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Brian Culp

Kennesaw State University, bculp1@kennesaw.edu

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Social Justice and the Future of Higher Education Kinesiology

Brian Culp, Ed.D.
Kennesaw State University

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Brian Culp, Department of Health Promotion and Physical Education, Kennesaw State University, Convocation Center MD 0202 590 Cobb Avenue, Kennesaw, GA 30144. E-mail: bculp1@kennesaw.edu.
Abstract

This article presents a rationale for the infusion of social justice into kinesiology programs for the purpose of reducing inequities in society. Specifically, the current climate for social justice is considered and discussed using examples from a university inspired service-learning initiative, law, and politics. Of note are the following areas of discussion, 1) differentiation between social diversity and social justice, 2) public pedagogy as a means by which to inspire service action, 3) the creation of climates for speech and application of social justice, 4) modeling and socialization for equity, and 5) the Neoliberal threat to inclusiveness. The paper concludes with suggestions for practice, research, and training to implore kinesiology programs to position movement as an issue of justice.

Keywords: service action, physical justice, neoliberalism, biopower, public pedagogy, community engagement
INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt that our global society is in the midst of changes that demand examination of our current world view. As noted in the introduction, the charge of this special issue was to make bold suppositions and recommendations regarding the future of the field. In thinking about the future, I argue in this paper that kinesiology must take the lead in expanding the scope of diversity and more so, social justice in existing programs to address societal problems that we are equipped to positively influence. In this age of supercomplexity (Block & Estes, 2011), where scholars are faced with a host of complex obstacles, it is vital for our survival as a discipline that we consider all possibilities.

Before proceeding with suggestions, I will provide my perceptions. Adams (2013) and I are in agreement that social diversity and social justice are two terms that are closely related, but not interchangeable. Social diversity differentiates based on social characteristics such as race, gender, sexuality, class and others. These differences are reflected in a group’s traditions, language, style of dress, cultural practices, religious beliefs, and rituals (p. 1). The appreciation for social diversity is a necessary task but not broad enough in understanding inequalities that margined groups face. It is easier to discourse on social diversity than social justice, because oppression and inequality leave little room for maneuverability. With this in mind, social justice for the sake of kinesiology will be of foremost discussion in this paper, with diversity presented as a supporting concept.

Social justice in today’s society

Earnest Boyer in his seminal work Scholarship Reconsidered (1990), provided a foundation for the inclusion of social justice, suggesting that higher education institutions had a unique opportunity to solve pressing social, civic, and ethical problems. Since his proclamation,
a host of institutional mission statements have been revised to reflect a focus on inclusion, diversity, and equity. Yet, these statements often fall short in addressing how social justice is interconnected in a larger scale (Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2014).

Why this would be the case is not that difficult to imagine. Institutions are reflections of the society that they are in, and I feel our society, has a passive aversion to discussing social justice. Discussing justice acknowledges that there are ills in our society that cloud our dreams of a better world. However, I will not be too critical in my remarks. I am reminded by Furlong and Cartmel (2009) that social justice is not a term widely used by the public, nor does one definition truly encompass its intended meaning.

Essentially, social justice espouses that all individuals and groups should have access to an equitable, respectful, and just society. Originating in Italy during the 1840’s, social justice has become formalized as political and educational treatise in higher education largely through the work of John Rawls. In A Theory of Justice (1971), Rawls discourses on the complexities associated with ensuring liberty and equity for the disadvantaged in a society that still caters to those afforded power and privilege by birthright.

Universities currently have conflicting purposes that clash with the promotion of equity. Traditionalists view the university as a community of scholars who pursue knowledge for its own sake. Others view the priorities of the university and the system of higher education as a means to prepare students for privileged positions separate from the general public. Given the increasing focus on funding in recent years, it has been suggested that higher education only serves to provide a world-class research capacity for enhancing global competition.

The latter observation is representative of a utilitarian mindset implying that the “end justifies the means”. It rewards hegemonic practices, networks, codes, and ways of thinking that
that do not take into account the experiences and circumstances of underrepresented populations.

Complicating the matter are those who believe in the “intent of equality”, but fail to comprehend why initiatives should include a focus on marginalized and disadvantaged groups to make equity for all a reality. All of these actions impact the kinesiology discipline.

With the current scope of social justice in higher education outlined, the discussion will turn to possible recommendations for the future. Four will be of particular focus: conceiving pedagogy outside the walls towards service action in communities, creating spaces within programs for the discussion of inequity and diversity, the need for modeling and socialization, and the impact of practice, research, and training.

Reframing pedagogy towards service action

In considering whether social justice can be infused in kinesiology, current programs should engage in deliberate efforts that moves students “out from the walls” of higher education classrooms. This action I believe will help future professionals better construct new meanings for their work while imagining solutions to on-going problems.

Dewey (1916) in Democracy and Education, mentions the distinctive roles of “spectator” and “participant”. While a spectator is “like a man (sic) in a prison cell watching the rain out of the window” (146), a participant is like a man who has planned a picnic and must consider how, since he cannot influence the weather, he will adapt his plans in light of the rain. The participant is engaged in “life activities,” as opposed to the spectator who is removed from those activities, unable to appreciate how meaning is constructed as “self and world are engaged with each other in a developing situation”. (p.148).

If we apply Dewey’s position in the context of today’s society, then it is agreed that future professionals can no longer serve as vessels to be filled with knowledge in university
classrooms. Sites where kinesiology is represented with potential environments for researchers to gain knowledge and construct meaning are many. Henry Giroux (2004) feels that in the modern age, politics, commercialization, and public consumption has redefined what pedagogy means and where it is realized. Thus, pedagogy is also a public entity that is not limited to institutions of schooling, but is found in sites where ‘identities are shaped, desires mobilized, and experiences take on form and meaning”. (p.2).

This public pedagogy as Giroux notes, exists in a world where new technologies are produced, refined, and replaced swiftly. No social institution has refuge from the concept of public pedagogy, whether it is institutionalized education, sport and entertainment media, cable television networks, churches, or advertising. Given that we are in the midst of The Information Age, the impact of technology on acculturation, learning, the creation of knowledge, and ultimately the consumption of this knowledge for use in society is apparent. Therefore, kinesiology must equip themselves to understand these changes. Kinesiology must also participate in engagements of consequence to strategically combat issues in our communities.

I spent a good portion of my early career in Indianapolis, Indiana working in the Department of Kinesiology at Indiana University Purdue University, Indianapolis (IUPUI). IUPUI positions service-learning and civic engagement as essential pieces that are integral to its identity as public institution. Upon arrival, it was imperative for me to quickly learn the history of the communities around the university. I uncovered that the university had a complex relationship with the surrounding primarily African American community, who largely felt that they had been victimized by decades of systematic racism through dubious policies.

In short, the characterization of Black communities in downtown Indianapolis as “impoverished slums” in the latter part of the 1920’s paved the way for a host of “slum
clearance” projects financed by federal funding from the 1950s’ through the 1980’s (Mullins, 2006). Despite the contributions of transcendent African Americans such as Madame C.J. Walker (business), Wes Montgomery (music) and Oscar Robertson (sports), neighborhood displacement of blacks, couched as urban renewal, made it possible for the establishment of IUPUI.

Recognizing that a large contingent of African Americans viewed the university in a negative fashion, IUPUI administration in the 2000’s developed community initiatives to extend civic engagement through service-learning. Given the litany of public institutions who prosper from eminent domain policies, the mere acknowledgement from IUPUI of their prior neglect was revolutionary, setting the stage for other universities to follow suit. Departments across campus began to consider better ways to involve themselves through “public work” (Boyte, 2011), a concept that solicits citizens not only serve as deliberators and decision makers about the world, but as co-creators of the type of society that they want to live in.

The idea of public work spurred the creation of many programs across the university. Physically Active Residential Communities and Schools (PARCS) was conceptualized by Dr. NiCole Keith and created in 2004 as a community-based exercise program to provide inner-city community residents in Indianapolis with exercise opportunities in order to help combat health disparities. It is a multidisciplinary effort engaging academics, professionals, and students in the fields of exercise science, fitness studies, nursing, education, sociology, and medicine (deGroot, Alexander, Keith & Culp, 2015). Every discipline involved in the program has a distinct role in promoting the outcomes of PARCS.

For instance, exercise science undergraduate majors under the supervision of trained faculty, provide fitness assessments, personal training, group exercise, instruction, and social
support for those involved in the program. Future physical educators help to run before and after-school comprehensive school physical activity (CSPAP) programs that have a health component. Majors involved in this work receive academic credit, are challenged to lead, work with diverse groups, and discourse on solutions to removing barriers to exercise participation in the midst of rapidly changing environments. As far as research, these sites provide opportunities for scholars to collect data and guide graduate education to help answer questions.

As previously mentioned, one of the core goals of the program seeks to involve adults and youth from low resourced communities in consistent exercise. In particular for the African American community, this focus is impactful. Similar to most urban locales in the United States, African Americans in Indianapolis experience higher rates of poverty, lower educational status, and poor living and working conditions. This often results in chronic disease such as hypertension and obesity, disproportionate alcohol and tobacco usage, substance abuse, physical inactivity, depression, poor diet, and a host of other anxieties which may or may not be appropriately identified.

Initially, sites in the Indianapolis Public School system were used as fitness centers, with interdisciplinary grants, carefully vetted corporate partners, and public donations contributing to the refurbishment of existing weight rooms and gymnasiums. Schools in close proximity to residents were chosen as exercise sites and made affordable for families, helping to eliminate common barriers to sustained exercise involvement. Recently, sites have included shared usage in churches, parks, and have been integral to the creation of other recreational facilities. These facilities, sponsored by local organizations and staffed in part by university students, promote exercise and teach skills related to healthy eating, personal finance and sustainability.
With the revitalization of the downtown area underway, the foundation of an infrastructure for physical activity that can contribute to an enhanced quality of life for residents in Indianapolis is in place. This description of the PARCS program, the context of why it was created, and where it takes place outside of the walls of academia, underscores why kinesiology professions must consider public pedagogy as we move toward the future. Lawson’s (2015) call for action-oriented and outcomes-focused kinesiology that is interdisciplinary and beneficial for historically marginalized populations and sub-groups who lack voice and agency is timely. It is a rationale that implores us to think intentionally and act strategically to incorporate social justice in our future work.

Further, program designs that go beyond mere task oriented civic engagement and service learning projects, present a grand opportunity for service action. Service action should engage future professionals in transformative outcomes. It should be on-going and build on the previous work from others. Further, service action engages the community in the creation of a sustainable infrastructure where health enhancing practices can be realized. I am of the opinion that service action provides an avenue whereby the kinesiology profession can demonstrate social justice infused stewardship and leave a memorable legacy for future generations.

**Creating spaces for social justice and diversity**

In 2008, Alison Richard, the first female Vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge, made remarks regarding higher education’s role in promoting social justice and mobility. In responding to comments by government representatives who in her words were “meddling” by advocating for more elite institutions to take more state school pupils, Richard noted:

“Universities exist to educate and lead research, not to be ‘engines’ for promoting social justice”… We try to reach out to the best students, whatever their
background”… promoting social mobility is not our core mission. Our core mission is to provide an outstanding education within a research setting … family poverty, misplaced ideas about ‘not fitting’ in and poor advice from schools should not be barriers to applying for top universities … the quality of what we provide and our capacity to attract talent are both at risk”. (Harris, 2008).

Richards’ comments were immediately countered by Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, John Denham. In his rebuttal, Denham challenged institutions of higher learning to play a greater role in the promotion of an equitable society:

“Education is the most powerful tool we have in achieving social justice. From that recognition, the responsibility arises – not to lower standards – but to seek out, support and nurture talent, wherever it exists. 'It must allow the most talented and hard-working of our young people to achieve their full potential, irrespective of what kind of social background they came from, or the school they went to. This does not mean imposing admissions policies on universities. But it does mean universities recognising their full responsibilities in helping to seek out and develop the best of talents, wherever they are in our society”. (Harris, 2008).

This exchange between Richards’ and Denham further illuminates the conflict that I believe is detrimental to the long term success of institutions of higher learning: leadership that is focused on product generation and upholding prestige, instead of including more altruistic strategies to help marginalized and disadvantaged groups have access to the same type of education.

In this particular case, the issue of note pertains to social class in the United Kingdom. But thoughts on the dismissal of justice and equity as necessary components for
institutions of higher learning has persisted for decades in the United States. Largely, these
ideas have, influenced by anti-democratic positions (e.g. Dinesh D’Souza, William
Bennett) and suspicious agendas which imply that non-Whites have predisposed
intellectual deficiencies and are culturally deprived (e.g. The Bell Curve).

Even those who are appointed to interpret the law have been seduced by
opportunities to question the need for equity and diversity in higher education. In late
2015, Chief Justice John Roberts in deliberation during *Fisher v. Texas*, a case involving
affirmative action, questioned the significance of minority student perspectives in a
physics class. Roberts’ perception of the sciences as subjects that are unambiguous in
nature and not influenced by diversity led to a host of comments defending the need for
minorities in science. One of the more notable ones came from Philip Philips, a well-
regarded African American professor of physics:

“Our most important thing in physics is ideas. Ideas come from people having
different perspectives. Lots of people who come into physics can solve problems in a
textbook. They want research to be cut-and-dried. Those who want ordinary don’t
last long. Those who do original thinking have done so in other aspects of their lives.
They already were confronted with differences early in life rather than floating
through it.” (Garcia, 2015).

The comments made by Richards and Roberts are troubling for two reasons. First,
their observations reflect a narrow worldview devoid of possibilities. Second (and in my
opinion worse), these comments demonstrate how those who make decisions, or “the
powerbrokers”, can frame thinking that sets a tone for how social justice and diversity
initiatives are perceived by the public and in educational institutions. Undoubtedly, race
and class are not the only areas where justice is needed, but the examples above provide context for the next section.

**Modeling and socialization for social action**

Future efforts in kinesiology must acknowledge the role of modeling and socialization as a means of recruiting faculty who could provide insight on issues of justice. This task has enormous ramifications for underrepresented groups. While individuals choose graduate studies for various reasons (i.e. career advancement, desire to learn, financial mobility), recent evidence suggests that underrepresented groups enroll in advanced study as a means to solve problems and contribute back to society.

Still, as Hodge, Brooks, and Harrison Jr (2013) note, initial perceptions of climate matter. Educational researchers have investigated university departments since the 1980’s, repeatedly identifying factors such as the campus environment, institutional type, and organizational characteristics as essential pieces that affect outcomes for students considering graduate education. What is often not discussed is the importance of faculty mentors who are committed to help solve inequities. This aspect is an underrated reason that may influence underrepresented groups’ admission into higher education (DiGiacinto, 2014).

Three professors influenced my entry into the professoriate. One woman of color, who recruited me to graduate studies and later became my primary mentor, was overt in teaching the promotion of justice, gender equity, and the importance of multiculturalism in schools. Another, a white male, was less overt, but equally effective infused examples of coaches engaged in equitable practices as a springboard to discussing justice and ethics. The last professor, an African American male, was influential towards the end of my
doctoral preparation, providing me the opportunity to teach a class on Sport in the Black Culture. Each of these individuals played a significant role in helping me to envision and refine my areas of scholarship related to social justice and diversity.

The aforementioned narrative highlights the importance of positive relationship building between graduate students and faculty as crucial elements of the socialization process. Particularly for students of color and underrepresented groups, the interactions that occur with faculty advisors and mentors are vital for two reasons: 1) they help reframe negative institutional messages that undermine success and 2) they create dialogues where opinions, ideas, and perspectives are shared that contribute to the creation of climates for equity and justice.

To the latter point, critical discourse and problem solving on issues of justice and difference will need to be part of activities that we continue into the future. I am of the mind that kinesiology programs could work to improve these efforts through intergroup dialogue, a practice that fosters learning and building mutual understanding among people from different backgrounds (Zúñiga, 2007). These dialogues are structured and facilitated so that participants can examine groups’ histories and conflicts, while strategizing ways to strengthen individual and collective capacities for social action.

When used in conjunction with peer relationships fostered early in a graduate program, intergroup dialogue has the potential to be a powerful tool that could aid in promoting interdisciplinary collaborations that I feel are necessary to the sustainment of kinesiology over the next few decades. The final section of this article will outline how social justice can be configured in kinesiology departments and discuss possibilities for the future.
Centering social justice in the kinesiology sciences

In his 2014 Dudley A. Sargent Lecture, Samuel Hodge stated that kinesiology is in need of an ideological repositioning that is equity-oriented and inclusive. According to Hodge, the historical, narrow view of thinking of people based solely on race-based categories, should be replaced with a more comprehensive analysis of “the human condition, character, context, and circumstances” (p.173). In contrasting the integration model with the social model, Hodge stressed the importance of inclusion over mere integration so that all can benefit in social institutions:

The philosophy of inclusion is that of valuing diversity and creating equity of opportunities for all. In other words, the philosophy and moral slant of inclusion is that we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers. The notion, as stated in the U.S. Declaration of Independence, that “all men are created equal” is a fallacy. Equality as viewed under the integration model calls for sameness. This is an unrealistic and for many Americans, undesirable goal. More appropriately, and more realistically, inclusion advocates equity of opportunities. (p. 173).

Hodge’s transformative statement provides a template for conceptualizing social justice in kinesiology. The prescriptions to follow do not focus on arguments about whether change occurs at the macro (structural) level or the micro (individual) level. Rather, they imply that emancipatory social change requires dialogue and action between each of these levels (McArthur, 2010).

Neoliberalism and the threat to inclusion

If we commit our kinesiology programs to a social justice focus, then we must acknowledge Neoliberalism as a threat to inclusive approaches. Preston and Aslett (2014)
along with Giroux (2010) mention that the university’s place as a public institution, committed to the creation and recreation of knowledge for the public good, is being lost due to the current standardized and entrepreneurial approach to education. The effect on departments of kinesiology can be seen in large class sizes, standardized testing, increased pre-certification requirements for graduation, the lack of resources, and reductions of faculty lines.

The uncritical acceptance of market values as fundamental to social progress, promotes managerialism, and economic rationality as best practices for any organizational setting (Preston & Aslett, 2014). This model threatens the autonomy and creativity of faculty and has little room for transformative or critical endeavors. As a result, students are now seen as ‘entrepreneurial learners’ instead of critical thinkers who have potential contributions to the public that may go unrealized (Beckman, Copper, & Hill, 2009).

My personal experiences, observations, and conversations with various faculty over the past decade would lend additional credence to the existing state of university kinesiology departments. Faculty meetings and retreats that used to center on philosophy of teaching and research have now been dominated by discussions of student retention, budgets, and capital improvement projects. The strategic management book of the month, may well be the new icon of the Neoliberal approach to university planning. For those who wish to engage in a social justice focus, this reality must be understood, but it should not limit possibilities.

Future directions for practice, research and training

Implications for Practice
Including social justice as part of the future in kinesiology should involve stronger collaborations with those who are involved in multiple areas with the promotion of equity. For example, initial collaborative partnerships might be created among groups that protect individual rights and liberties, which could be found at the local, state, national and international level. Partnerships could also involve those in social work, psychology, mental health, public health, along with school and family counseling. Effecting systematic change involves the efforts of many and is multi-faceted across race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, and socioeconomic status. To this end, we must use the expertise of community advocates, government, attorneys, educators and health care professionals.

Social justice work requires that we are removed from the ivory tower and engaged with the spirit of people and the struggles that they may face. When food and exercise deserts exist in the neighborhood next to us, it is a problem. When community development projects demolish recreational facilities and remove historical references to the senior populations that live in them, it is a problem. When established sports franchises leave cities and damage the economics and psyche of local communities and stakeholders, it is a problem. When universities cannot implement research and innovative strategies that contributes to a higher quality of life for people, it is a problem.

The PARCS program discussed earlier is one example of a project that took time to envision. It involved multiple stakeholders and has been lauded by the American College for Sports Medicine (ACSM) as a model university and community based partnership in kinesiology. Alliances such as these enhance the strengths and competencies of families, communities, organizations and the larger society (Yates & Masten, 2004). If constructed
responsibly, initiatives between these entities and kinesiology departments have the potential to be mutually beneficial. Essentially, kinesiology departments should connect and provide a service to the community, and these services should extend to health care systems, educational systems, businesses, and non-profit organizations (Lowrie & Robinson, 2013).

Implications for Research

For years, research has reflected a positivist world view that sees science as a disconnected entity from life, and the researcher as an objective person in a world of isolated objects. Mind and reality are divided, while knowledge is not connected to power (Hawkins, 2014). However, Reason and Bradbury (2006) argue that positivist approaches to research have outlived its usefulness, imploring that the current defining world view is participatory and consists of relationships that are “systemic, holistic, relational, feminine and experiential”. (p.5).

If kinesiology research is to be transformative, I believe it must work to further examine movement (and barriers to movement) as an issue of justice. This attention to physical justice, as I term it here encompasses an understanding that the fundamental right for an individual to move is threatened by a host of intentional environmental, political, and social actions. Physical justice recognizes the impact of biopower (Foucault, 1976). Biopower focuses on the practices of modern nation states and their regulation of their subjects through "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations". (p.140). The next example aims to provide an example for the previous definitions.
Due to the work of many over the past few decades, the public has finally begun to consider the link between movement, self-efficacy, and learning. However, in many urban schools, physical education and time for exercise has declined precipitously in part because of an overemphasis on testing and the lack of facilities. If it is postulated that exercise increases learning and thus cognition and leads to more academic options for students via increases in test scores because of exercise, then why is exercise being withheld from these students? Who is making these decisions? Are these schools demographically different than others? Why are students not empowered to have more avenues available to them that may positively impact their future mobility in society?

I took the risk of providing that example and the resulting questions with the intention of spurring thinking about issues that may currently exist. Urban schools provided the subject matter here, but there are other populations that need our expertise. Senior citizens are the fastest growing population in the world and the majority have intentions on being functionally able for the rest of their lives. Girls, in some areas of the world are in environments where culture and justice converge to have their physical bodies attacked while their mental fortitude is broken as they are treated as property (e.g. female genital mutilation).

The application of this research lends itself to qualitative and quantitative approaches. Social constructivist research paradigms that are qualitative in nature, can gain insight into the experience of participants to discover new theories or perspectives. Critical research paradigms that could be quantitative or qualitative, could evaluate specific interventions to gain data necessary to refine programs and report outcomes to decision makers. Irrespective of approach, existing kinesiology programs would be well served to
have faculty with multiple expertise who appreciate the value in each method. Lowrie and Robinson (2013) implore kinesiology departments “to be prepared to address research questions that align with the health and performance needs of our society along with working with diverse and inclusive populations (p.178).

**Implications for Training**

In 2013, *Kinesiology Review* in a Special Theme on Diversity in Kinesiology, engaged multiple scholars in suggesting ways by which programs can be shaped for the future. Kinesiology departments in the future must continue to recruit members from underrepresented groups so that ideas on how to solve inequities can be considered from multiple perspectives. Intentional efforts towards a culture of inclusion and full participation provide a means to transform existing practices and to create policies that cultivate sustainable and successful practices (Lowrie & Robinson, 2013).

As universities are reorganizing departments, it could be appropriate at this juncture to consider current program offerings and determine if they should be added, modified or expanded with another discipline. For departments that are inclined to consider a larger social justice focus, examples of possible courses include organization and systems change, social advocacy, public health intervention, program evaluation, policy, and community development (Hage & Kenny, 2009). Along with literature that is field specific, students need to be presented with knowledge about power disparities within and across marginalized groups and how the distribution of power can be altered (Kenny & Hage, 2009).

This understanding of power disparities and group marginalization must be structured so that the culture of graduate school classrooms are more integrative in thought
(Rabow et al. 1999). Faculty have a role in this. To paraphrase Osei-Kofi, Shahjahan and Patton (2010) academics must have the foresight to introduce new paradigms of thought from areas such as women’s studies, ethnic studies, media studies, economics, statistics, and political science.

Students in social justice preparation are challenged with others to exploring their own and others’ racial and cultural stereotypes, biases and areas of privilege. When led by faculty who respect this approach, students learn to critically analyze inequality that they witness while taking into account their own experiences. This “conscientization” and dialogue between student and teacher emphasizes reflection and action upon the world to transform it and is relevant irrespective of the subject being studied (Freire, 1993). As Block (2016) mentions, society needs university graduates who can organize thoughts skillfully through writing and fact identification, so that they can make compelling arguments in a civil fashion.

Lowrie and Robinson (2013) reminds us that there are additional steps to take in training. Inclusiveness is not merely introducing or increasing enrollment and staff demographic representation, concepts of inclusion, or expanding curriculum to be diversity inclusive. It requires institutions “to change their thinking and the thought processes, the talk and the construction of the lexicon; the walk and the practice of ambulation or the alternative for movement and action; the policies and the policies that shape governance; the governance that both addresses the issues and includes the voices of others” (p. 178).

For institutions and our programs to change, we must develop “liberatory consciousness”. To paraphrase Barbara Love (2013), many members of society who benefit from oppression as well as those who are placed at a disadvantage want to work for
social change and justice. Yet they continue to participate in actions that preserve existing systems of inequity. This occurs because humans are socialized with habits and ways of thinking that cause resistance to change. In Love’s view, a liberatory consciousness enables individuals to develop agency in exploring their values, attitudes, and responses to situations they face. In incorporating a justice mindset in kinesiology, I feel that attention to this concept and its development has value.

**Conclusion**

To end, it is acknowledged that there are sure to be critics of the social justice focus I feel kinesiology should engage in. For some, the concept remains a “buzz word”, the political risk is too great, the scope of the work is too broad, and how it will be assessed and rewarded for career advancement is unclear. But as I remind us, paradigm shifts in any discipline carry with it many unknowns and kinesiology historically has been able to adjust to the changing times.

Irrespective of what path we choose, diversity and social justice issues will continue to matter, because they proliferate and reflect an imperfect society. As much as we might want to “wish” issues of inequity and justice away, there is no progress that can be made without vigilance. Higher education is one of the few public spheres where knowledge, values, and learning can be incorporated to assist the public in meaningful and transformative ways. Therefore, involving approaches from kinesiology to solve inequities in our society is not only a noble effort, but a necessary one that we have capacity for.
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