories he tells of his contemporary civic engagement work as a full professor. We found that the stories about his life prior to his employment at the University of Minnesota and stories about larger issues relating to rural America, American agriculture, and the land-grant mission were vitally important in helping us understand the meaning, significance, and value of his civic engagement work as a faculty member. Although we had placed the focus of the research we were conducting at the time on the construction and interpretation of case studies and practice stories of a couple of dozen faculty members' work and experiences as publicly engaged scholars, Don's profile convinced us that we could greatly enhance our interpretation and analysis of our cases and practice stories by situating them in the context not only of faculty members' *life* stories, but also of larger social, cultural, political, economic, and institutional narratives. With this realization, we began to see

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the value of opening a new line of inquiry that examines the nature, meaning, significance, and value of civic engagement across the career stages of faculty life.

A New Line of Inquiry

In this section, we provide a brief sketch of the new line of inquiry we are proposing, following Maxwell's (2005) "interactive" approach to qualitative research design. Maxwell's approach consists of a model with five interrelated parts: goals, conceptual framework, research questions, methods, and validity. We provide only a general sketch of these parts. Researchers who wish to pursue this line of inquiry must flesh out the details of each part of the design in ways that are informed by the judgments, knowledge, experience, and interests of their research participants, as well as situational and contextual realities related to participants' institutions, institutional types, academic fields and disciplines, and geographical locations.

Goals

We propose the establishment of a new line of inquiry in the field of higher education studies that pursues three related goals:

1. The goal of advancing our understanding of the nature, meaning, significance, and value of faculty members' civic engagement work, both within and across each stage of their careers;
2. The goal of catalyzing and informing processes of institutional change and faculty and organizational development; and
3. The goal of advancing the project of strengthening and deepening higher education's roles in renewing civic engagement and enhancing the quality of our civic life.

We propose that these goals be pursued not only simultaneously, but also with equal weight and attention. Goals two and three are not to be treated as secondary afterthoughts. Also, goals one and two are not ends in and of themselves, but rather means to an end. The end they are a means to is expressed in goal three. Given the change and action-oriented nature of goals two and three, researchers must take an action research approach in all stages of their inquiry, including research design.

Conceptual Framework

Maxwell's model of qualitative research design includes the articulation of a conceptual framework that consists of the main assumptions, presumptions, concepts, beliefs, and theories that inform and support the study of a particular issue or problem. A conceptual framework serves as an answer to the question of what scholars think is going on with the issue and/or problem they wish to examine and understand in their inquiry, based on their review of prior research and relevant academic literatures, their personal experience, and their preliminary research.

Despite the lack of attention (beyond service-learning) in the academic field of higher education studies to the political roles and civic engagement work of faculty members and

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other academic professionals, there are explicit and implicit presumptions about this issue in the field's literature, and in the organizational and administrative workings of academic institutions. The central presumption is normative: namely, that faculty members should limit their civic engagement work and roles to a responsive "service" function that consists of the provision of scientific information (usually in the form of the results of or findings from a faculty member's own research), technical expertise and assistance, and/or criticism, all of which are to be supplied from a stance of disinterested and unbiased neutrality. If they wish to be engaged in the everyday politics of public work in other ways, they are free to do so—but only in their "private" lives as citizens. It is simply inappropriate for them to do so as professionals. [This normative presumption was included in one of American higher education's most important documents: the "Report of the Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure," published in 1915 by the American Association of University Professors. For the full statement, see Hofstadter & Smith (1961).] The main reasons why this is so have to do with issues of epistemology, professional and institutional identity, and public trust. More specifically, it has to do with judgments and theories about how trustworthy knowledge is discovered, constructed, and communicated (answer: from a stance of disinterested, unbiased objectivity), how academic professionals and institutions should behave themselves if they are to stay true to their appropriate functions and missions (answer: they should stay out of politics in all ways except the responsive service function noted earlier), and how academic professionals and institutions are to secure and hold the public trust (answer: by staying out of politics in all ways except the responsive service function noted earlier).

A second presumption we want to note is particularly prevalent in research universities: the presumption that faculty members should not spend much (if any) time being engaged in civic life until after they have been tenured and promoted. There are two main reasons why this is so. First, it's partly due to realities about what will and won't get faculty members tenured and promoted. In many if not most cases, a record of civic engagement not only won't help, it may well hurt. [There are efforts underway to encourage and support institutions that wish to include and value civic engagement in the tenure and promotion process (e.g., Ellison & Eatmon, 2008).] As a result, junior faculty members are encouraged to avoid civic engagement until they reach the associate professor stage of their careers. Second, it's a reflection of the view that civic engagement is mainly or even only about the provision of the results of a faculty member's research. In line with this view, civic engagement is seen as being inappropriate during the early, pretenure, assistant professor stage of a faculty member's career. Faculty members who wish to become engaged should wait until they have research results to provide, which (according to the logic of this presumption) isn't until after they've been tenured and promoted.

We readily acknowledge that these presumptions are not universally and consistently held and articulated across the whole of American higher education. We are not saying they are. What we are saying is that they have been and continue to be voiced and accepted in ways that influence and shape our individual and collective perceptions and beliefs—particularly in the research-university context. We think this is one of the things that is going on with respect to the topic of faculty members' engagement in civic life, and we think it is

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a serious problem. We are deeply skeptical about the truth and value of these presumptions, based on our experience, our preliminary research, and our review of various literatures about the political roles and work of intellectuals.

In our view, there are three other things we think are going on that both warrant and guide our proposal for a new line of inquiry:

1. We think the normative presumption that faculty members *should* limit their civic engagement work and roles to a responsive "service" function is problematic, on three counts: (1) We think it unnecessarily limits the scope of higher education's public purposes and work, (2) we think it is widely violated in actual practice, and (3) we think it obscures the ways in which the political roles and work of faculty members are deeply contested, both in theoretical and normative terms. In our experience and previous research (Peters et al., 2005; Peters, Alter, & Schwartzbach, 2008), we have learned that faculty members' political roles and civic engagement work are not in practice limited to the provision of scientific information, technical expertise and assistance, and/or criticism from a stance of disinterested and unbiased neutrality. Likewise, the public purposes faculty members pursue in their civic engagement work are not limited to technical and social problem solving. Faculty members are engaged in civic life in other ways and for other purposes. They may become engaged as experts, critics, leaders, servants, educators, change agents, facilitators, and/or organizers. In taking up these roles, they may seek to pursue public purposes that have to do with much more than technical and social problem solving. They may seek to stand for and pursue cultural, political, environmental, and economic ideals and interests related to such things as sustainability, democracy, equity, and justice. As we learned from our interview with Don Wyse, they may interweave a wide range of roles in pursuit of technical as well as cultural, political, environmental, and economic ideals and interests. And as we also learned from Don, they may seriously disagree with each other about not only what counts as "proper" roles and work, but also how to understand the meaning and significance of their roles and work.
2. We think that the political roles and work of faculty members in civic life involve developmental, relational, situational, and contextual dynamics of trust, interests, agendas, and power that take a good deal of time to establish, negotiate, build, and exercise. As a result, we would expect to see changes in the nature and quality of work and relationships over time, across the span of a faculty member's career. This is the main reason why we think that career stage is an important issue to attend to in the study of civic engagement in the academic profession. We think that both the nature and scope of civic engagement in the academic profession are likely to vary across not only the career stage of faculty life, but also the different kinds of intellectual projects faculty members choose to pursue in their scholarly work, the disciplines in which they work, the kinds of academic appointments they hold, and the types of institutions in which they are employed. Some faculty members' research and teaching agendas and projects—particularly but not only if they involve action research and/or service-learning—may *require* deep and sustained levels of civic engagement *from the very beginning* in order for them to be successful. In these cases, civic engagement can't be put off until after tenure and promotion. Given all this, we believe that the study of faculty members' engagement in civic life

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must be approached and situated within the unique contexts of specific institutional types, in ways that are attentive to differences in faculty members' academic appointments, disciplines, and intellectual projects.

3. We think that civic engagement in the academic profession involves serious questions and problems that are not being attended to as much as or in the manner in which they should be. They include challenging epistemological, pedagogical, and methodological questions and problems related to the implications of civic engagement—both positive and negative—for the trustworthiness, quality, integrity, and effectiveness of academic professionals' research and teaching. Most importantly, in our view, they also include the problem of understanding and working through what Thomas Bender (1993, p. 128) has called "the dilemma of the relation of expertise and democracy." The dilemma for academic professionals is to decide, among various options, how and for what purposes they should contribute their specialized knowledge and skills to the everyday politics of public work. The ways faculty members perceive and work through this dilemma is not just a reflection of "what works." It is also a reflection of their normative views about not only democracy and politics, but also their roles and responsibilities as professionals in a democratic society. As Brint (1994) notes, there are two main aspects of professional practice: a technical aspect having to do with the competent performance of skilled work, and a social aspect that grounds and guides professionals in an appreciation of the larger public ends they serve. Those professionals whom Sullivan (2003, p. 10) refers to as "civic professionals" attend in equal ways to both by making a "public pledge to deploy technical expertise and judgment not only skillfully but also for public-regarding ends and in a public-regarding way." The question of what it means and looks like to work for public-regarding ends in public-regarding ways is perhaps the most important one that can be raised in the context of conversations about the political roles and work of faculty members in civic life. This question has no single answer that is equally true or applicable across the diversity of institutional types, academic disciplines and fields, and stage of career. Therefore, to borrow from Ernest Boyer (1990, p. xiii), there is a need for many conversations, each informed by the values that are reflected in a college or university's "distinctive mission," by situational and contextual realities, and by a quality and level of reflexivity that illuminates rather than obscures the wide range of political roles and non-neutral commitments faculty pursue in their civic engagement work.

Questions

In line with the goals and conceptual framework just outlined, the line of inquiry we are proposing should include the following set of questions:

1. With respect to the nature of faculty members' civic engagement work:
    - When, where, how, and for what purposes do faculty members become engaged in the everyday politics of public work? What different forms does their civic engagement work take, what political roles do they play, and what contributions do they make? Are there patterns in forms, roles, and contributions within and across each stage of faculty life? What challenges, dilemmas, tensions, and difficulties does civic engagement

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involve, and how do faculty members perceive and deal with them? How do faculty members understand and articulate what the public-regarding ends of their work are or should be? How do they understand and describe the public-regarding ways they do or should pursue these ends?

2. With respect to the meaning, significance, and value of faculty members' civic engagement work:
   - How are we to understand the meaning, significance, and value of faculty members' civic engagement work? Specifically, what meaning, significance, and value does it hold for the pursuit of core academic missions, and the pursuit of the project of renewing civic engagement and enhancing the quality of our civic life?

3. With respect to the goals of catalyzing and informing processes of institutional change and faculty and organizational development, and advancing the project of strengthening and deepening higher education's roles in renewing civic engagement and enhancing the quality of our civic life:
   - How and why do institutions change? How, in particular, are problematic presumptions in institutional cultures changed? How and why do faculty and academic organizations develop? How can a line of inquiry about faculty members' civic engagement work be designed and conducted in ways that are more rather than less likely to catalyze and inform processes of institutional change and faculty and organizational development that enable academic professionals and institutions to make significant contributions to the project of strengthening and deepening higher education's roles in renewing civic engagement and enhancing the quality of our civic life?

Methods

In line with the goals and conceptual framework just articulated, we propose the following methods, broadly and briefly described under three headings.

1. Recruiting participants, refining the research design.

In line with principles from action-research, researchers must take an organizing approach to the tasks of recruiting participants and refining their research designs. [It is important to note, in line with Maxwell's (2005) approach, that the task of developing a research design is an interactive and iterative (rather than linear) process. Therefore, a design must be refined and revisited throughout the life span of a research project.] In our view, a robust organizing approach must be centered on one essential and irreplaceable method: the discipline, art, and skill of the one-on-one relational meeting (Chambers, 2003; Rogers, 1990). The central purpose of a relational meeting is to explore the potential of building an ongoing public relationship with someone. In the context of this line of inquiry, relational meetings should be designed to identify and recruit participants who have a deep self-interest in pursuing change and action goals related to faculty members' civic engagement work. Participants must include faculty members who are and/or have been significantly engaged in civic life in one or more stages of their academic careers. Instead of aiming for the recruitment of a random or representative sample of participants, the aim must be to recruit a purposeful

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sample that includes not only faculty members who have civic engagement experiences, but also faculty members (and others) who have a self-interest in acting to strengthen and deepen higher education's roles in renewing civic engagement and enhancing the quality of our civic life. In engaging participants in the task of refining the research design, the additional organizing methods of power and interest mapping (Boyte, 2004) should be used. These methods engage participants in a process of identifying not only who the main players in their contexts are, but also and more importantly what their self-interests are, and what kinds and levels of power they have. Power and interest mapping is not to be done only as an intellectual exercise (although it is an intellectual exercise), but also as a means of informing strategic actions.

2. Producing and gathering data.

The specific set of methods researchers and their participants use to produce and gather data is likely to vary across the different contexts in which this line of inquiry is pursued. However, we believe that life story (Atkinson, 1998) and narrative interviews (Chase, 1995; Forester, 2006; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000; Seidman, 1998) of faculty members who are or have been engaged in civic life should be conducted and recorded in every context as a central method of generating data. Life story and narrative interviews are deliberately designed to avoid questions that elicit only or mainly participants' views and opinions and/or second- and third-person reports of other people's actions. Instead, they are designed to invite participants to tell first-person stories from their life experience that feature themselves as primary actors. The interview protocol for this line of inquiry should consist of four sections of open-ended questions: the first section on participants' personal and professional life experiences and backgrounds, the second on the origins and evolution of their political roles and work in civic life, the third on their accounts of their work, roles, and experiences in specific civic engagement practice stories, and the fourth on their reflections on the meaning and significance of their experiences. To elicit stories, interviewers should ask "how" questions. For example, they might ask how participants ended up becoming a faculty member, how they came to be engaged in civic life, how they came to be involved in a particular civic project, how they came to take up specific roles in their projects, what kinds of challenges they encountered and how they dealt with them, and how they assess the meaning, significance, and value of their work, roles, and experiences. Although individual life story and narrative interviews should be one of the main means of generating data, it should not be the only means. Other means that should be used include autoethnography (Chang, 2007; Fear, Rosaen, Bawden, & Foster-Fishman, 2006), focus group interviews, ethnographic field notes that document aspects of interview and research experience that are not captured in recordings of interviews, and the collection of historical and contemporary documents related to the research context.

3. Conducting analysis, writing up and communicating findings, taking action.

In this line of inquiry, the work of managing, analyzing, and interpreting data from individual interviews includes not only transcribing them, but also editing them into what we (following Forester, 1999) refer to as "practitioner profiles." Practitioner profiles include only the words of interviewees, with the interviewers' questions edited out. [The process of

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editing interview transcripts into profiles is explained and discussed at the following website: http://courses.cit.cornell.edu/practicestories.] Utilizing tools and approaches from narrative analysis (Chase, 2005; Clandinin, 2007; Riessman, 1995) and critical discourse analysis (Rogers, 2004), researchers who pursue this line of inquiry must work to identify, interpret, and analyze not only the stories and narratives that are included in a profile, but also the ways in which interviewees narrate their life experiences and practice stories, and the discourses they use in doing so. Researchers and their participants should look for ways that both their context(s) and data are storied and/or restoried, utilizing conceptual tools such as meta- and counternarratives. In doing so, they must focus their attention "not only on individuals' experiences but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, pp. 42–43). Data analysis and interpretation should be centered on the task of discovering the meaning, significance, and value of faculty members' narratives of and discourse about their civic engagement experiences and their political roles and work with respect to the dilemma of the relation of democracy and expertise, the pursuit of core academic missions, and the pursuit of the project of renewing civic engagement and enhancing the quality of our civic life. In doing so, researchers must utilize a carefully selected set of conceptual tools, frameworks, and approaches from political theory, philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, adult learning, anthropology, and history. The analysis and interpretation of meaning, significance, and value must be conducted not only by researchers, but also by and with research participants. This can (and we think should) be done by organizing and facilitating collective reflection sessions during which participants are asked to read, critique, and make sense of the stories and narratives in their edited profiles. Such sessions should be captured as data by being recorded and transcribed. Implications for action from the analysis and interpretation process must not only be named, but also pursued, tested, documented, and evaluated through organized cycles of action and reflection. Actions should include making profiles public and using them as resources in faculty and organizational development workshops and sessions. Research findings should be written up and communicated not only for and in academic journals, but also for and in other venues that are strategically selected to reach audiences in and beyond the academy.

Validity

Under Maxwell's model of qualitative inquiry, "validity" refers to the trustworthiness of researchers' findings, analysis, interpretation, and conclusions. Maxwell suggests that researchers ask themselves to think of the reasons and ways they might get things wrong in their research, and what they will do about it. The key is to identify specific threats to validity and incorporate specific strategies for addressing the threats into the research design.

In the line of inquiry we are proposing, there are two main categories of validity threats.

- First, there are threats to the trustworthiness of narrative interview data. Specifically, interviewees may intentionally or unintentionally get things wrong or leave things out in relating stories from their work and experience. Researchers should address this threat

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in five main ways: (1) by probing during individual interviews for additional details of the stories interviewees tell; (2) by sharing transcripts and/or edited profiles of interviews with interviewees and asking them to correct mistakes, add missing details, and clarify and/or elaborate on particular passages, points, or aspects of their stories, a move that is sometimes referred to as conducting "member checks" (Guba & Lincoln, 1989); (3) by guaranteeing interviewees anonymity if they so choose (see the following section on ethics); (4) by triangulating interview data with other data related to interviewees' stories; and (5) by organizing and facilitating collective reflection sessions during which interviewees and their colleagues have an opportunity to provide their perspectives on the trustworthiness, meaning, significance, and value of the stories interviewees tell.

- Second, there are threats to the trustworthiness of the analyses and interpretations researchers and their research participants conduct and make of narrative interview and other data. In interpretive research, there is no such thing as a single "correct" interpretation and analysis of a narrative or set of narratives, or of a data set. But analyses and interpretations can be better or worse, or more or less trustworthy. Generally speaking, there are three main ways researchers can address threats to the validity of their analyses and interpretations of narrative data: (1) by situating narratives of individuals' experiences and work in the context of larger social, cultural, and institutional narratives; (2) by asking interviewees to contribute their own analyses and interpretations; and (3) by organizing and facilitating collective reflection sessions during which interviewees and their colleagues have an opportunity to both provide their own and respond to others' analyses and interpretations of the meaning, significance, and value of the stories our interviewees tell.

Ethics

Finally, it would be a major mistake to gloss over the ethics of the line of inquiry we are proposing here. Because this line of inquiry is centered on drawing out, documenting, analyzing and interpreting, and taking action on the implications of personal stories from faculty members' life experiences and civic engagement work, there are numerous risks involved. If the stories and experiences faculty members tell about their political commitments, roles, and work become known to others, it may get them and/or others in various kinds of trouble. Reputations may be damaged or even destroyed, and public relationships and/or support may be lost or destroyed. It may become harder rather than easier for faculty members to continue to pursue civic engagement work. They may even lose their jobs. In light of these and other potentially negative implications of making narrative data about faculty members' political commitments, roles, and work, every effort must be taken to protect their anonymity, unless or until such a time as they permit their stories and names to be made public. Because this line of inquiry is grounded in an action research orientation, the issue of anonymity is problematic. In most cases, unless real names are used in publishing and communicating findings, including profiles, the power of the research will be greatly diminished. People rarely care about or are moved by anonymous stories and information. Making the data real and personal is absolutely essential to making it matter. It is also absolutely essential to do so in ways that meet the highest standards of ethical responsibility.

Conclusion

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, if we wish to both understand and improve higher education's roles in renewing civic engagement and enhancing the quality of our civic life, we need to illuminate and examine the nature, meaning, significance, and value of the political roles and work faculty members (and other academic professionals) have and are playing and pursuing as active participants in and contributors to civic life. With the exception of service-learning, scholars working in the academic field of higher education studies have mostly ignored or glossed over this topic. Our proposal for a new line of inquiry on this topic is designed to stimulate and contribute to conversations within and beyond the academy about the nature, meaning, significance, and value of civic engagement across the career stages of faculty life. Our motivation in proposing this new line of inquiry is not only or mainly because scholars in the field have ignored it. Rather, it is because we are convinced that it can help us rethink problematic presumptions and realize positive democratic possibilities—but only if it is deliberately and effectively designed to address action and institutional change-oriented goals.

We are well aware of the fact that what we have proposed in this chapter is extraordinarily ambitious and difficult. The task of illuminating, analyzing, and interpreting the nature, meaning, significance, and value of faculty members' political roles and work in civic life will require the creative use of complex conceptual and theoretical frameworks and approaches from many different fields. It will require deep, careful, and close attention to the particular and the contextual, rather than the general. It will take a good deal of time and effort by many people in many different contexts. And it will involve levels of personal exposure and political and ethical risk that are not typically experienced—or wanted—by faculty members, and by scholars working in the field of higher education studies. Despite the complexities and difficulties of this line of inquiry, we firmly believe in its potential and promise not only to advance the leading edge of inquiry in the field, but also to catalyze and inform positive institutional change processes in the American academy in ways that advance the larger project of renewing civic engagement and enhancing the quality of our civic life.

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