

HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE



2013

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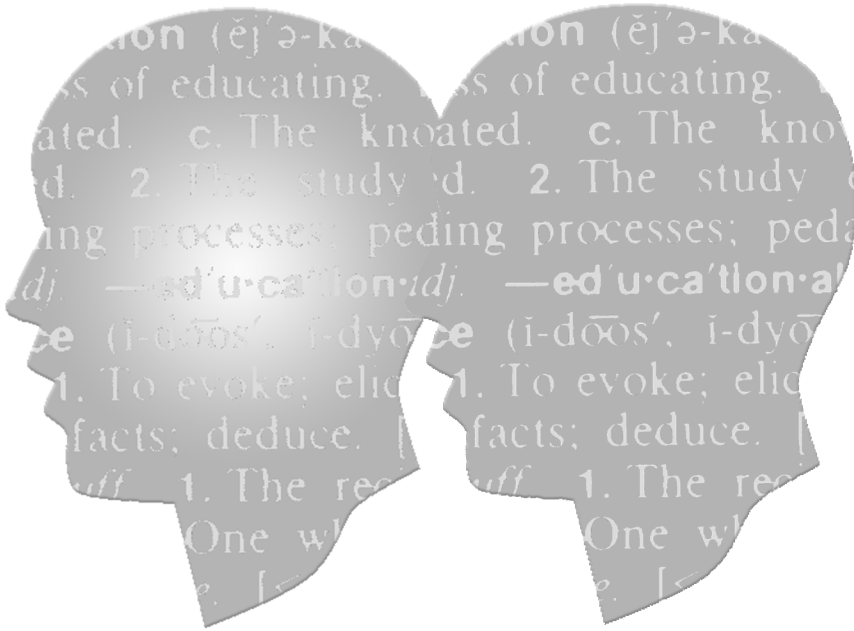
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The *Higher Education Exchange* is founded on a thought articulated by Thomas Jefferson in 1820:

I know no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion by education.

In the tradition of Jefferson, the *Higher Education Exchange* agrees that a central goal of higher education is to help make democracy possible by preparing citizens for public life. The *Higher Education Exchange* is part of a movement to strengthen higher education's democratic mission and foster a more democratic culture throughout American society. Working in this tradition, the *Higher Education Exchange* publishes case studies, analyses, news, and ideas about efforts within higher education to develop more democratic societies.



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FOREWORD

By Deborah Witte

The Kettering Foundation's research has been focused on putting the public back into the public's business for more than thirty years. Its entire research agenda has this notion of public politics at its core. In this same vein, some questions that have recently been useful to Kettering researchers as the foundation focuses on its work with institutional actors—especially higher education and its relationship with the public—have emerged. They include:

- Why doesn't higher education see the public we see?
- How can higher education learn to see the public? and
- How can the public become more visible to higher education?

One answer to these questions, we have found, is that higher education isn't looking for what we're seeing. Instead, higher education is accustomed to seeing and relating to many publics. They see students and their parents as one public, focused—much like clients—on a return-on-investment metric. They see the university faculty as another entity, who, when thinking of service to community, often want to do research *on* a community not *with* a community. They also see the neighborhood or community around the university as another public, usually an adversary, rarely a partner. This isn't the public—or publics—that Kettering sees.

What Kettering sees in its work with citizens is a public-in-action, or citizens acting in concert together to solve problems and make decisions about their future. This is the public we hope to make visible to community institutions, including higher education.

Increasingly, there appear to be exceptions to this sort of blindness to the public on the part of higher education. Stories from those who are committed to and wrestle with making the public more visible fill this issue of the *Higher Education Exchange*.

HEX coeditor David Brown contributes two interviews with well-regarded scholars from the higher education universe. The first, with Thomas Bender of New York University, reveals Bender's fear that Americans are no longer self-constituted, a quality that he believes is fundamental to a public. Nor does he think we view ourselves as a collectivity; instead he asserts that citizens live in

isolated enclaves. As to what this bodes for the future of the public, Bender suggests that we are on the cusp of a cultural transformation.

The second interview, with Thomas Ehrlich, a faculty member in the Stanford School of Education, and Ernestine Fu, currently working toward a PhD in engineering at Stanford, concerns the writing of their coauthored volume, *Civic Work, Civic Lessons: Two Generations Reflect on Public Service*. The book provides a multigenerational approach to understanding civic work. While Ehrlich has had a long career of public service, even he was surprised to learn from Fu about the hundreds of ways students engage in civic work today. Before his writing partnership with Fu, he clearly was not seeing the public that these civic-minded students represent. He learned through Fu that the type of civic work done by students is vastly different from his own public policy and political work early in his career. Fu sees this difference as a new form of youth activism—what she characterizes as youth social entrepreneurship. She describes this process as looking at a civic problem that needs solving and then exhausting the possibilities that may work best to solve the problem while remaining consistent with core values. She gives the reader a glimpse into a new view of students as civic or public actors.

Sandwiched between the two interviews is an essay by Harry Boyte. Boyte defines and describes three kinds of citizenship as public work: community-building, or the collective labors of solving public problems and building and sustaining shared resources in communities; vocation and civic professionalism, or callings to careers filled with public purpose; and democratizing public work—work that deepens and expands democracy. For Boyte, the public is not only visible, but also interactive, collaborative, and filled with purpose.

Martín Carcasson provides a first-person account of his efforts to make the public visible through his work with college students. He situates his work within the concept of wicked problems and suggests a role for higher education in creating students who can apply different modes of thinking and argument to public or wicked problems. Carcasson sees deliberation as providing a venue in which the public can have a hand in decision making, without acquiescing to experts or advocates. Higher education, he argues, is unable to make the public visible because of the expert approaches to

decision making. He outlines three persuasive reasons why engaging in deliberative practices is good business for higher education and the public.

Nick Longo, in the essay that follows, presents the emerging theory of deliberative pedagogy that seeks to connect college students to community through the curriculum. Building from the seminal works of John Dewey, Jane Addams, and the Highlander Center, the new institute for public service at Providence College is experimenting with providing a space for community and university members to come together around meals, conversation, and coursework. Longo asserts that deliberative pedagogy opens opportunities for deliberation and incorporates political themes into community engagement projects. These efforts can lead to public action becoming an ongoing part of the process of public deliberation on real-world problems in a community, fostered by higher education. This focus on public action, he suggests, is a result of a public creating itself.

Edith Manosevitch writes of deliberation in Israel. Juxtaposing a student-led deliberative forum with a traditional panel conference with political candidates for public office, she finds that the deliberative forum demonstrates the value of constructive public debate in her country. Manosevitch maintains that as a deeply divided society Israel needs ways to close the gap between its right- and left-wing ideologies. Deliberation, she asserts, may be one way to begin to close that gap. Students who participated in both the traditional panel presentation and the deliberative forum reported later that they would be interested in joining another deliberative forum. Not surprisingly, no one wanted to repeat the uproar that had accompanied the panel presentation. While deliberative pedagogy in a university setting is just now emerging in Israel, Manosevitch's research shows its promise. What deliberation can do to make the public more visible in Israel is just beginning to be explored.

An essay by Sean Creighton follows. In his research on community colleges, Creighton identifies the inability of higher education to see the public as a function of the relationship most universities have with their community. When the relationship is primarily seen as the university acting *upon* the community, the public becomes opaque or worse, invisible. Creighton asserts that

until community colleges learn to embrace the idea that citizens have a role in decision making, citizens will remain clients, not collaborators. He believes that community colleges in particular can learn how to build bridges between campus and community that will promote civic and citizen engagement. But for now, they do not see these civic skills as central to the community college learning experience.

The review by Alex Lovit presents the most recent book from Bent Flyvbjerg. In *Real Social Science: Applied Phronesis*, Flyvbjerg and his coeditors demonstrate the rich possibilities of approaching academic work through the use of the concept of phronesis, or practical wisdom. Following on his previous volume, *Making Social Science Matter*, Flyvbjerg has collected responses to and applications of phronesis in this volume. The many authors share a commitment to the production of research that contributes to society's practical knowledge. Through a combination of both theoretical and applied essays on phronesis, Flyvbjerg and his coauthors suggest "phronetic social scientists are explicitly concerned about public exposure, because they see it as one of the main vehicles for the type of social and political action that is at the heart of phronesis." A careful read of this volume may offer further clues for understanding the public's role in knowledge and wisdom development.

David Mathews rounds out the volume by reminding *HEX* readers of the crucial importance of the public's point of view as colleges and universities put engagement and service learning projects into practice. He encourages universities to go a step beyond current practices to reinforce the work citizens do in building their communities. He restates the six democratic practices that have influenced the research of the Kettering Foundation and that characterize the work citizens do. He ends with an invitation to *HEX* readers who are also involved in this work to share their stories and experiments.

RECONSTRUCTING AMERICA'S PUBLIC LIFE

An Interview with Thomas Bender

David Brown, coeditor of the Higher Education Exchange, spoke with Thomas Bender, professor of history and University Professor of the Humanities at New York University. Brown was interested in learning more about the implications of Bender's years of scholarship for reconstructing America's public life.

Brown: In your book, *The Unfinished City*, you described how Central Park and Union Square in New York have been important public spaces for most everyone to share. Are they examples of how “public culture” is developed through social experience?

Bender: I think they are. There are two aspects of a democratic public culture. One can be described as out-of-doors; this is about recognition. Bringing diverse people to a relaxing setting (as Olmsted described Central Park) enables some visual, and sometimes greater, communication across the boundaries of difference. Presumably this makes for a more tolerant public life and sometimes even greater benefits. The other aspect of public culture is “indoors.” This is the public culture that Habermas tends to have in mind: legislative, formal politics, not wholly indoors, but concentrated on rational debate, whether in the press (formal communication) or in a legislative chamber.

Brown: In *Intellect and Public Life*, you wrote that the “centrality of the city is being eroded, being replaced by translocal institutions (professions and corporations, for example).” What specifically has been lost by such displacement?

Bender: Basically, our whole culture is being suburbanized. Everyone in their place, and some of these places are placeless. The professions are linked by academic or professional journals and websites. You may have a colleague for years—either on the next block or on another continent—whom you never



meet. Corporations are connected by the movement of information and money. Most important, however, this kind of connection is organized around sameness, marked by homogeneity (training, education, work day, income, and so forth). The city brings a more vital, challenging, different confrontation. Most important, it offers serendipity. Back in the 1940s the social theorist Robert Merton, who was quite an insightful analyst of sources of creativity and ideas, argued it is a major source of new thinking.

Brown: If professions and corporations, more than not, reside in or near cities, why do you think they have withdrawn into homogenous enclaves? Don't those who work in such enclaves also have urban lives that reach beyond them? Wouldn't they still qualify as "cosmopolitans" according to Merton?

Bender: I think that more than ever we live in isolated enclaves at work and at home and even in our leisure lives "in the city." Driving into Manhattan from Bergen or Westchester County into the underground parking at Lincoln Center, for dinner (within three blocks if not in the complex itself) and seeing a play, opera, or dance performance is not a cosmopolitan experience. If kids grow up in upper middle class neighborhoods and go either to private or local public schools, it is living in a mirrored culture, not a cosmopolitan one. Of course, many break out of these tunneled lives, but that is far from the majority.

Brown: You have described "community" as a "network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds." Given your description 30 years ago, do online social networks qualify as "communities in continual transformation?"

Bender: I tried in *Community and Social Change* to distinguish two kinds of networks, only one of which I considered to be community. The connections of *most* online networks would not meet my definition of community. But by being selective, one could identify a subset that fit my rather tight definition of community as marked by mutuality and emotional bonds. But a larger network might be more apt for politics, if not community. The nature of Facebook connections is both familiar and not. The key to public politics is working together as strangers, with strangers, with people who are different but who can be brought together on the issue that forms the public.

Brown: Those who use Facebook are usually not concerned with strangers. If “public politics” is about strangers working together, where are the sites for such work? Can their origins be more or less accidental, or are they more likely to be intentional?

Bender: The growing residential segregation by class and race (at the lower income level) in American society makes any kind of accidental, diverse public coming-together somewhat unlikely. But even under these circumstances, certain issues might bring separated citizens together as a public for political work, albeit for different reasons. Environmental issues are particularly likely. Poorer communities of a city or region, who may be concerned with environmental justice movements—nearby dumping grounds, garbage transfer stations, hazardous material movement—and suburbanites—who are concerned for mostly aesthetic reasons, but also about health in the longer view—might come together in a broadly defined common cause at the local level.

Brown: In “The Historian in Public Life,” you quote John Dewey with approval: “Unless communal life can be restored the public cannot adequately resolve its most urgent problem: to find and identify itself.” Could you say more about why, at present, you think there is no “public sphere”; that there are “audiences, but no public”?

Bender: For Dewey a public must be aware of itself. I do not think the mediated world of our fragmented (no longer mass culture) society is aware of itself as a collectivity. We are media audiences, in a one-way relationship, despite “comment” opportunities. We are not self-constituted, which is, I think (now especially), a quality fundamental to the public. The public is not defined by space—whether material or cyber, though the public may be created in either of those spaces. I think Occupy Wall Street did form itself into a public, initially in a space but eventually nationally and beyond. Part of it was in physical space, part in cyberspace. In this way, strangers can become a public.

Brown: If “publics” are episodic and easily disbanded, wasn’t that true of Occupy Wall Street—that it was a brief phenomenon? Or does my question rely too much on whether media attention is too often the measure of what a “public” is?



Bender: Actually, I think that Occupy Wall Street fully succeeded. They are no longer physically a community, but their political agenda survives and has been incorporated into the current language of politics. The one percent has become a fundamental category of political discussion in the contemporary USA, both in private conversation and the public sphere. It is a huge victory to insert your language of protest into the mainstream public culture. And, it did this in competition with millions of dollars—tens of millions of dollars in the case of one right-wing defender of unlimited economic inequality. Pretty good, I think.

Brown: Is it possible in this day and age to strive for “a sense of commonwealth based upon shared public ideals, rather than upon acquaintance or affection”?

Bender: Yes, but it is important that these be pragmatic alliances, not dependent on either affection or acquaintance. Only the shared goal (improving the school or advancing the city’s environmental policies, etc.) is necessary. One need not be friends or even previously acquainted. That is politics, but not community. And it is unlikely to be a permanent association, although some issues do produce a more lasting public. It depends on the nature of the issues, whether it needs continuing monitoring.

Brown: What are some of the issues that you think have produced “a more lasting public,” and what do they have in common?

Bender: I think no public will be lasting unless it is incorporated into the structure of governance. If the public is an “act,” then it is not an institution. An organization/foundation can sustain this act to the point where its potential is clear, but if the appropriate level of governing power does not “adopt” it (it need not be an adoption of every detail and may refigure it), it will pass once its initiating urgency loses emotional power. We ought not forget that many of the programs we associate with social democratic aspects of the New Deal or the Kennedy-Johnson era were developed locally as publics to address immediate problems or foundations. Ford especially, in the 1960s, did so by helping fledgling publics acquire resources and political connections. The whole point of a public as I see it is a seedtime for the government. Publics and volunteerism cannot be sustained without some form of public support. The kind of transformative power the largest foundations

had in the immediate postwar period (or before, for that matter), internationally and nationally, is no longer possible. Seeding is all that can be done, and it is the essential starting point as a public emerges. It need not be constituted as a public agency; it only needs access to the relevant administrative/regulatory agencies—a permanent public interest lobby to counter private interest lobbies. For example, the long-standing organization worried about the dangers of the Indian Point nuclear plant on the Hudson River has achieved sustained pressure on the energy company and the federal regulators. That organization is important to the capacity of the group to sustain itself over many years.

Brown: Both of us are admirers of Charles Lindblom's work as a political economist. Along with David Cohen in *Usable Knowledge*, Lindblom argued that much of the "new knowledge" produced in the social sciences is "ordinary knowledge"; that it is produced by the same common techniques and casual verification that are practiced throughout the society by many different kinds of people, and is not by any significant margin more firmly verified. Do you share Lindblom's view and, if so, does it mean that there is a certain amount of pretension in academe and professional practice?

Bender: There are two issues in the practice of social science and public knowledge. One is belaboring areas of knowledge that are already part of our common life and, sometimes in fact, merely reframing it as jargon. The other—and more common practice, I think—is the emergence of new and exciting insights or methods that end up being copied again and again because they are new and "hot." The sociology of the academic disciplines knowledge seems to encourage the routinization of knowledge. And "copycatism." A new idea or method emerges, and like lemmings a large number in the discipline jump in. There is change, but it is ever so quickly the "next big thing." Everyone jumps on and it lasts well beyond its proper shelf life. Then another episode. One good thing is that the results become silly after a while, and a younger generation can turn everything over. But too often, this has its internal dialectic; the new is often not driven by the world beyond the discipline, rather it is some kind of flipping of the method being dissed. I would add that doctoral training and

publication afterward is very much driven by “the literature,” rather than by issues in the culture and society at large. Scholarship progresses by building upon and critiquing that literature. That need not be isolating, but questions are framed too exclusively in terms of the literature.

Brown: You have argued that academic disciplines and professional communities have “become too self-referential.” What has to happen to change the status quo?

Bender: Here I revert to what I have said about Dewey’s notion of the scholar in public: to be pertinent to the public life of our communities, we need to listen to the framing of questions by the world around us and then draw upon our special knowledge that may help examine those questions. We will reach into the esoteric knowledge of our discipline and try to translate what is pertinent to the public question into the language of the public. If we thought of ourselves more as teachers and less as researchers, this would come naturally to us. That is what we do in an undergraduate class. We get rid of the esoteric jargon, at least in introductory level courses, and speak in a common tongue, bringing students to understand why some jargon of the discipline crystallizes the idea or concept. But to the extent our disciplinary professional colleagues are our *only* audience, we do not develop that capacity.

Brown: What accounts for research being the *sine qua non* of academic life? Is that what initially draws young men and women into a discipline or is it the expectation of others already in academe that dictates that research comes first with teaching and service trailing far behind?

Bender: In *Education of Historians for the Twenty-First Century*, I cite a study done now about 15 years ago at Madison by the current (I think still current) dean of the Stanford University Graduate School. One of the remarkable findings was that most graduate students entering the social sciences and humanities (especially in the case of philosophy and history) did so to be teachers. When interviewed later, after obtaining their PhDs, they overwhelmingly wanted to be researchers. Partly, there is some appeal, even joy, in research, but it is also a product, I think, of the graduate school ethos. Emulate your mentor, and since one’s mentor at a leading graduate school is likely to have a light teaching load and consider it a burden, the mentor model is a researcher. And to fail to be a researcher is to

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fail what is often (and regrettably) a father figure. (The book noted above, done for the AHA as secretary of a committee on graduate education, offered a number of suggestions to weaken that master-apprentice, mentor-model dynamic, but it is hard to break.)

Brown: Many academic departments seem resistant to any substantial change or, as you put it, “few would consider taking up the departmental challenge of adjusting their curriculum.” Is the problem really more organizational than intellectual? If so, what has to happen to overcome departmental inertia or intransigence?

Bender: One of the amazing things is that the structure of the American university (at least its academic structure) has barely changed since the 1920s, when departments, divisions, and deans established the structure. Yet the content has been completely transformed. It results in some clumsiness, but it enables individual anarchism for the faculty, which may foster innovation. My concern in that essay was less to change the disciplines than to make the work better in the formation of a liberal arts curriculum.

Brown: If the intellectual appetite of faculty, and the variety of such appetites, have changed, why have the academic “structures” remained relatively untouched?

Bender: I suppose it is because they were loose containers, and with growth and increasing resources (which is unlikely going forward from our present situation) efficiency was not a high priority. Duplication, odd juxtapositions, outliers, all of these and more were okay. There is something positive about letting faculty research imaginations flow without trying to restructure after each one, including those that fail. It is important to keep in mind how many research and teaching agendas fail or change. It could be chaos. And keep in mind, the two oldest institutions in western civilization, the Catholic Church and the university, are both slow to change—and frustrating for that reason, but perhaps for the same reason, they are still around. And the university at least offers many interstices into which one can, if one wishes and works at it, frame one’s own context for work.

Brown: Why is it that those in academe who would radically reform American society show little interest in reforming academe?

Bender: They are human; they have a good deal. As my father, who lacked even a high school education, said when I told him I hoped to become a professor: “Let me see, it will mean reading a

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lot of books, and you like that anyway. And you will discuss these books with smart students. That should be enjoyable. And they cannot fire you.” Why rock this boat? Now that the postwar, growing, prestigious university—always getting better and better for the faculty—is at an end, we might see much more faculty concern with university reform. “No confidence” votes in university leadership at my institution and at some others of late suggest that the sleeping lion may be awakening, but who knows how they will balance the civic with the professional and the personal.

Brown: You have suggested “flipping the curriculum right-side-up.” That is, putting a discipline in the first two years of the undergraduate experience followed by focusing on “liberal learning” in the last two years in collaborative workshops. Is this being done or considered somewhere in academe?

Bender: To the best of my knowledge it has not been—and may not be. I first proposed this at a meeting called by the president of the Mellon Foundation. The foundation brought together a series of elite university presidents and deans and asked me to start the conversation. That is when I first formulated this idea. The response was very disappointing—not because no one embraced it, but rather for this reason: students are not ready for the disciplines in the first year.

Brown: How, then, would you counter such a response?

Bender: Were my task or assignment in that presentation to defend my position, I would have pointed out the stupidity of their particular objection. Institutions with general education programs for the first year also offer introductory courses to various disciplines, and students learn them. This was true of all the institutions present at the meeting. Disciplines, with their distinctive methods and rules of the road are actually easier to learn than large, amorphous bodies of knowledge. The challenge of the liberal arts (and public life) is to come to terms with and mobilize different disciplinary knowledge through what the philosopher Richard Rorty called “conversation.” That can happen only if you have command of a discipline and openness to other knowledge. In fact, history is one of the few disciplines to lack an introductory course.

Brown: In your essay “Do Disciplines Change?” (*Transforming Undergraduate Education*), you cite William James, who remarked

that “any discipline becomes liberal and humanistic if taught historically . . .” Are there examples of how this is currently being done in disciplines other than history?

Bender: Not only are most of the humanities historical in their pedagogy, but in general education courses, even the sciences, are taught in historical fashion, whether it’s the history of scientists and their discoveries or the history of the physical world itself. Many natural science disciplines are in fact historical: astronomy, geology, paleontology, evolutionary biology. In the past, historical treatment of the range of known knowledge was greater, but history is a natural way of thinking—or it is in the cultures I know best, those deriving from the Abrahamic religions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity) who describe themselves by stories, by historical stories. We are a historical culture. I would argue that the humanities generally remain historical in method, even with some of the more recent (but now receding) theories of reading texts. But with ever fewer exceptions, the social sciences vital to our public life are becoming less and less historical. Rational choice theories in political science, economics, law, and to some extent sociology, do banish historical understanding, to say nothing of cultural understanding. Anthropology, on the other hand, has become more historical and more engaged with public issues, particularly in medical anthropology and family and race/ethnicity.

Brown: Finally, to return to your book *The Unfinished City*, can “cultural authority,” as you put it, still reside in universities and professions of practice now confronted with “the revolution in information technologies” and alternative sources of knowledge?

Bender: This future is very unclear. I do not think the university will be completely marginalized, but I think our culture may be quite different. I think we are on the cusp of a transformation equivalent to the Gutenberg moment: print transformed society and produced a particular kind of intellectual culture. I think that culture will change. Analog was one-dimensional; our digital world is much more open at least in potential, but it has yet to find its principle of authority. I doubt that the university will have the centrality it once had; the result could be richer or less so. There will probably be institutions that “validate” knowledge, places you trust, not unlike universities, but probably more nimble.

Brown: Thanks, Tom. I learned a great deal.

REINVENTING CITIZENSHIP AS PUBLIC WORK: CIVIC LEARNING FOR THE WORKING WORLD

By Harry C. Boyte

Traditions of Citizenship as Public Work

A challenge to conceptions that contrast citizenship with work, common among leaders of the American Revolution who had little use for work (and condescended toward working people), developed through the colonial experiences and early years of the nation. The actual labors of settlers, who had cleared lands, built towns and villages, wells, meeting halls and roads, generated what the historian Robert Wiebe has called America's portable democracy (Wiebe 1995) and cultivated a democratic assertiveness among the people. "Experience proves that the very men whom you entrust with the support and defense of your most sacred liberties are frequently corrupt," wrote a group of artisans in Philadelphia during the Revolution. "If ever therefore your rights are preserved, it must be through the virtue and integrity of the middling sort, as farmers, tradesmen, & etc." (Kazin 1995, 9). Benjamin Franklin spoke and wrote in this vein. The Leather Apron Club, which he founded in Philadelphia in 1727, included tradesmen, artisans, and shopkeepers—those whom he lauded as "the middling people"—and combined hard work and civic commitments. The Club discussed civic and political topics of the day, developed plans for self-improvement, and created a network of citizens committed to "doing well by doing good." Members generated myriad civic projects, including a street-sweeping corps, volunteer firefighters, tax-supported neighborhood constables, health and life insurance groups, a library, a hospital, an academy for educating young people, a society for sharing scientific discoveries, and a postal system (Isaacson 2012). In a similar vein, Franklin proposed education that combined practical and liberal arts, a union that was to reappear in the country's land grant colleges.

The connection between work and citizenship further developed in the early years of the new nation. "When [ideals of disinterested civic virtue] proved too idealistic and visionary," writes Gordon

Wood, Americans “found new democratic adhesives in the actual behavior of plain, ordinary people” (Wood 1991, ix). Several interrelated, interacting traditions of citizenship as public work emerged, worth identifying as foundations for citizen-centered democracy:

- *Community-building*—the collective labors (paid and unpaid) of solving public problems and building and sustaining shared resources in communities;
- *Vocation and civic professionalism*—callings to careers filled with public purpose; and
- *Democratizing public work*—work that deepens and expands democracy.

Community-Building

David Mathews has described pithily the tradition of practical community building in his treatment of the emergence of institutions such as public schools. “Nineteenth-century self-rule . . . was a sweaty, hands-on, problem-solving politics,” Mathews writes.

The democracy of self-rule was rooted in collective decision making and acting—especially acting. Settlers on the frontier had to be producers, not just consumers. They had to join forces to build forts, roads, and libraries. They formed associations to combat alcoholism and care for the poor as well as to elect representatives. They also established the first public schools. Their efforts were examples of “public work,” meaning work done *by* not just *for* the public. (Mathews 2006, vii)



Such public work drew on traditions of “the commons”—lands, streams, and forests for which whole communities had responsibility and in which they had rights of use, and also goods of general benefit built mainly through citizen labors, like schools, libraries, community centers, wells, roads, music festivals, and arts fairs. All were associated with the term, “the commonwealth.” Indeed, for many immigrants, America represented a chance to

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recreate the commons privatized by elites in Europe. As the historians Oscar and Mary Handlin observed about the Revolutionary generation of the 1770s, “For the farmers and seamen, for the fishermen, artisans and new merchants, commonwealth repeated the lessons they knew from the organization of churches and towns . . . the value of common action” (Handlin 1969, 30). Such community-building traditions of communal labor can be found around the world. They create rich foundations for a normative ideal of citizenship as collective, self-directed labors, citizenship that is practical and hands-on, and which bridges divisions of status, income, and other differences for the sake of community-benefit (Boyte 2011).

Vocation and Civic Professionalism

Collaborative work that solves public problems and creates common resources for communities is one current of public work citizenship. Work filled with public purpose is another. This concept draws on the rich theological idea of *vocation*. As John Budd observes, “when Martin Luther translated biblical verses such as ‘Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called’ from the original Greek into German . . . he used the German word for ‘occupation’ for ‘calling.’ Thus, Luther initiated a radically new perspective in which all are called to employ their gifts, ‘something that fits how we are made, so that doing it will enable us to glorify God, serve others, and be most richly ourselves’” (Budd 2011, 167).

The connection between vocation and education has recently resurfaced in undergraduate education. Liberal arts colleges like Augsburg College, the new institutional home of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship, illustrate the recall of vocation and have the potential for significant impact since they are “upstream” centers, shaping the identities and practices of thousands of civic leaders. In its educational vision, *Vocation, Access, and Excellence*, Augsburg highlights the concept of vocation, integrated into its core curriculum as “a fertile seedbed for the democratic ethos.”

This view of vocation both stresses the importance of education and clarifies its role. One does not seek education for either self-advancement or as a way to reach salvation. Its proper role is in helping persons determine and develop their abilities in preparation for investigating and celebrating God’s creation, for probing

the mysteries of the human condition, and ultimately for furthering the well-being of society. As Luther said, God doesn't want a cobbler who puts crosses on shoes; God wants a cobbler who makes good, reliable footwear. (*Vocation, Access, and Excellence* 2012)

Augsburg's view of vocation has potential for helping to bridge the sharp divide in higher education between professional studies on the one hand, and liberal arts and civic learning on the other.

A sense of calling or vocation is associated with the rise of professions. Though professions are often understood in terms of the emergence of a disinterested ethic tied to positivist theories of knowledge and detached from politics and self-interests, an alternative tradition of "citizen professionalism" contributes especially to American democracy. William Sullivan identifies a central tension in professionalism in the United States since the colonial period, "between a technical emphasis which stresses specialization—broadly linked to a utilitarian conception of society as a project for enhancing efficiency and individual satisfaction—and a sense of professional mission which has insisted upon the prominence of the ethical and civic dimension of the enterprise" (Sullivan 1995, 28).

Scott Peters has detailed extensive practices of such civic professionalism in the land grant college tradition, especially before World War II. Land grants combined "practical arts" with "liberal arts," and sought to develop professionals with a strong sense of their civic responsibilities. "Our colleges should not be content with only the training of outstanding agriculturalists, or engineers, or home economists, or teachers, or scientists, or lawyers, or doctors, or veterinarians," declared John Hannah, president of Michigan State College in 1944. "The first and never-forgotten objective must be that every human product of our educational system must be given the training that will enable him to be an effective citizen, appreciating his opportunities and fully willing to assume his responsibilities in a great democracy" (Peters 2004, 47).

William Doherty and his colleagues at the Citizen Professional Center have pioneered in the practices and theory of such citizen professionalism. Adapting broad-based organizing practices and public work concepts to family and health professions, their citizen professional model begins with the premise that solving complex

problems requires many sources of knowledge, and “the greatest untapped resource for improving health and social well-being is the knowledge, wisdom, and energy of individuals, families, and communities who face challenging issues in their everyday lives.” The Citizen Professional Center has generated multiple partnerships including suburban movements of families working to untangle overscheduled, consumerist lives; an African American Citizen Fathers Project seeking to foster positive fathering models and practices; a new project with Hennepin County to change civil service practices into public work; and a pilot with Health Partners Como Clinic, called the Citizen Health Care Home, which stresses personal and family responsibility for one’s own health and opportunities for patient leadership development and co-responsibility for health (Doherty, et al. 2010).

Democratizing Public Work

The work of making democratic change is a third tradition of citizenship, overlapping and intertwining with community-building work and civic professionalism. Union and community organizers, civil rights workers, suffragists, and others created a strong tradition of work for democratic social change, mingling with the very idea of “work” itself as a well-spring for change. Thus the iconic book-ends of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s career were the unforgettable images of thousands of domestic workers walking to their jobs in the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955 to protest segregated buses, and the signs of Memphis garbage workers declaring “I Am A Man,” demanding recognition and dignity in 1968.



Change-making through professional work played a pivotal role in the African American freedom struggle. Gerald Taylor has argued that after the collapse of the Populist Party in the 1890s, the black community turned to “knowledge artisans.”

While millions of property owners and artisans sinking into debt peonage, or forced into wage labor, formed the populist movement, the rising professions, what could be called collectives of

“knowledge artisans,” offers a contrasting story of the search for independence among both whites and blacks, using a different set of strategies in an effort to consolidate control over productive property, work products, tools, and vocational training and accreditation. . . . These intellectual artisans, accountants, doctors, lawyers, engineers among others, gained control over what we now call the professions. The professionalization of these groups provided the ability to negotiate contracts but retain control over their workplaces, their tools and their schedules. They controlled decisions about the learning and application of their knowledge of these intellectual crafts, the formation centers that prepared them and the terms by which they could enter the professions. . . . By the early 20th century, these professional guilds had organized national organizations, stabilized and expanded the income of their members and wielded significant economic political and cultural influence.” (Taylor 2012, 224-225)

In the African American community, knowledge artisans provided leadership in the continuing freedom struggle by building centers of independent power ranging from schools and congregations to businesses and beauty parlors.

Parallels can also be seen among European Americans in the 1920s and 1930s who created foundations for civic change. These included many who viewed schools and other educational sites, such as settlement houses, as being at the center of democracy.

Civic Learning Through Public Work

Our civic engagement work through the Center for Democracy and Citizenship (CDC) began in 1987 with an argument that communal labor traditions nourished a “commonwealth” politics throughout American history. Working with partners, we sought to translate methods and ideas of broad-based community organizing, themes of “the commonwealth,” and principles of self-organized governance, as articulated by Elinor Ostrom and her colleagues, into other settings, with a particular focus on education in schools, communities, and higher education.

As we sought to democratize educational institutions it soon became apparent that institutional organizing requires a shift in framework. Rather than seeing institutions in conventional ways—as fixed and static, defined by structures, procedures, rules and

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regulations—we have to reconceive them as living and dynamic communities, with norms, values, leadership, and cultural identities. Maria Avila, a former Mexican American organizer with the IAF who directed the Center for Community Based Learning at Occidental College, has given a vivid account of what this means. “The medicine for our predicament [in higher education] requires efforts to restructure the way we think, act, behave toward each other, and the way we act as a collective to restructure power and resources.” Avila argues that organizing focuses on cultural change before structural change. “Culture changes [come] first, leading to structural changes later.” Change is relational, tied to organizing and power. “For academic institutions to partner with community groups, institutions and organizations for a better society [requires] countless opportunities for conversations and organizing campaigns with community partners engaged in power restructuring” (Avila 2003).

... public work connects individual and institutional interests to citizenship and the public good by inviting people to “make work more public...”

Work is at the heart of the self-interest in all institutions, including schools and colleges. Democratizing the politics of knowledge and making such politics explicit has to be an essential strategy. Seeing institutions as communities, building public relationships, undertaking intentional changes in their cultures to make them more public, and thinking in political terms about knowledge, as well as other power sources, highlights the dynamics of work routines, incentives, norms, and identities. A public work approach to organizing differs, in significant respects, from conventional liberal and communitarian approaches to civic engagement, both of which have strong normative frameworks. Public work avoids exhortations about what teachers, students, staff, or institutions *should* do. Rather, public work connects individual and institutional interests to citizenship and the public good by inviting people to “make work more public,” more interactive, collaborative, visible, and filled with public purposes. We saw this early on, for instance, in the efforts of a group called The Collaboration for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning that sought to spread active learning practices in education. Lesley Cafarelli, director of the consortium, explains.

In 1991 . . . [the consortium] began an intensive effort to raise the frequency and level of campus conversations about teaching. This effort, funded by The Bush Foundation, was a response to

our observation that the culture of privacy around higher education's most public activity—teaching—serves to obstruct both individual and collective efforts to strengthen student learning. How can faculty strive to improve their teaching, for example, if there are few opportunities to observe and learn from other professionals or to wrestle intellectually with colleagues about ways to cope with both common and surprising difficulties in teaching? How can colleges and universities fulfill their public responsibility if there is little or no collective knowledge of how teaching is practiced, sharing of expertise, or joint exploration of teachers' impact on student learning? An academic culture that preserves the privacy—even secrecy—of the classroom fosters professional isolation and stifles improvement. (Cafarelli 1998)

Nan Kari and a group of faculty, staff, and students at the College of St. Catherine, working with the CDC, addressed the challenge of “making teaching and learning more public” through adapting community organizing methods. Their work significantly informed the CDC's general theory of citizenship as public work. Building on such partnerships, public work created the framework of the 1999 *Wingspread Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Research Universities*, which I coauthored with Elizabeth Hollander on behalf of a group of higher education leaders.

The concept of public work also informed an initiative in schools, begun during those years and known as Public Achievement. It sought to revitalize the empowering civic learning of the Citizenship Education Program of the civil rights movement. Teams of young people—typically ranging from elementary through high school students, but more recently also involving college students and sometimes older adults—work through the school year on public issues of their choice. Members of the team are coached by adults who help them develop achievable goals and learn political skills and concepts. At St. Bernard's elementary school in St. Paul, Public Achievement became the centerpiece of the culture in the early and mid-1990s through the leadership of then-principal Dennis Donovan, who insisted that all forms of work in the school, including teaching, have public and empowering dimensions. Public Achievement at St. Bernard's was closely linked to the concept of “citizen teacher,” an idea that seems especially important in an era when high stakes testing and technocratic measures of accountability

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threaten the foundations of teacher autonomy and creativity. Since its founding in 1990, Public Achievement has spread to several hundred communities and schools in the United States, as well schools in Poland, Northern Ireland, Gaza and the West Bank, Israel, and elsewhere.

Skills and habits of civic politics include relationship building, tolerance for ambiguity, ability to deal with conflict constructively, and the capacity to act in open environments with no predetermined outcomes. These are not part of normal higher education curricula, or of scientific or other conventional academic or professional disciplines. The capacities for civic politics and civic professionalism have to be learned mainly in practice, and also entail *unlearning* such tendencies as hypercompetitive individualism, intellectual certitude, and the stance of outside observer, which are frequently bi-products of conventional graduate education. Our colleague Bill Doherty estimates that it usually takes two years of learning and unlearning for most professionals to do effective public work.

There are also other, parallel and sometimes allied, efforts in education to make work more public. These include the deliberative pedagogies in K-12 schools and higher education supported by Kettering Foundation and the National Issues Forums Institute. In higher education, such deliberative pedagogies now have a demonstrated track record for generating agency and action in settings like Wake Forest University. In K-12 education, research by Stacey Molnar Main is showing that teachers who use deliberative pedagogies report an enhancement of their own sense of citizenship as teachers, as well as notably more active, engaged citizenship among their students.¹

Such efforts to make education more public found some support from populist elements within the Obama administration. At the White House on January 10, 2012, the Office of Public Engagement and the Department of Education hosted a national gathering of civic and educational leaders called “For Democracy’s Future: Education Reclaims Our Civic Mission.” Secretary of Education Arne Duncan announced the addition of a “third C,”

¹ For evidence in higher education, see John Dedrick with Laura Grattan and Harris Dienstfrey, *Deliberation and the Work of Higher Education: Innovations for the Classroom, the Campus, and the Community* (Dayton: Kettering Foundation, 2008); Stacey Molnar Main’s report is forthcoming from Kettering Foundation.

citizenship, to the department's commitments to preparation for college and career. At the White House event, education groups undertook new initiatives to strengthen civic learning and education. The Association of American Colleges and Universities released a report, *A Crucible Moment*, calling for civic learning to become "pervasive" in colleges and universities. And the American Commonwealth Partnership (ACP) of educational groups and institutions was launched, created on invitation by Jon Carson, Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement. ACP aimed at marking the 150th anniversary of the Morrill Act, which established the first land grant colleges, by developing new strategies to strengthen the civic identities of colleges and universities, as part of the larger movement for a citizen-centered democracy.

ACP grew out of the Civic Agency Initiative, part of a coalition of state colleges and universities called the American Democracy Project, which spread and adapted empowering pedagogies from Public Achievement. A group of colleges and universities began to work together on these themes, including Lone Star Community College, Western Kentucky University, Georgia State College and University, the University of Colorado at Boulder, Winona State University, Augsburg College, Syracuse University, and more recently the University of Washington Bothell. In several places—especially Northern Arizona University and the University of Maryland Baltimore County—concepts of civic agency and public work became the foundation for large-scale institutional innovation in curriculum and co-curricular life.

ACP also created a context for highlighting outstanding examples of education as public work. For instance, at the White House meeting we spotlighted the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences, a public school on a 78-acre farm in the southwestern corner of the city, where students learn math, science, English, and writing through the processes of planting, harvesting, marketing, and selling vegetables. Juniors and seniors enroll in classes that focus on the city's flower garden show, learning horticulture, animal science, agricultural mechanics, economics,



food science, communications, and business. Guided by teachers, the students also have a good deal of space for self-organizing and initiating their projects. “Connecting work and academics makes a huge difference in terms of ways students look at education,” says Lucille Shaw, assistant principal. “Through all of their academic classes as well as technical studies students can blend and apply concepts.” Students also learn “we’re all in this together,” Shaw says. “What is this going to do to better my life, and help someone else?” With a high number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who often struggle with standardized testing, the Ag School has won national attention for its success in college preparation and student achievement—87 percent graduate and go to college. Fifty-nine percent meet or exceed average scores on the Prairie State Achievement exams, which test for reading, English, math, science, and writing, compared to 28 percent in the Chicago district as a whole.²

ACP deepened the theory of public work, including the framework of “civic science,” an effort to rethink the nature of science, its role and relationship to society, and the identity of scientists through the lens of civic agency and public work. For some years, the CDC had worked on civic science with the Delta Center, a world-renown center for infant development science. ACP created a context to deepen the idea and develop relationships on civic science with leaders in climate science, sustainable agriculture, science and technology studies, and other fields. Civic science highlights the political—though not partisan—nature of science; science as a powerful source of knowledge for action *in* the world, rather than an outside description *of* the world. In this sense, science itself is a resource for helping to negotiate a shared democratic way of life. Civic science stresses that scientists are also citizens, who come together with nonscientists to solve real-world problems in the course of building a democratic society. Civic science addresses what may be called “the knowledge war” that feeds a bitterly

² The account of the Chicago Ag school and its successes is taken from Harry C. Boyte, “For Democracy’s Future,” *Huffington Post*, November 9, 2012 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/harry-boyte/for-democracys-future_b_2088408.html; for parallel evidence that consequential work tied to education is a powerful motivator for low income student success, see Peter Levine, et al, CIRCLE, *Pathways Into Leadership: A Study of YouthBuild Graduates* (2012), at <http://www.civicyouth.org/released-today-at-the-white-house-circle-study-shows-youthbuild-builds-leaders/>.

divided, hyperpolarized society.³ The Delta Center launched a new initiative based on civic science, Get Ready Iowa, to bridge the professional educator and policy maker/parent divides, and ACP created an organizing team for a new international civic science initiative.⁴

Overall, the American Commonwealth Partnership generated the realization of the need for a reform movement across all of education to put public work—work with explicit civic dimensions—back into the center. This means bridging the gap between liberal education and civic learning, career and workforce preparation, and between thinking and acting in terms of the economies and civic ecologies of local communities. We need a broad reform effort to “integrate the three C’s” of college, career, and citizenship, for the health of our communities and our democracy, for the viability of our educational institutions and for our careers as professionals.

Agents of Change, Not Objects of Change

As the political theorist and community organizer Rom Coles has observed, it is hard for many to believe that such democratic innovations add up to much more than “oases of democracy” in an expanding desert of a technocratic and market-driven culture (Coles 2006, 547-561). What makes it possible to imagine that wider change is possible?

Feeding discouragement of many, a recent story from *Inside Higher Education* dramatizes the possibility that higher education will become reengineered in narrow ways that eviscerate the liberal dimensions of learning entirely. “North Carolina governor joins chorus of Republicans critical of liberal arts,” read the headline in *Inside Higher Education*. “Governor McCrory’s comments on higher education echo statements made by a number of Republican

³ See Harry Boyte and John Spencer, “Civic Science – Beyond the Knowledge Wars,” *Huffington Post*, May 31, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/harry-boyte/civic-science-action-_b_1556076.html.

⁴ CRAFTS: Civic Engagement Minor, plan for NAU January 30, 2013; for a detailed discussion of organizing and culture change in and around Flagstaff and NAU see Rom Coles, “The Promise of Democratic Populism in the Face of Contemporary Power,” *The Good Society* 21, no. 2 (2012): 177–193, and (for a student video on the contrasts with conventional schooling) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NarLowOLLQo&feature=youtu.be>).

governors—including those in Texas, Florida and Wisconsin—who have questioned the value of liberal arts instruction and humanities degrees at public colleges and universities. Those criticisms have started to coalesce into a potential Republican agenda on higher education, emphasizing reduced state funding, low tuition prices, vocational training, performance funding for faculty members, state funding tied to job placement in ‘high demand’ fields and taking on flagship institutions” (*Inside Higher Ed* 2013).

But such developments also create openings. The first populist movement among small farmers, black and white, grew from the threats to farmers’ civic autonomy. As Gerald Taylor observes, professionals of all kinds experience analogous threats to their autonomy as knowledge artisans, in environments where “outcome measures” become increasingly narrow, from standardized tests in K-12 to HMO efficiency measures. Like farmers “who contested the loss of control over the means of their work and the intellectual and physical products of that work,” (Taylor 2012, 226) faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders are faced with the prospect that they will either be the architects of change or they will be its objects. There is need to move from protest and resistance to the constructive identities of architects of change, rebuilding public relationships and alliances with many others in American life.

This challenge requires an empowering civic education and many sites that are citizenship schools for knowledge societies. It calls for a revitalization of education itself as a great and animating civic vocation. Public work for citizen-centered democracy will be central to the process.

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CIVIC WORK, CIVIC LESSONS: TWO GENERATIONS REFLECT ON PUBLIC SERVICE

An Interview with Thomas Ehrlich and Ernestine Fu

David Brown, coeditor of the Higher Education Exchange, spoke with Thomas Ehrlich and Ernestine Fu about their work coauthoring Civic Work, Civic Lessons: Two Generations Reflect On Public Service. Brown was interested in learning more about their respective experiences that shaped the manuscript.

Brown: How did you two team up?

Ehrlich: I initially drafted some text about my own work in public service with the idea that it might be used in a book to help encourage young people to engage in public service. When I discussed the idea with a publisher on a very preliminary basis some years ago, she said any book that focused on young people and those who advise them needed youth perspectives. This seems obvious in retrospect, although I had not thought about it until she told me. Kim Meredith, who heads the Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society at Stanford, suggested Ernestine Fu, then a Stanford sophomore. I took one look at her incredible resume—she had been doing more than any student could possibly do, in my view, and doing it all superbly—and responded to Kim that Ernestine must be much too busy to take on coauthoring a book. But Kim urged me to talk to Ernestine on the premise that the busiest people are just those you want to join with you in a project like this because they are usually also the best people. When I talked to Ernestine, she said she would be interested, so I gave her what I had written and asked her to write a piece about her own civic work. I was extremely impressed by her civic story and we quickly agreed that we would join forces as coauthors.

Fu: Coming to Stanford, I was interested in continuing my involvement in public service. I joined student government and volunteered at the Stanford Center for Philanthropy and Civil Society (PACS). Kim Meredith told me that a professor at Stanford (Tom Ehrlich) needed help with a book project. She didn't specify

what he needed, but she convinced me to schedule time to meet him, suggesting Tom was a genuinely friendly and interesting person. I remember we had particular trouble coordinating that first meeting, as I was taking over 20 units at the time. Also, as an engineering student, I did not see myself working on a book, since I was not used to writing nonfiction prose. I mostly focused on research papers that involved number crunching, analysis, and explanations of results. But after some time, Tom and I finally sat down together and things got rolling from there.

Brown: Were there any disagreements on how to proceed or what should be included in your book? Did the substantial differences between Tom's public policy work and Ernestine's civic work help or hinder your partnership?

Ehrlich: We did not have disagreements on how to proceed. It was clear from the outset that Ernestine could contribute insights about civic engagement that complemented mine, and I could do the same in relation to hers. The significant differences in our civic work strengthened our partnership because we each learned from the other, and in the process, our partnership became steadily stronger.

Fu: We work together very well. I couldn't have wished for a better coauthor! What might be termed a "disagreement" occurred when picking the title of our book. Tom initially proposed *What You Can Do For Your Country*, a famous line from President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address. For Tom's generation, that phrase holds significant weight. I quickly agreed that it was a wonderful title. But after speaking with many friends and colleagues, I realized that many young people in my generation, to my dismay, do not recognize the meaning behind the quote or even that President Kennedy said it. I conveyed this to Tom, and after some deliberation, we decided to change our title to *Civic Work, Civic Lessons*, which was originally our subtitle.

Brown: Ernestine, what have you learned from Tom that you probably would not have learned otherwise?

Fu: First and foremost, I had the opportunity to understand what exactly it means to devote a career to public service. Before I met Tom, I didn't personally know anyone who served in as many meaningful civic roles as Tom has. It was inspiring to collaborate with someone who spent an entire career in public service, and

is devoted to continuing to do so. Tom started out as an inspirational role model and turned into a wonderful mentor, colleague, and friend.

Brown: Tom, what have you learned from Ernestine that you probably would not have learned otherwise?

Ehrlich: Ernestine has opened up literally hundreds of doors into youth civic work that were unfamiliar to me. I knew, of course, that many young people were engaged in nonprofit civic work, some locally, some nationally, and some internationally. But Ernestine was able to bring together perhaps 60 young people in focus groups to discuss their civic work and I was literally blown away by their passion and dedication to making the world a better place.

These individuals taught me a great deal about how committed young people are, making amazing differences in the lives of those around them in every conceivable arena of societal need. Ernestine herself is a star, as her own story makes clear. Starting when she was just 15, she organized a youth music group to play for seniors and disabled people and she has been engaged in expanding circles of good work ever since. I would never have known the depth and diversity of youth civic work without her.

Brown: Ernestine, Tom speaks of the “passion and dedication” he found among young people in your focus groups. Where does that come from—family, circumstance, someone’s example?

Fu: A combination of family, circumstance (notably, hardships), role models, and simply enjoying what you’re doing. As Tom and I illustrate in Lesson 4 of our book, after interviewing scores of young people, I realized that people engage in civic work for multiple and mixed reasons. I detail in the book the importance my sister played in shaping where I am today. Also, growing up in urban public schools where drugs, gangs, and violence were commonplace, I saw these bad things happening around me, and I knew I did not want to end up in similar situations. I’ve also had the great fortune of having some outstanding role models, from Mr.



Rodriguez in high school to Tom now. The final ingredient to which I attribute true passion is enjoying what you're doing. If you wake up in the morning excited to jump out of bed and start working on something, then you're working on the right thing.

Brown: Ernestine, how do you specifically go about gaining the “trust” of those you work with? You and Tom note in one of your lessons that “mixed motives” are often bound up in civic work. Does that make earning others’ trust more difficult? Could you provide an example from your experience when “trust” was difficult to establish? And what eventually happened to bring it about?

Fu: When I was leading my nonprofit Visual Arts and Music for Society (VAMS) in high school, the initial group of volunteers included peers from a small magnet program that I was in. I knew everyone extremely well before they decided to join VAMS and trust was never an issue in working with them. As the organization grew, however, we attracted members from outside the magnet program. These new members included students living in urban parts of Los Angeles, and some were rumored to be involved in drugs, gangs, and other questionable activities. When they joined the organization, some of my fellow volunteers and I questioned their authenticity, devotion, and capabilities. We didn't trust them. But as we saw that these new volunteers consistently performed their tasks and kept their promises, this mistrust dissipated and we realized that our initial perceptions were wrong. What I learned from this incident is that a negative perception of an individual often leads to mistrust of that individual. But, if that individual consistently keeps promises and performs well, and proves you wrong, trust is easily created.

Brown: Ernestine, what did you learn from your engineering studies that has helped you in your public service work?

Fu: That's an interesting question because when I met with one of the leaders of the Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford, one thing we talked about was that engineering students often don't spend time volunteering or engaging in public service projects. I thought, “How can that be?” I've found my work in engineering very beneficial to my work in public service. The ability to think critically about a problem and approach it from all angles has helped me see the countless ways in which people can make a difference

... a negative perception of an individual often leads to mistrust of that individual.

in serving the needs of our society. Along with that comes the drive to constantly work through failures and shortcomings in order to come out on top, or in an engineering sense, find the right solution.

Brown: Tom, do you think young professionals currently are doing more pro bono work than in the past?

Ehrlich: I do not know the answer. But I do sense that the type of pro bono work done by many young professionals has changed. Far fewer seem to be engaged in the traditional types of public policy and political work that marked my own early career and that of many of my contemporaries. At the same time, far more are involved in the kinds of nonprofit organizations that Ernestine and I heard about in the focus groups of young people that we organized. Ernestine herself is a role model of this type of pro bono activity.

I grew up active in politics and public policy, but in my youth that meant being involved in partisan politics or in helping to make public policy as a government official. I did not realize, at least as clearly as I do now, thanks to tutorials by Ernestine and those she has connected me with, that nonprofit organizations such as the one that she started are just as important to a vibrant civil society as the more traditional forms of civic work like political campaigning that I had been used to. Both types are needed.

One of the many lessons that I have learned from Ernestine and the wonderful young people whom I have met through the focus groups we conducted together is that youth today take a much broader view of “political engagement” than was true in the years when I was particularly active in traditional politics and public policy making. Youth today are doing all sorts of important civic work that impacts directly on public policies in ways that were completely unknown in that earlier era. Ernestine describes a number of examples in her sections of each of the lessons in our book, and particularly in the last chapter when we focus on using new technologies to enhance civic work.

Fu: And there’s a new form of youth activism. Youth social entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly popular. The rise of social entrepreneurship organizations such as Ashoka, the Skoll Foundation, the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship,

Youth social entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly popular.

and New Profit is aiding this movement as young leaders are provided with the resources they need. I think we should realize that young people are creating change in new, different ways. Young people want to make a difference.

Brown: What have you found are the differences between young social entrepreneurs and those who pursue more traditional community service?

Fu: First, it depends on how you define “traditional community service.” For my generation, I think it is viewed as volunteering at a soup kitchen, picking up trash, cleaning up graffiti, or participating in more routine activities. These activities are critical; however, they are often used as a means to fulfill a requirement or accumulate a certain number of community service hours.

On the other hand, young social entrepreneurs tend to be more eager to be innovative in their civic work—to think outside the box. They look for a civic problem that needs solving and they then exhaust the possibilities in seeking to find what will work best, consistent with their values.

Brown: Tom, given your extensive government experience and now the uncompromising nature of the current political scene “inside the Beltway,” what has to happen to change that, and do you think such a change is likely?

Ehrlich: I am an optimist, and over the long term I think our citizenry will become sufficiently sick of the current stalemate that change will happen. Taking the long view, our country has faced political gridlock before, and we have overcome the resulting hurdles. In my view, youth have an opportunity, along with an obligation, to help bring reasoned debate and thoughtful compromise back to the political scene. The last chapter of our book suggests ways to do that with the help of emerging technologies. The crippling cuts in education budgets are one obvious place to start, for those cuts so directly impact young people and their future.

Brown: Ernestine, specifically, how would you use “the tools of new technology” to arouse citizens about the perils that public



education currently faces? And what do you think has to be done “face to face,” as you put it, not just online?

Fu: Several of my high school teachers are experiencing the cutbacks in funding for public education. I am informed of these problems because some of them describe these issues through social media, namely Facebook. Others directly communicate issues to my former classmates in person. Both methods are effective. Why? Technology enables me to instantly read and visualize what my former teachers are encountering, despite being separated from them by many miles. Meeting them face-to-face helps my former classmates better understand and personalize the stories. The personal aspect is still important for influencing some. I think it is critical to have both the online and in-person parts. When combined, the impact can be very powerful in educating a wide number of citizens—whether they are neighbors next door or people across the country.

Brown: Tom, do you think enough has been done to integrate civic work into the curricula of colleges and universities? If not, what remains to be done?

Ehrlich: Much has happened to integrate civic learning into the curricula and co-curricula of colleges and universities around the country, particularly in the last two decades. Community-engaged learning, or service learning as it is sometimes called, is now an active pedagogy in most institutions of higher education. But it is still not as widespread as I think it needs to be. A book that I wrote with colleagues at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, *Educating for Democracy*, makes the case that preparing undergraduates for responsible political engagement—in public policy as well as partisan politics—is especially needed. Campuses are one of the few places where reasoned debate can and should take place on tough political issues and students need education in grappling with those issues.

Brown: Tom, moving from your manuscript to published work by others on civic engagement and higher education, David Mathews has written that “practical wisdom has to be socially constructed.” Does academe, in its scholarship and teaching, leave room for such work? If so, what are some significant examples that you know of?

... preparing undergraduates for responsible political engagement ... is especially needed.

Ehrlich: David Mathews is a true hero in his eloquent calls for promoting civic engagement in higher education. I am pleased that both scholarship and teaching at campuses across the country are fusing academic learning with civic work for constructive social change. In the realm of teaching, community-service learning has become a widely recognized pedagogy, and there is now an extensive literature on how that pedagogy helps students think about themselves in relation to others. Who are their neighbors and what are their obligations to those neighbors? They come to understand how a community functions, what problems it faces, the richness of its diversity, the need for individual commitments of time and energy to enhance community life, and, most of all, the importance of working as a community to resolve community concerns.

Brown: Ernestine, in *To Serve a Larger Purpose* (Temple 2011), the editors argue that “Rather than openly questioning the prevailing norms, customs, and structures of the academy, civic engagement efforts have instead adapted in order to ensure their acceptance, and legitimacy within it.” What do you think?

Fu: That’s an interesting argument—that students often respond to civic problems within society’s existing structures, rather than think deeply about what causes these problems and the possible need to change those structures. I think that is to some degree true.

I believe that a mix of both methods is needed, which can be termed adaptation and mitigation. Mitigation projects enable students to understand the core of deep-rooted problems in order to mitigate their long-run consequences. Adaptation projects are required so that students learn how to quickly adapt innovative approaches to these problems.

Brown: Tom, Ernestine, let me stay with the editor’s argument that academe has done little to change internally while encouraging external change through civic engagement efforts. What internal changes in academe would you like to see happen?

Ehrlich: The most important step would be for colleges and universities to adopt what I term “institutional intentionality” to ensure the infusion of civic engagement efforts on their campuses. As my colleagues and I discuss in our book, *Educating for Democracy*, most institutions of higher education leave it to their students to choose whether they will participate in programs, courses, or

projects designed to enhance the knowledge, skills, and values needed to participate effectively as knowledgeable and responsible citizens of their communities. But some institutions, and we write about a number of them in our book, have a strong commitment by senior administrators and a critical mass of faculty to ensure that their students graduate with these attributes. That is what I mean by “institutional intentionality.” These campuses not only include “responsible citizenship” as a goal in their mission statements, as most colleges and universities do, they ensure that this goal is realized. They do not necessarily require a single approach for all students, but they do make sure that their students are equipped to be civic leaders when they graduate.

Institutional intentionality is key in terms of all aspects of civic engagement, but it is particularly important in regard to learning how to take part effectively in public policy making and politics, for our democracy depends directly on a citizenry that takes active roles in those arenas. As has often been said, democracy is not a spectator sport. Institutions of higher education are the most important nonpartisan arenas in which young people can learn to be responsibly engaged in making our democracy work.

Fu: As a student, I have often heard faculty encourage students to pursue academic careers or other careers that are based directly on their academic majors. Unfortunately, I have rarely heard either professors or administrators initiate conversations with students on the topic of civic engagement and how those students might apply the knowledge and skills they are learning in their college years to promote civic work. Civic involvement by the graduates of colleges and universities should be an explicit goal of their faculty and administrations. This requires more than just exhortations for students to be civically engaged, though those are important. Carefully planned curricular and co-curricular activities are needed to ensure that students will gain the civic abilities they need and will be motivated to want to be civic leaders of their communities.

Brown: Thanks to both of you.

RETHINKING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT ON CAMPUS: THE OVERARCHING POTENTIAL OF DELIBERATIVE PRACTICE

By Martín Carcasson

In recent years there has been a growing call from multiple sources for a revitalization of democracy. Colleges and universities are often asked to play a central role in such a revitalization, particularly in terms of how college students are prepared to serve as democratic citizens. The growing civic engagement movement was recently highlighted in the 2012 report entitled *A Crucible Moment: College Learning & Democracy's Future* by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU). It is clear that civic education and civic engagement programs have traditionally been envisioned as a critical preventative or antidote to the problems of democracy. Ideally, students are adequately prepared for the responsibilities of democracy with the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The question, however, is whether these programs are properly geared to the nature of the problems we face. *In this essay, I argue that current civic engagement programs often fall short because they misdiagnose the nature of problems in the 21st century and thus leave citizens and communities insufficiently equipped.*

Whereas the recent calls have certainly raised the profile of critical issues and added important insights into the need for improved democratic engagement, they too often provide a somewhat disconnected list of skills and programs that often further muddy what is already muddied terrain. I contend that due to the inherently “wicked” nature of problems in our diverse democracies, our communities must develop and sustain their capacity for inquiry and collaborative problem solving through the perspectives fostered by deliberative democracy. As a result, civic engagement programs in particular should be tapping into those resources and activities in order to prepare students as well as to help build local civic capacity.

Wicked Problems

In a 1973 article, engineers Rittel and Webber introduced the term “wicked problems,” which they contrasted to tame problems. The authors argued that their engineering education was very well suited to help them handle tame problems, but in their work in communities they were being asked more and more often to address wicked problems, which to them seemed to require a completely different skill set.

Tame problems are problems that may very well be extremely complicated and difficult to solve but are nonetheless solvable. They are particularly data-dependent and essentially can be solved by experts armed with good information. As experts engage tame problems, perspectives tend to naturally converge. Wicked problems, on the other hand, have several characteristics that distinguish them.

- Wicked problems are systemic, thus require systems-level thinking due to the inherent interconnections between issues. They cannot be split into component parts to be studied separately, which is particularly problematic for universities that tend to compartmentalize data into narrow subfields.
- Wicked problems inherently involve competing underlying values and paradoxes that can be informed, but not resolved, by science. Such paradoxes require individuals and communities to make tough choices that involve tradeoffs.
- Wicked problems often require adaptive changes from key audiences. Solutions cannot simply be handed down from on high but ideally should be developed and owned by those impacted.
- Addressing wicked problems demands effective collaboration and communication across multiple perspectives.
- Wicked problems often require creativity, innovation, and imagination. They cannot be solved through the accumulation and application of knowledge, but rather are addressed or “tackled” through the cultivation of collective wisdom and application of sound judgment.

In sum, wicked problems cannot be “solved.” The tensions inherent in wicked problems can certainly be addressed in ways that are better

or worse; indeed this is exactly what deliberative engagement seeks. *Wicked problems thus represent a basic reality of diverse democracies that attempt to involve a broad range of people and perspectives in decision making, and that must constantly address problems that are value-laden.* Such a perspective clearly connects with John Dewey's democratic philosophy. Democracy is not simply a mechanism for voting, but a way of associated living, an ongoing conversation. Our communities must be in constant conversation concerning how to best negotiate these inherent tensions and make various adjustments along the way. The better that conversation, the stronger the community likely will be.

Most social problems are wicked problems. Health care, for example, can clearly be understood as a wicked problem. Some people focus on the need for more access, others on lower costs; but all want to maintain high quality health care, support continued innovation and research, and preserve patient choice and convenience. The problem is that many of these goals work against each other. More access likely leads to higher costs or the sacrifice of quality, research, or patient choice. The wickedness is that no amount of information can tell us exactly how to maximize all of these values at the same time. Once we take action to minimize costs or increase patient choices, we necessarily impact the entire system, often in unexpected ways.

Notice how the wicked problem can be framed in such a way that multiple perspectives focus on positive values. The essence of wicked problems is not that some people hold "bad values," but that issues inherently involve competing underlying values to the point that communities cannot have more of one value without sacrificing another. Consider, for example, the dominant American values of freedom, equality, justice, and security. Multiple tensions exist between these values that require constant communication, mutual understanding, and adjustment. Similarly, balancing the social, economic, and environmental goals of sustainability—the "triple bottom line"—also compels tough choices and the recognition of inherent tradeoffs.

In sum, tackling wicked problems requires much different forms of inquiry, communication, problem solving, and decision making than we often see in politics or public policy research.

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Unfortunately, few communities or organizations—much less individuals—currently have the necessary capacity.

Adversarial, Expert, and Deliberative Forms of Engagement

A key construct that has been developed at the Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation to situate deliberative engagement is a typology that lays out three primary ways to engage public problems: adversarial, expert, and deliberative. The adversarial and expert versions are the two dominant forms of problem solving that communities tend to rely on to address public problems, wicked or otherwise. Adversarial engagement is a perspective that relies on having opposing sides competitively make arguments and appeals to mobilize broad audiences, build strategic coalitions, and/or appeal to institutional decision makers in support of their preferred policy options. The key players in this perspective are politicians, activists, lobbyists, and other professional persuaders. It is the primary form of engagement used within partisan party politics, protest politics, social movements, and interest group politics.

Expert-dominated forms of problem solving focus on the importance of high-quality data, and therefore they foreground the role of particular forms of inquiry and the contributions of credentialed experts. They assume that there usually are technical answers to difficult questions; therefore, experts should significantly influence public decisions based on rigorous, often empirical research and analysis. The public, in other words, should defer to experts. Key players here are thus engineers, policy researchers and analysts, and scientists. In local communities, city managers and superintendents often play more of an expert role as well. Often the “public” is considered too uninformed, too uninterested, or too emotional to be involved in decision making.

Both adversarial and expert forms of engagement have strengths and weaknesses. *Unfortunately, their weaknesses are particularly exposed and consequential when dealing with wicked problems.* The zero-sum, winner-take-all nature of adversarial tactics tends to incentivize problematic communication patterns that cause polarization, misunderstanding, and cynicism, making already-wicked problems much more diabolical. Rather than helping communities uncover

and work through the competing values that underlie wicked problems, issues are often framed strategically to narrow the issue to one dominant value, supporting the assumption that those who disagree must reject strongly held values, rather than recognizing they likely support alternative values that are in tension. With adversarial engagement, most messages are designed to either mobilize the like-minded (the “choir” or the “base”) or entice the undecided, meaning productive communication *between* perspectives is oddly rare. Adversaries seek to make one side sound flawless and the other depraved, while opposing advocates make the same argument, leading to dominant communication patterns of opposing sides completely talking past each other. Communications that recognize the value of and provide respect for opposing perspectives are actually seen as weak and ineffective, rather than prudent. Admitting to tradeoffs is simply poor strategy. As a result, differences become severely exaggerated.

Expert-dominated engagement struggles with wicked problems primarily due to the privileging of particular forms of knowledge. As scholars such as Yankelovich and Boyte have argued, experts support a technocratic view of decision making that overly focuses on empirical data and being “value free,” meaning they are adept at examining what *is* or what *could* be but not what *should* be. Experts are trained to focus on specific aspects of problems, which works well with tame problems but is far too narrow for wicked problems. Wicked problems require significant engagement with both facts and values, and experts tend to only deliver on half of that equation.

Deliberative engagement, on the other hand, provides an alternative model focused on genuine interaction. Ideally, citizens come together and consider relevant facts *and* values from multiple points of view, listen and react to one another in order to think critically about the various options before them, and ultimately attempt to work through the underlying tensions and tough choices inherent to wicked problems and arrive at a more nuanced public judgment. When done well, deliberative engagement tends to



foster mutual understanding across perspectives, which then fuels greater potential for the collaboration and innovation critical to tackling wicked problems.

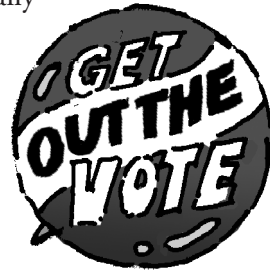
Deliberative engagement, however, takes significant time and effort. The primary hindrance with deliberative engagement, therefore, is the need to build capacity for it, and ultimately make it a habit in our communities. In order to support all the various process points deliberative engagement requires—broad and inclusive research that identifies both tensions and common ground, issue framing, genuine engagement across perspectives, and support for the move to collaborative action—deliberative practice generally requires the assistance of individuals or organizations that take an “impartial” perspective on issues and focus primarily on improving the quality of communication. Such resources increase community capacity by fulfilling a broad range of critical roles, such as convenors, process designers, facilitators, reporters, and impartial researchers. Elsewhere I have termed those who take on these roles as key resources of “passionate impartiality.” They represent people who are passionate about their community, about democracy, and about solving problems but who nonetheless realize that serving as impartial resources focused on building deliberative capacity will fill a unique, critical void in their community. In sum, deliberative engagement requires dedicated, smart, and passionate people to serve critical impartial roles that support the process, and clearly such individuals are rare, and becoming more and more rare by the minute in our polarized political culture. This is precisely why expanding the deliberative nature of campus civic engagement programs is so critical. College students, with instruction and support from professors and staff, however, have enormous potential to fill this role in their local communities, as they have with the Colorado State University Center for Public Deliberation model.

Application to Civic Engagement Efforts

Shifting back to civic education and civic engagement, I would argue that, understandably, the bulk of the college experience focuses on the expert model. Simply put, higher education is primarily tied to the notion of knowledge and data playing an important role in solving various problems. There are certainly

numerous efforts to encourage institutions to engage more directly in community problem solving, and many institutions do, but the dominant model remains a detached and empirically focused model of hard science and social science working to emulate hard science.

Secondarily, colleges and universities also offer numerous opportunities for training in adversarial politics, generally outside of the curriculum. The most obvious examples are campus “get out the vote” campaigns, and the availability of student groups such as College Democrats and Republicans or chapters of activist groups on a wide variety of issues. Certainly the “free speech zone” of most campuses is often awash with activists seeking signatures for petitions, speakers working to mobilize their respective choirs, and activist groups seeking members. Official campus civic engagement efforts can also often connect more with adversarial versus deliberative engagement. Many civic engagement efforts as well as coursework have a particular activist/social justice focus. The degree to which such programs or courses begin with a particular political goal in mind is likely to push them into the adversarial realm.

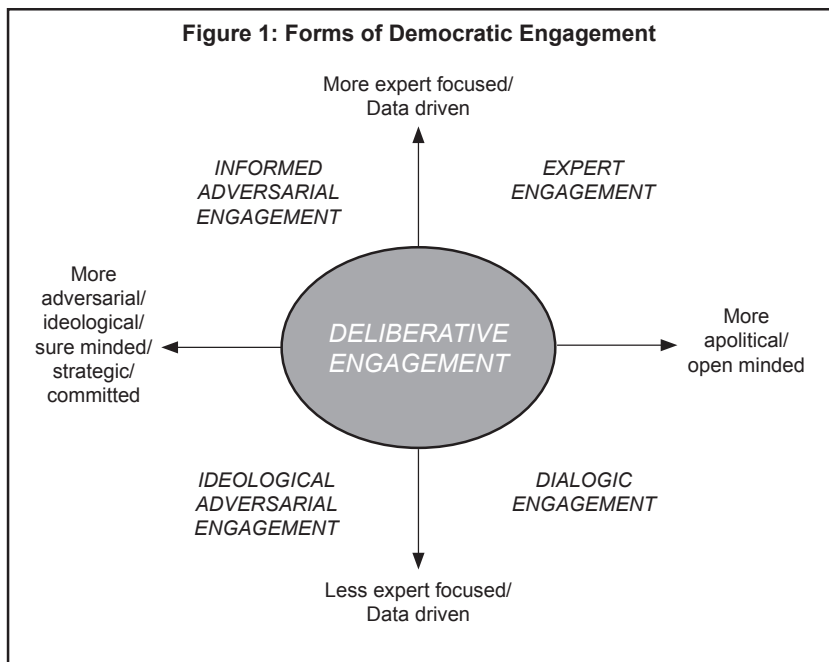


Beyond these connections to adversarial and expert forms of engagement, civic engagement programs at many colleges and universities also have come to focus on much more narrow, service-oriented aspects of civic engagement. Recent reports by scholars such as John Saltmarsh have examined the growing “apolitical” nature of many civic education programs that focus primarily on service and volunteerism. Engagement focused primarily on service tends to essentially skip over the “working through” phase so critical to deliberative engagement. While I certainly support service learning as a useful aspect of the college experience, and recognize the valuable work that is often done through service learning that can make a real impact on lives, when such programs fully substitute for democratic engagement, they are simply too limited. Said differently, civic engagement programs have come to focus more and more on addressing the problems *in* democracy, and have seemingly moved away from addressing the problems *of* democracy. In response to such shifts,

commentators in these reports are now calling for the more specific term “democratic engagement” to replace “civic engagement.” Connecting civic engagement with deliberation is a way to do just that.

Mapping the Connections Between Forms of Democratic Engagement

Building off the distinctions between the various forms of engagement explored thus far, Figure 1 is an initial attempt to graph these different perspectives in conjunction with each other. Infusing campus engagement programs with deliberative engagement



would thus work to place added emphasis on negotiating the appropriate value of data (the vertical axis) while similarly negotiating the perfect balance between the close-mindedness of strictly adversarial engagement with the open-mindedness of perspectives that believe all positions are equally valid. In the figure, expert and adversarial perspectives are now placed in relationship with each other, and dialogic processes are added as processes that are both open-minded and less focused on expertise. Utilizing Aristotle’s notion

of virtue representing the ideal mean between extremes, the far ends of each continua should be considered untenable for political decision making. Far north would represent a perspective that has such an overly narrow view of knowledge, focusing only on rigorous, empirical data as relevant to decision making, to make it too limited for public decision making. Far south, on the other hand, has too open a view of relevant knowledge, losing the ability to make judgments concerning the quality of any argument. Far west is untenable because individuals are so close-minded and entrenched in their positions that the possibility for collaboration and compromise is precluded, whereas far east is untenable because individuals are so open-minded and uncommitted that decisions are never made.

I place deliberative engagement in the middle area of both axes. As Aristotle argued, the ideal mean is not necessarily the middle point, but it could, depending on the situation, range along the continuum. Virtue, Aristotle argued, was thus situational, and always a moving target. The virtuous individuals built up practical wisdom or *phronesis* so that they became better and better at hitting the moving target, but judgment was not simply about applying clear rules to different situations. Deliberative engagement is therefore always about making adjustments in order to seek the right balance along these two dimensions, meaning sometimes what is most needed is to shift upward (adding more focus on quality data and expertise), sometimes to shift downward (opening up the conversation from a rigid limitation of expertise and empirical data), sometimes to shift to the left (adding more passion and stronger perspectives and challenging the status quo), and sometimes to shift to the right (opening up the conversation to broader perspectives).

I should also emphasize that each of the categories in Figure 1 have their own value, particularly depending on the situation. We need, for example, experts dedicated to working in nonideological ways, focused on discovering rigorous data about complex issues. Such work, again, is not sufficient for addressing wicked problems, but it is certainly useful and necessary. Similarly, we need advocates who take positions and work their hardest to convince people to their point of view. Even if those perspectives are more ideological and less supported by data, as John Stuart Mill argued when defending “bad speech,” they have value based on the potential of being the

best idea in the long run, having a spark of insight in them that becomes critical, or perhaps simply due to the instrumental value they earn by causing us to rise up and defend the accepted view. Finally, the dialogic processes on the bottom right can be critical to building trust, understanding, and social capital across perspectives.



In important ways, deliberative engagement seeks to bring out the value of the other forms while minimizing their defects. For example, Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) projects require the analysis of many types of talk in order for us to make sense of issues and devise processes to move the conversation forward. We rely on expert information as well as information from all sorts of advocates to understand where both potential common ground and significant tensions lie. Without the Web pages, message board posts, and various missives from

and conversations with more “close-minded” advocates, the work of the CPD would be much more difficult. The CPD, in other words, works to help the Northern Colorado marketplace of ideas work as it should, and needs a vibrant marketplace to do so.

The broad ideal of deliberative democracy is that individuals would seek these balances themselves, and indeed one way to conceptualize civic education is to build up the skills in students to do just that. Students should recognize both the importance and the limits of data (vertical axis) and should seek to have a mind that is open just the right amount (horizontal). A community of such self-motivated deliberative citizens would certainly run more smoothly than our typical polarized communities. Such an expectation, however, is a tall order, which is precisely why the deliberative democracy movement focuses so much on the importance of good process and the important contributions of “passionately impartial” analysts, issue framers, convenors, and facilitators.

A community of such self-motivated deliberative citizens would certainly run more smoothly than our typical polarized communities.

Conclusion: Seeking the Win-Win-Win

The key question, however, is to what degree do colleges and universities support the deliberative perspective? To what degree do they begin with a recognition of the inherency of wicked problems and the need for individuals and communities to be in constant

negotiation between various key values? A review of the many calls for improved civic engagement that have surfaced in the past several years often includes mention of the importance of deliberation or problem solving, but they tend to be listed alongside many other skills and needs. The perspective offered here argues that deliberative engagement can serve well as an overarching mechanism or ideal to bring a number of inherent tensions within democracy and our colleges and universities into play with each other. Unfortunately, as large institutions tend to do, it is much more common for all the various parts to be rather disconnected—expertise is done over here, dialogue over there, advocacy in other various pockets, and then perhaps deliberation within a specific program or course—leaving the students to make the connections on their own.

If colleges and universities take deliberative engagement as their overarching ideal, three broad benefits would result. First and foremost, students would gain a skill set that is very broadly relevant, and not just to civic efforts. Building skills in complex problem solving, innovation and creativity, and collaboration are among the most important skills employers seek from college graduates.

The second broad benefit of accepting the deliberative perspective as an overarching ideal goes to the community. It is clear that communities are starving for capacity for deliberative practice. In many communities, especially those with institutions of higher learning, there is an abundance of experts and advocates; what is missing is an understanding of the nature of wicked problems and the capacity to turn all the potential value of those resources into more productive engagement. Here is precisely where students can step in and fill this critical need, while at the same time gaining valuable skills for themselves. They are a perfect fit, as they are often eager to make real impacts, are bright, have time, often are not yet polarized, and can perform multiple roles while being compensated with class credit.

Lastly, the third broad benefit goes to the institution of higher learning. These are perilous times for colleges and universities. For multiple reasons, colleges and universities need to renew their connection to the community and clearly present their value. I believe increased deliberative engagement has the potential to do just that.

In closing, I simply would like to reemphasize the clear win-win opportunity presented by expanding deliberative engagement efforts on campuses. I would argue that some of the most important needs of both the community (help in addressing wicked problems) and the university (to help make connections across campus and clearly demonstrate their public value) can be in part fulfilled by utilizing students to support deliberative practice in service of tackling wicked problems, which in turn fulfills some of the most important needs for students (to find meaning and purpose while building critical skills for both their community and the market). As the problems *of* democracy and the problems *in* democracy continue to worsen, the time to tap into the overarching potential of deliberative practice has clearly arrived.

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DELIBERATIVE PEDAGOGY AND THE COMMUNITY: MAKING THE CONNECTION

By Nicholas V. Longo

It is becoming increasingly apparent that higher education is struggling to reinvent itself in the face of new challenges—from shrinking public expenditures and unsustainable tuition prices to economic uncertainties and loss of democratic commitment. Yet these challenges also present remarkable opportunities for innovation, experimentation, and civic purpose—and a broader look at where these new ideas and practices are likely to emerge. Questions about the future of higher education have been taken up in multiple settings over the past few years, culminating most recently in a report issued by the American Association of Colleges and Universities, *A Crucible Moment*. The report boldly calls for institutions of higher education to act as “sites for learning and practicing democratic and civic responsibilities” (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement 2012).

While large-scale change in higher education has historically been slow to develop, new practices for publicly engaged pedagogies that value different ways of knowing are emerging. A diverse array of public deliberation programs and courses has been initiated at colleges and universities, and as a result, a growing network of centers for public life is leading conversations on public issues—including the role of higher education in society—through National Issues Forums and other types of deliberations. The efficacy of public deliberation at resolving complex issues has led to its elements being incorporated into domains beyond the public policy or political sphere. One of the most prominent of these areas is education; specifically, deliberation as an integral part of pedagogy. David Mathews defines *deliberative politics* as the integration of deliberative decision making with public action (Mathews 2012). *Deliberative pedagogy* integrates deliberative decision making with teaching and learning.

Public deliberation is joined by more widespread publicly engaged practices—such as service learning and community

engagement—that help to educate for civic responsibility through reciprocal partnerships that take place outside the walls of campus. According to the Higher Education Research Institute, 65% of college freshmen reported that their campuses offered opportunities for community service or community service learning (Butin and Seider 2012). This is not all that surprising given the growing infrastructure on campuses to support community-based learning. There are centers of service learning and civic engagement on up to 94 percent of colleges and universities that belong to Campus Compact, a national coalition that helps to support the integration of civic and community-based learning (Campus Compact 2008), along with college majors, minors, and a new career track for directors of community education.

But these publicly engaged practices—democratic deliberation and service learning/community engagement—too often take place in isolation. New ways of knowing through publicly engaged pedagogies often simply mirror the silo mentality that permeates more traditional models of teaching and learning. And yet there are civic engagement programs and practices that attempt to bridge these pedagogical divides: namely, *deliberative dialogue that connects with education in the community*.

Connecting deliberative pedagogy and the community is not entirely new. It draws upon historical efforts—such as those developed by the Highlander Folk School during the civil rights movement—led by educators such as Myles Horton, Septima Clark, and Bernice Robinson. Among the significant contributions of Highlander are processes that were used in the “learning circle” method, which empowered people by democratizing the decision-making process. This, for Horton, was integrally tied to education. He argued that learning and decision making are inseparable. “People learn from making decisions,” Horton explains, “and making decisions helps them learn” (Horton 1973, 245). Thus, Highlander involved students in naming, framing, and ultimately acting on the issues that mattered most to them.

This insight can be seen in practice in higher education today. Deliberative pedagogy in the community is more than a unique type of deliberative practice. It also illustrates the emergence of a new approach to teaching and learning. This more collaborative



approach to teaching and learning—in part the result of increased diversity, new technologies that promote transparency and collaboration, and the civic experiences of the millennial generation—offers a new educational paradigm. It moves us beyond a shift from “teaching-to-learning” toward a model of “collaborative engagement” where knowledge is more genuinely co-created through reflective public action. The shift toward collaboration also helps us to see the potential for deliberative pedagogy to illuminate the civic dimensions of teaching and learning in a time of rapid transformation in higher education.

Talking Outside the Classroom

Throughout our nation’s history, education has been linked to the promise of democracy. Deliberative pedagogy is often used as a vehicle to make this connection in higher education, as it spans many domains—connecting communication studies with civic learning and combining new approaches for teaching and learning with productive possibilities for multicultural education.

Deliberative pedagogy most often occurs inside the boundaries of the classroom. For instance, a faculty member might use public deliberation to help students understand the nature of public policy choices, to develop skills in group communication, or to understand a specific public issue such as immigration, the federal debt, or education reform. These approaches to public deliberation tend to be not only important examples of civic learning, but also engaged teaching and learning. Yet confining education to the classroom can be constricting, as it overlooks the many assets of community and community institutions for learning. “The American tendency to equate education and schooling and make schools the instrument for satisfying our wants and alleviating our malaise takes attention from our circumstances,” writes John Goodlad. “We bet on schools, leaving the contextual circumstances unaddressed” (Goodlad 1997, 41). This applies not only to K-12



schooling, but also higher education. Schooling and communities are inextricably linked; solutions to the problems in each must be addressed by harnessing the many talents in the entire “ecology of education” (Cremin 1976).

A growing number of educators are recognizing the power of the community for civic learning, drawing upon the educational philosophies of such pioneers as Jane Addams, John Dewey, Elsie Clapp, Myles Horton, and Lawrence Cremin. These educators have found that thinking more broadly about where learning takes place unleashes a vast set of resources for learning; it also allows education to be more connected to democratic revitalization.

Education in the community is active learning that takes place outside of, but often connected with, the classroom. It involves more than a short-term community service project; it means intentionally putting education in the context of long-term community building efforts. It is most often place-based, using a collaborative, integrated, problem-solving approach. The role of community more often gets recognized as part of student internships, practicums, international immersion, and especially service learning courses in higher education; yet there is also a strand of education in the community that includes public deliberation (which, it is important to note, is where deliberative politics is most likely to take place). In a growing number of courses and programs, for instance, students are involved in public deliberation in community-based settings that go well beyond any introduction to deliberation. Today, students are involved in a variety of deliberative projects that ask them to take leadership in their local communities. And these practices of deliberative pedagogy, which involve reciprocal community partnerships, are also powerful models that begin to challenge traditional notions of politics, engagement, and education. Deliberative pedagogy in the community connects—and transforms—deliberative dialogue and community engagement by attempting to create space for reciprocal conversations, grounded in real-world experiences, which lead to public judgment and collective action.

A Promising Practice in Higher Education

Providence College’s Feinstein Institute for Public Service is experimenting with deliberative pedagogy in the community with the development of the PC/Smith Hill Annex, which draws explicitly

on the examples set by Myles Horton and other historical models such as Jane Addams at Hull House and the social settlement house movement. The Annex is a 1,000 square-foot storefront leased by Providence College from the Smith Hill Community Development Corporation, a long-time partner of the college's Feinstein Institute.

Keith Morton of Providence College, who spearheads the project, describes it as "a space for community and campus to come together." The Annex hosts courses open to students and community members; potluck dinners and book clubs; breakdance, exercise and street art programs; strategic planning meetings of partner organizations; education and support groups for people contending with a variety of challenges—any configuration that will bring campus and community into dialogue. The expectation is that over time the co-creation of this shared space will facilitate campus and community "getting to know one another as neighbors." Morton concludes: "Our deep hope is that these conversations will help the people and institutions articulate and realize what it is that they find most meaningful" (Battistoni, Longo, and Morton, forthcoming). As part of the PC/Smith Hill Annex, the Feinstein Institute is partnering with College Unbound, an experimental college for nontraditional college students, and several high schools and community-based organizations to offer courses around the theme "The City and . . ." The annual course, which is offered each fall semester, provides space for intergenerational conversations and reflective practice around the city of Providence. The first course in the fall of 2011, *The City and Its Youth*, examined the theme of youth and youthwork. The subsequent course, *The City and Its Storytellers*, focused on capturing neighborhood-based storytelling in Providence. Future themes being considered include *The City and Its Arts*, *The City and the World*, and *The City and Its Future*.

Overcoming Challenges

While this initiative offers a compelling example of the potential link between deliberation and community engagement, there are also challenges when asking college students to take real responsibility in the community. Unlike Highlander, for instance, the above example is located within the confines of university education, which is built upon numerous artificial constructions

. . . there are also challenges when asking college students to take real responsibility in the community.

of time. Students take classes measured in credit hours, courses are offered in terms, schedules change each semester until students amass enough hours at the university to graduate. These ways of thinking about time grow out of a scientific conception of learning. John Tagg (2003) suggests that common conceptions of time in higher education result in a limited “time horizon.” That is, students and teachers think they will have to live with the consequences of their actions at school for only a brief time.

In one example of this limited time horizon, J. Herman Blake tells a story of trying to see if some of his college students could intern at Highlander. Blake had been at Highlander, knew Myles Horton, and was aware of Highlander’s work with communities. Thinking this would be an ideal learning experience for his students, he asked Horton, then still director of Highlander, if his students from Santa Cruz could come and do internships at Highlander. “Yes,” Horton replied, “we will be glad to have them, provided that they stay with us for two years” (quoted in Wallace 2000, 133). This was not a commitment many students in higher education could make.

Others have raised related challenges about the role of student leadership in the community. For instance, an early pioneer in the service-learning movement, Richard Cone offers a challenge that empowering students in campus-community partnerships means giving ownership of civic engagement efforts to the most transient and least experienced of those involved in the partnerships. The ethical dilemma that Cone shares is the uncertainty as to “how to engage students in a way that they acquired a sense of humility and a respect for those they ‘serve.’” Cone questions the privilege associated with many students in institutions of higher learning, who he fears “would use their service experiences to acquire skills and knowledge they could use to further disenfranchise those already disenfranchised” (Cone 1996, 21). In giving students more responsibility for leading deliberation in the community, do we run the risk of increasing their sense of privilege and shifting control of the learning even further away from the community? These challenges can be overcome, however, by applying the heightened expectations that come from what Richard Battistoni has termed a “sustained, development, cohort” approach that prepares and supports students

to be engaged democratic citizens in community settings (Mitchell et al. 2011). Battistoni and his colleagues describe the impact of multi-year programs such as the Public and Community Service Studies major at Providence College, the Citizen Scholar Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and the Public Service Scholars Program at Stanford University—all of which have existed since the mid-1990s—on the formation of civic identities and effective campus-community partnerships. These programs each contain four fundamental principles that help produce students with an enhanced civic identity and the skills necessary for relational, action-oriented leadership, which include student voice, community collaboration, engaged scholarship, and a commitment to reflective practice. Furthermore, when community partnerships are thought of as long-term, reciprocal relationships, space is opened for experimentation, mistakes, and flexibility as both sides of the partnership see themselves as dedicated to the long haul.

Deliberative pedagogy in the community also seems to offer an opportunity to address criticisms leveled against deliberative dialogue and community engagement, respectively. For instance, one criticism of deliberative dialogue is a version of the old adage “all talk, no action”—or as Myles Horton explained, “All you do is sit there and tell stories” (Horton & Freire 1990, 99). In advocating for the importance of including public work in deliberative civic engagement, Harry Boyte explains:

Deliberative democracy, welcome as it is, is not enough. Alone, it all too easily takes on a hortatory, idealized quality that separates out an abstract “public sphere” of communicative consensus from real world politics built upon negotiation, bargaining, messy compromise and also creative work to what was once termed, in American history, the commonwealth. (Boyte 1995)

Similarly, critics point to the seemingly apolitical nature of community engagement. This can be seen in the language and framework of service learning, the most common form of community engagement, with its emphasis on “serving needs” and addressing community “deficiencies” (McKnight 1995). Many forms of community engagement also fail to recognize the nature of politics and power. Boyte contends that service routinely “neglects to teach about root causes and power relationships, fails to stress productive impact,

Many forms of community engagement also fail to recognize the nature of politics and power.

ignores politics, and downplays the strengths and talents of those being served” (Boyte 2004, 12).

Deliberative pedagogy in the community opens opportunities for deliberation to incorporate political themes into community engagement projects as students become involved in reflective conversations with a diverse set of stakeholders; and, likewise, this collaborative practice opens opportunities for community engagement to incorporate more public action as an ongoing part of the process of public deliberation as students get involved in real-world community settings.

Toward Collaborative Engagement

“Deliberative democracy challenges academic institutions at every level: from the nature of teaching and the character of the extracurricular program to the very meaning of scholarship,” writes David Mathews (Mathews 2009, 13). Deliberative democracy also offers higher education an example of the type of civic innovation needed for colleges and universities to address the complex challenges facing communities.

Almost twenty years ago, Barr and Tagg articulated an important conceptual shift in teaching and learning—from an Instructional to a Learning Paradigm—that is taking shape across the landscape of higher education. This moves campuses from institutions that exist to provide instruction to institutions that exist to provide learning. With the learning-centered approach, they write, the college’s purpose serves “not to transfer knowledge but to create environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves, to make students members of communities of learning that make discoveries and solve problems” (Barr and Tagg 1995, 15). And yet as a growing number of campus programs make clear, when deliberative pedagogy takes place outside the classroom, it recognizes an essential aspect to the learner-centered paradigm that is often invisible: the community.

In looking at Providence College’s example of deliberative pedagogy in the community, it seems we may be seeing the emergence of the next paradigm that goes beyond the more linear teacher-learner dichotomy still dominant even among the most well-intentioned adherents to the learning paradigm. The next generation of engaged

teaching and learning, it would seem, will more fully incorporate the ecology of educational opportunities available to students in a global and digital world, including community and community institutions. Building on these insights, the Next Generation Engagement Project sponsored by the New England Resource Center for Higher Education has begun to argue that reciprocal, co-creative engagement is the foundation for a new framework for teaching and learning, what might be termed “collaborative engagement.”

The emergence of this new collaborative paradigm is partly the result of significant cultural transformations, especially the advent and adaptation of innovative technologies that have revolutionized the ways in which people communicate, work, and learn. This idea, however, also echoes the writing from educational figures, such as John Dewey, who believed that knowledge and learning are most effective when people work collaboratively to solve specific, real world problems. “Thinking,” he wrote, “begins in . . . a forked road situation, a situation which is ambiguous, which presents a dilemma, which poses alternatives” (Dewey 1910, 11). But to really be immersed in these kinds of forked-road situations with others most often requires going outside the boundaries of the classroom, involving the community as reciprocal partners and co-educators.

This approach means not only recognizing new places for learning, but also recognizing the need for new connections to be made. Thus, in order to fully develop and implement a new paradigm for teaching and learning, we need to be, well, even more collaborative. This asks us to practice collaborative engagement by breaking the disciplining silos that engulf even reform movements in higher education, a call for connecting academic learning with community engagement and deliberative dialogue. In short, we need to do even more talking—and collective acting—in the community.

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THE MEDIUM IS THE MESSAGE: AN ISRAELI EXPERIENCE WITH DELIBERATIVE PEDAGOGY

By Edith Manosevitch

This past January, two election events occurred at Netanya Academic College in Israel. Both took place in Tshuva Hall, which is the major arena reserved for important events with high visibility and prestigious guests. Both events carried the story line of the 2013 Israeli general election campaign, and both endeavored to make a contribution to democratic life by engaging the college community in campaign issues as it prepared to fulfill its civic duty of voting. Taking place a week apart and similar in so many ways, the outcomes of the two events were completely opposite. One event was cut short by contentious discourse and an outraged audience. The other ended with excitement, a sense of civic empowerment, and a consensus that the experience ought to be replicated in coming years. Why were these events so different?

In this piece I argue that the juxtaposition of the two election events demonstrates the power of deliberative pedagogy as a medium for bolstering deliberative norms and values. Just as King Arthur's round table embodied the message of equal voice and opportunity, the National Issues Forums (NIF) format for public forums embodies the message of constructive public debate. In turn, this format can bring about a dramatic change in the nature of public debate and the norms that govern it. This design, which lends itself to a core tenet of deliberative democracy, is particularly important in a culture with deep internal divides on critical issues. Such divides pose an immediate threat to society's stability and well being, impeding any attempt to convey tolerance and mutual respect. This is where the context of Israel is relevant.

Israeli Political Context and Culture

Israel is a deeply divided society with a delicate security situation and complex foreign relations. The nation is divided among several primary minority groups, each of which has further political and

religious divides within it. This includes the Arab sector, comprised of Christians, Muslims, Druze, and Bedouin minorities. The Jewish majority is also comprised of several distinct groups, which differ significantly in their understanding of the role of Jewish tradition and Jewish law in Israeli democracy. Deep divides exist among the various Jewish groups, with conflicting religious and ideological values that are difficult if not impossible to reconcile.

Israel is a parliamentary democracy. The 120 members of Knesset are elected by voting for party *lists* rather than for individual candidates. The total number of seats assigned to each party is proportional to the percentage of votes that each party collects in the general elections, with a minimum requirement of two percent of the total national votes. The divisive social fabric, along with the parliamentary system of governance, results in a broad spectrum of political parties running for office during each election campaign. To illustrate, thirty-two parties competed for office in the recent elections, with twelve ultimately comprising the current Israeli Knesset.

Over the years, this social political context has brought about a culture saturated with political talk and debate. However, due to the deep social and political divides, public issues are highly controversial and public debate often comes across as heated dispute that deepens divides rather than contributing to the problem-solving process. Consequently, many Israelis associate the idea of political discussions with heated arguments rather than constructive debates that strive to meet deliberative ideals. A recent survey I conducted among communication students at my college provides support for this assertion. When asked to describe the nature of existing political debate, most students provided negative accounts of such talk. They describe it with adjectives like “disrespectful,” “ignorant,” “aggressive,” “uncivil,” “not listening,” and “stubborn.” As one student explained, “people try to be right all the time, and do not leave room for the expression of new views. They have no patience for views that contradict their own.”

These descriptions, albeit not representative of the entire population’s views, align with Tamar Katriel’s seminal work on Israeli speech culture. Katriel (1999) identifies the “*casach* speech” as one of the dominant speech styles in contemporary Israeli society.

... many Israelis associate the idea of political discussions with heated arguments rather than constructive debates that strive to meet deliberative ideals.

This speech, she argues, is rough, verbal aggression that impinges upon the fabric of constructive interpersonal relationships (1999). Applying Katriel's insights to the ideals of public deliberation highlights the challenge of pursuing deliberative democracy in Israel, since the "*casach* speech," albeit not the only type of speech in Israel, reflects social norms that undermine the core values of deliberation.

A Chaotic Political Panel

The first election event illustrates the implications that this divisive context and challenging speech culture may have when attempting to pursue informed public debate.

On January 9, 2013, two weeks prior to the Israeli general elections, a political panel was held on campus. Initiated and organized by the Student Union, the panel was designed in the form of a political debate. About 400 students attended the event, with twelve panelists representing the broad spectrum of the parties running for office. The organizers set up the panel to take up a 90-minute time slot, with each representative given five minutes to state their positions and respond to audience questions.

The event began as planned. But soon the atmosphere heated up when Yael Lerer, representing what is considered to be the extreme left wing party Balad,¹ responded to a question about her party's controversial actions on the Mavi Marmara flotilla in May of 2010.² Lerer said that she was glad that her party was there, and expressed support for parliament member Hanin Zuabi's actions on the flotilla.

¹ Balad is an Arab party that advocates turning Israel into a state of all its citizens, rather than a Jewish state.

² The Mavi Marmara was part of the Gaza Freedom flotilla, manned by activists and humanitarians that came from Turkey with the purpose of confronting the Israeli blockade over the Gaza Strip. While it was in international waters, flotilla members refused the request by Israeli Naval Forces to honor the blockade and approach Israel via the nearby port. A violent clash between the activists and Israeli soldiers ensued. During the clash, parliament member Hanin Zuabi joined the activists on the flotilla. Her actions caused heated public debate in Israel, with many questioning Zuabi's loyalty to Israel and her right to serve as a Knesset member.



These statements caused heated outcries from panelists. Some left the stage in protest, declaring Lerer's expressions to be incitement and treason. Others remained on stage, saying they opposed Lerer's views, but valued her right to express them. In essence two issues were simultaneously at dispute: Lerer's controversial opinions, and the debate about the limits of freedom of speech.

While this drama was taking place on stage, there was an uproar from the audience, with dozens of students standing up, singing Israel's national anthem, and clapping steadily to overpower Lerer's voice. But she insisted on her right to voice her opinion, and scolded the audience for their undemocratic behavior. The event turned chaotic. Heated arguments occurred in tandem on stage, off stage, and between the audience and the panelists. Witnesses reported that an argument between Arab and Jewish students began in the audience and turned into violent confrontation that required police intervention. The Student Union organizer tried to maintain control by requesting that everyone calm down, but he was unsuccessful and was forced to stop the panel discussion. Later, he managed to get a few of the moderate panelists to continue the debate in another room.³

This panel demonstrated how political issues in Israel are intertwined with fundamental questions about the nation's identity and legitimacy as a Jewish democracy. It also showed the deep divide between right- and left-wing ideologies, and the challenge Israelis face when seeking to embrace democratic norms such as tolerance and inclusive debate.

Citizens' behavior during the panel discussion—students and politicians included—manifested the negative characteristics that my students



³ Videotape of the event and confrontation may be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCus7ilpxXM>.

Discussion of sensitive issues in public oftentimes leads to aggressive speech and an impasse.

noted in their descriptions of existing public debate. This is indisputably an extreme occurrence. By no means does this represent all political debate in Israel; there are plenty of forums for constructive and thoughtful deliberations. But sad to say, it was not an anomaly. Discussion of sensitive issues in public oftentimes leads to aggressive speech and an impasse. This may occur in the media, in public conferences, and even in the parliament. In fact, the Israeli parliament has a reputation for disrespectful discussions—an Israeli might scold arguing friends using the expression “will you stop already, you are not in the parliament.”

My aforementioned student survey reveals two more interesting findings. First, more than 90 percent of the students surveyed agreed with the statement that it is important to have inclusive public debate about key issues in Israel. A few responded that they are not sure, and only two students (of 120 total respondents) said they disagreed. But more striking were students’ normative ideas of public debate. To gauge their concept of this, I asked, “If you could shape public debate in Israel in the best way possible, how would you shape it? How should it be conducted, and who should participate in it?” Most responses seemed to align with theoretical conceptualizations of public deliberation. For example, students wrote that public debate should manifest “tolerance, acceptance of others’ opinions” and it should be “inclusive of people from all layers of society (socioeconomic, gender, and culture).” They wrote that it should be conducted

- “in a quiet and organized manner,”
- “[where] one talks and everyone listens and then the next one talks and everyone listens,”
- “politely without yelling,”
- “with patience and tolerance,” and
- “must listen to everyone’s opinions, listen to one another, as long as the opinions do not hurt our nation and army.”

In other words, students’ negative characterization of existing Israeli political talk does not seem to detract from the importance they attribute to such debate when it adheres to normative ideas of deliberation. They believe that an inclusive and organized political debate is a necessary component for Israeli democracy. This brings me to the second election event.

The Deliberative Elections Conference

On January 16th, one week after the political panel discussion, in the same lecture hall, we implemented the first student-led deliberative elections conference. The event was timely—only six days shy of the Israeli general elections, with campaign news coverage and events at their peak. We named the conference “Students say NO to the Horse Race: Elections Conference 2013,” thereby inviting an opportunity to discuss the challenging nature of campaign coverage and its implications on informed citizenry and democracy.

The conference was a peak event of an intensive three-month process with my senior-year seminar students. This is a yearlong research seminar on public deliberation, which I have been teaching in Israel since 2009. The general elections presented an appealing opportunity to complement theory with practice. Thus I decided to integrate a deliberative conference as a class project within the seminar curriculum. To me, this was also an opportunity to experiment with deliberative pedagogy on a timely occasion.

To begin, we devoted six weeks to discussions of core readings on the theory of deliberative democracy. We then turned to conference preparation. This included learning the campaign issues, preparing them for deliberation, and preparing background material about the issues for participants. The other major preparation was moderator training. As all this was happening, students also helped “get the buzz” around campus and create a sense of excitement that would encourage wide student participation. They ran a Facebook page, created a promo that was broadcast on the campus radio, and used their graphic design skills to produce an appealing logo and flyers that were posted around campus and shared virally online. The project capitalized on communication skills that students had been developing in our school’s program to enhance their experience and contribute to its success.

In total, 127 students participated in the event; 19 students were from the deliberation seminar and the rest were communication students with no prior background in public deliberation. This exceeded my goal of 100 students—and the faculty’s warning that I should not expect more than 50—since normally students are disinclined to participate in optional activities.

The conference framework followed the traditional NIF structure for public forums, with an opening plenary session,

group discussions where ten discussion groups were seated in circles in the open area surrounding the major conference hall, a coffee break, and closing session, after which participants completed feedback forms about their experience. My seminar students served

as moderators for the group discussions. While

some were eager and confident in their ability to do this, others were shy or intimidated by the responsibility involved. In order to encourage all students to experience the moderator role and take an active part in the process, I suggested they work in pairs, with a lead moderator and an assistant. This option was well received.

Indeed, in the end all of the seminar

students took part in moderating the discussion (except two students that headed the film crew) and, most important, all expressed personal fulfillment and empowerment from the experience.

As students were engaging in group discussions, faculty and guests observed from afar so as not to disrupt. At this point it was a student event in its entirety. After three months of endless preparations, even I felt useless. Student moderators were leading engaged student discussions and a film crew was busy documenting the event. Nothing else was needed. There was no trace of aggressive discourse, public rage, or protest; just a simple manifestation of public deliberation.

Faculty members walking around were overwhelmed to see students actively participating in civilized group discussions led by their peers. Student moderators reported the same feeling. Prior to the event, they were concerned that no one would cooperate, or alternatively, that they would have trouble controlling an aggressive discussion. Some suggested we hire security guards for the event, which made sense given the backdrop of the aforementioned political panel. But none were needed for the ten groups in circles, who were getting to the heart of the issues, challenging each other with substantive questions and considerations, and attentively, respectfully engaging.



Analysis of participants' feedback forms complements the overall enthusiasm expressed by the seminar students and the faculty. Participants were overwhelmingly appreciative of the experience. They reported that they were happy they came, they benefited from it, and most of them wrote that they would be interested in joining this type of event in the future. Further, most participants indicated that they gained both knowledge and understanding of the issues discussed.

Group discussions were by far the most appreciated and valued component of the conference. All participants rated the discussions positively, as either "excellent" or "very good." Only a few classified the conference as "good" and none evaluated it as "poor" or "fair." In response to the question "what was the most valuable component of the event?" 81 percent of the respondents answered that it was the group discussion. Interestingly, in response to the question about "things that should be changed in future events," many indicated that the group discussions should be longer, thus providing further evidence for the attributed importance of this component.

Moderators were also highly appreciated. Most participants indicated that their group moderator was "excellent" or "very good." Here, too, open-ended comments support the positive ratings. For example, participants wrote that their moderators

- "moderated the discussion in an excellent and fascinating manner";
- "were pleasant and very clear";
- "[were] interesting and knowledgeable";
- "created an interesting atmosphere and gave an opportunity to express differing opinions."

Conclusion

Deliberative pedagogy is an emerging field of research that seeks to identify ways in which academia may develop students' deliberative values, norms, and behavior. While cultivating deliberative practices is challenging everywhere, it seems particularly difficult to achieve in deeply conflicted contexts such as Israel. Difficult, but not impossible. This case study serves as an example of the power

... most participants indicated that they gained both knowledge and understanding of the issues discussed.

of deliberative pedagogy for transforming the nature of political debate. Juxtaposing the two events illuminates the power of pedagogy and format for translating theory to practice.

The sharp contrast between students' descriptions of existing public debate versus their normative understanding of what it should be may explain the success of the deliberative conference, and highlight the importance of such endeavors in Israel.⁴ The conference manifested the attributes that students ascribed to public debate when asked how they would shape it, if only they could. It manifested mutual respect, organized discussion, and equal opportunity for everyone to listen and to be heard. The conference represented the opposite of students' subjective experience with Israeli political talk. Perhaps it provided them the deliberative experience that they aspire to have.

Further research is needed to examine how similar experiences might be developed to provide students with tools for constructive participation in public debate, and help promote a more deliberative culture in Israeli society and beyond.

⁴ Videotape of the deliberative conference may be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzLR2W5Astk>.

TODAY'S CIVIC MISSION FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

By Sean Creighton

During the most recent global economic crisis, America's community colleges frequently gained the national and political spotlight as federal policymakers directed new levels of funding to them to address workforce development, skills retraining, and college attainment. Several major foundations, working alongside policymakers, also recognized the particular importance of community colleges' contributions to the country's workforce mission by making billions of new dollars available through direct and competitive grants. Policymakers and foundation leaders declared community colleges a major factor in transitioning displaced workers from America's manufacturing sector, as well as in giving first generation, traditional and nontraditional students a pathway to career and future. Community colleges may be better positioned than traditional universities to respond to the changing needs of industry and deliver educational programs aligned with industry demand. Also, these colleges remain comparatively affordable, as the cost of tuition and fees at public and private institutions has risen to record levels. Though community colleges were established in the 1920s—and flourished in the 1940s in response to the Truman Report—it was as if they had been newly discovered and deemed the ideal solution for addressing the nation's economic woes.

In fact, we have seen—and continue to see—an aggressive development of new initiatives fashioned around skills development. Understandably, community college leaders, who have experienced flat or declining state funding for instruction, are highly attracted to this labor-driven investment. However, the supply and demand approach to curricular development may lead to tunnel vision if industry needs *du jour* increasingly dominate the community college mission. In other words, community colleges could become pigeon-holed, supplanting a comprehensive educational mission with a strictly economic mission. Furthermore, this over-emphasis on the economic mission distracts from the conversation and attention on strengthening the civic mission of community colleges and building the civic agency of its students to address community

problems. Once referred to as *Democracy's College* and the *People's College*, the current trend is turning community college into the *Economy's College*. Hence, it is absolutely imperative that the pendulum swing back to create balance across the educational, economic, and civic missions of community colleges.

Among community college leaders and advocates, there has been a discussion on the relevance and critical importance of the civic mission of community colleges. Inspired by the American Democracy Project, *The Democracy Commitment: An American Community College Initiative*, launched in 2011, is giving rise to a renewed voice and commitment to the civic mission. The Democracy Commitment is a national initiative focused on the development and expansion of programs and projects aimed at engaging community college students in civic learning and democratic practice. The commitment puts the civic mission back at the center of the dialogue on the role of community colleges, stating:

We will provide a national platform for the development and expansion of programs and projects aiming at engaging community college students in civic learning and democratic practice. Our goal is that every graduate of an American community college shall have had an education in democracy. This includes all our students, whether they aim to transfer to university, gain a certificate, or obtain an associate degree (Democracy Commitment 2011).

The American Commonwealth Project, launched in 2012 by the U.S. Department of Education and the White House, also sparked renewed national attention to higher education's civic mission. Although these commitments to democracy and civic engagement did not receive as much attention in political rhetoric, they clearly signaled that national leaders maintain an interest in advancing the civic mission of higher education.

Higher Education's Contemporary Challenges

While the economic and civic missions may be gaining steam—the former faster than the latter—over the horizon is an accumulating set of internal and external contemporary challenges with no simple answers or quick solutions. While this list could be ten times longer based on whom you talk to, several pressing contemporary

challenges include, in no particular order

- the rising cost of tuition and fees;
- the challenge to provide increased security on campuses;
- increased scrutiny by policymakers and media on how public dollars are spent;
- questions about a college degree's return on investment;
- the influx of international students to generate revenues;
- launch of the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) initiative and its resistance to commodification, along with ongoing efforts to integrate MOOC learning;
- decline in federal and state support for instruction;
- pressures to increase retention, completion, and graduation rates;
- aging facilities and infrastructure across many campuses; and
- pressure to prepare graduates to work in the era of globalization.



This list is far from complete. We could conduct further inquiry with faculty, students, and community partners and the list would grow.

Community colleges and higher education in general are headed on a collision course with these challenges if not handled with strategic care, intelligent stewardship, and intuitive leadership. These challenges need to be resolved or they will remain an ongoing distraction that pulls and pushes the educational, economic, and especially civic missions off course, or simply prevents the civic mission from achieving a level of maturity that results in scalable community impact.

Challenges to Civic Work on Campus

In addition to the plethora of economic and structural challenges, there is another unique set of challenges community colleges face in embracing a civic mission and providing a civic education for their students. An unpredictable student population is a challenge when

attempting to generalize student engagement across a curriculum. A large percentage of community college students are managing jobs, families, and other community and life commitments, and that often makes it a challenge to engage them in co-curricular activities. Unless service activities are substituted for classroom seat time, civic activities pose a challenge for community college students since these activities are in direct competition with other life priorities.

An additional challenge is the substantially diverse educational goals of the community college population from semester to semester. Students attend community colleges for numerous reasons, including degree or license; ongoing professional development; lifelong learning for personal enrichment; workforce development and career change; and remedial education, just to name a few. Unlike traditional four-year institutions, where the majority of students are in pursuit of a degree, community colleges are far more complex in their design, purpose, course offerings, and student input and output. Because a large segment of the student population is transient, it is consequently a challenge to create ongoing civic engagement activities that link students with the surrounding community. Therefore, the bonds between students, the campus, and the surrounding community are difficult to establish or develop, much less sustain.

In listening to faculty and practitioners speak about issues, barriers, and challenges, other common themes emerge, such as civic engagement activity being politicized as liberal and partisan by conservative leadership, faculty, or trustees, and, therefore, discouraged or frowned upon. At first glance, this observation might seem isolated to campuses in conservative states. However, the truth is that campuses, regardless of the preferred politics of their locale, shy away from “civic work” that may appear political in nature.

There is also the longstanding and ongoing acknowledgement that community engagement, public scholarship, and service by faculty is not valued in the criteria for promotion and tenure. In the publication, *Scholarship in Public: Knowledge Creation and Tenure Policy in the Engaged University* (J. Ellison and T. Eatman 2008), the culture of the academic workplace is investigated and confronted on this issue. The publication makes the case for academic work performed in connection with the public to be treated equally

with traditional types of research and to become a respected and acceptable form of scholarship. Despite scholarly efforts like this and other work on select campuses, gaining a broader acceptance and recognition of public scholarship has been an ongoing battle, dating back to the efforts of Eugene Rice and Ernest Boyer in the 1990s, who pioneered the scholarship of engagement.

There is also always the issue of poorly executed service learning programs that do a disservice to community partners and result in a divide between campus and community. The classic example is the one in which the campus still acts as if the community is a laboratory for student learning, and faculty and students fail to recognize the community's own assets, needs, and perspective in arranged learning agreements. In these cases, community members or organizations are often left with a feeling of being used and ignored in terms of having their own voice heard and their own needs met through civic engagement.



These ongoing challenges to practicing civic engagement, combined with the internal and external contemporary challenges facing community colleges, leave me far less optimistic about the future of today's civic mission at community colleges. It makes me wonder how a community college can genuinely embrace its civic mission and become a leader in civic engagement when faced with so many barriers. It makes me question whether the national civic conversation has a chance of advancement.

Fortunately, a glimmer of hope emerges—a hope that resides abundantly in academic idealism, and a hope that is at the foundation of democracy. Citizens band together during times of challenge, and have overcome hardships far greater than the ones facing higher education. Maybe these challenges present the whitewater conditions in which the civic mission will benefit because the challenges will best be resolved through democratic engagement. It is through the collective strength of the citizens working on these contemporary challenges to higher education that creative

resolutions will be found. Such a purposeful outcome stems from the power of collaborative thinking, the practice of enlightened civic engagement, and the ethos of our unwavering democracy.

Creating a Culture of Democracy

In creating a culture of democracy, community colleges need to take a major first step by adopting a clear commitment to democratic practices. Fortunately, the signatories of The Democracy Commitment have made such a pronouncement. The commitment asks the following of the signatories:

- a public commitment to the central role of civic education;
- intentional support for both curricular and extracurricular programs that build civic skills among students, especially focusing on projects that support students in doing public work;
- faculty and staff development in civic engagement;
- partnerships with local civic, nonprofit, and governmental agencies whose primary work is the social and economic development of local communities;
- participation in a national clearinghouse of program designs, curricula, and project development strategies for community colleges;
- participation in an annual meeting that brings together faculty, staff, administrators and partners;
- development of joint regional and national programs with partner universities, and with national higher education associations.

The Democracy Commitment frames the work to be done, providing a glossary of actions. It reflects various outputs toward the articulated outcomes of “preparing our students for their roles as citizens and engaged members of their communities” and ensuring that a “graduate of an American community college shall have had an education in democracy” (Democracy Commitment 2011).

Although the commitment fails to articulate the importance of addressing specifically the *contemporary challenges* facing higher

education and utilizing democratic practices to alleviate these challenges and future ones, the subtext to the commitment is to build a culture of democracy on campus that ultimately leads to this outcome. Further, the commitment has provided an opportunity for ongoing study. As these community colleges work toward creating that cultural change on campus, scholars and practitioners alike have a self-selected study group to watch and learn from, to follow closely and study the success of culture change, as well as the challenges and pitfalls.

In addition to The Democracy Commitment, various exemplar centers in civic engagement have arisen at community colleges. The exemplars demonstrate a deeper level of investment in building civic capacity. These centers provide insight into the current state of civic engagement at community colleges and serve to illustrate how civic engagement initiatives have been operationalized at these institutions. Several exemplars include

- the Institute of Community and Civic Engagement, De Anza College (CA), which “advances education for democracy with full participation of all of our communities as its core value”;
- the Center for Civic Engagement, Ivy Tech Community College (IN) that “works to promote service on the individual, academic, and institutional level”;
- the Center for Civic Participation, Maricopa Community College (AZ) that “seeks to enrich public life and public discourse on our Maricopa Community Colleges campuses and in our communities”; and
- the Center for Community Involvement, Miami Dade College (FL), which “enhances student learning, meets community needs, and fosters civic responsibility and a sense of caring for others.”

These notable centers work closely with the diverse communities served by their community college. Their programs and activities promote civic participation to faculty, staff, and students and connect with key community stakeholders. While by no means the only examples of civic activity occurring at our nation’s community colleges, they are standouts, having received national recognition for their leadership in promoting civic engagement and are illustrative

. . . various exemplar centers in civic engagement have arisen at community colleges.

of quality civic work occurring at community colleges. They demonstrate that community colleges can learn how to develop a mechanism that is institutionally supported and that serves as a bridge between campus and community. These centers demon-

strate that there are pockets of active leader-

ship among community colleges that

promote civic engagement. From these

centers, we can learn about new and

innovative ways to institutionalize the

practice of civic engagement at

community colleges.

While these centers are leaders in

working with the external community,

what is still unclear is their role in developing

a culture of democracy on campus that addresses

their own on-campus challenges. These centers coordinate

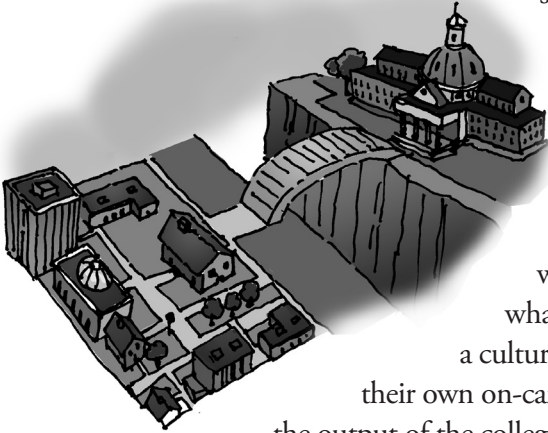
the output of the college's civic mission, if you will, so it makes it

easy to describe a community college's civic mission by its pro-

grammatic output. Therefore, a civic center could readily deepen

its focus on inward issues and work on institutionalizing democratic

practices to address contemporary challenges on campus.



Conclusion

As I reflect on the many conversations with colleagues that have broadened my understanding of democracy and engagement, I realize that the idea of educating students to be engaged citizens is viewed favorably by a majority of educators. That said, the actual practice is limited to only a select faculty. Those select few are passionate and dedicated educators and administrators who are on a professional mission to incorporate civic learning into their own classrooms and/or make it a central part of the operations of their campuses. These efforts are admirable, to say the least, and are aimed at positively affecting student success. However, in the grand scope of higher education, civic education and civic engagement are not priorities, nor are they considered central to the learning experience.

Yet I am optimistic that community colleges hold the potential to lead the conversation and efforts on the civic mission of

higher education. There are important questions for community colleges to consider, which will involve a deeper reflection on their civic mission and their abilities to build a culture of democracy and engagement on campus. As much as there is a call for civic renewal, aside from the exemplars community colleges are not challenging themselves to pursue a civic mission. Community colleges prioritize their education and economic missions foremost and view democratic capacity building as secondary. Although community colleges affirm the key ingredients of a civic mission, this mission has been less important and less explicitly articulated than education and economic missions. For community colleges to become civic agents, much consideration needs to be given to building upon the best practices of existing efforts, and looking for innovative practices to bridge the educational, economic, and civic missions. In the end, the most viable effort to create and sustain a culture of democracy and civic engagement on campus is to engage students, faculty, administration, and staff as participatory citizens in addressing pressing challenges on campus first; that is the key to today's civic mission at community colleges. This is the honest crux of the matter for community colleges and other types of colleges or universities: to be genuine in its commitment to civic engagement, a campus needs to develop a culture of democracy and demonstrated democratic practices within the institution itself. This would be an intentional and internal understanding of democratic practice.

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REAL SOCIAL SCIENCE: APPLIED PHRONESIS

Edited by Bent Flyvbjerg, Todd Landman, and Sanford Schram
Alex Lovit, Reviewer

This edited volume collects responses to and applications of the idea of “phronesis,” as it was introduced by Bent Flyvbjerg in his 2001 book, *Making Social Science Matter*. Flyvbjerg adapted the concept of phronesis from Aristotle, who distinguished phronesis (practical wisdom) from epistemé (universal truth) and techné (technical know-how). In Flyvbjerg’s view, the academic social sciences have erred in attempting to emulate the model of the physical sciences. Where hard science seeks replicable, universal truth (epistemé), social scientists study subjective, conditional, and localized human relationships. Phronesis, or the search for knowledge that is applicable in practice, is therefore the appropriate model for social science research. As Sanford Schram puts it in his contribution to this volume, “Phronetic social science . . . is centrally about producing research that has relevance to decisions about what can and should be done, and also how to do it.” (19) To guide social science research toward this goal, Flyvbjerg provided four central questions that phronetic research projects should address: “(1) Where are we going? (2) Who gains, and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power? (3) Is it desirable? (4) What should be done?” (25) Suggesting a fundamental reorientation of the multiple social scientific academic disciplines, Flyvbjerg’s concept of phronesis is not lacking for ambition. *Real Social Science*, which collects the efforts of various scholars attempting to put these theories into practice, will be of interest to *HEX* readers who wish to know the results of this experiment in applied scholarship.

The book is divided into two sections: the first containing four theoretical essays on the subject, and the second containing nine essays on “applied phronesis.” Although phronesis seeks to make scholarly knowledge useful outside of the academy, the essays in this volume are theoretically dense and are unlikely to appeal to lay readers. Different essays approach the subject of phronesis through varying theoretical literatures. Sociologist Arthur Frank

cites Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus*—socialized norms within a field—and *illusio*—investment in the stakes of a field. Frank writes, “Real social science, as I understand Bourdieu, requires the capacity for sustaining the respective *illusio* of both the academic and the everyday fields, while remembering the differences between them.” (56) Frank also endorses Michel Foucault's emphasis on problems rather than solutions, concluding that “[p]hronesis is tolerating the understanding of life and theory as projects-in-process . . . ” (63)

Virginia Eubanks, a professor of women's studies, argues that feminist theory can address weaknesses in Flyvbjerg's approach by complicating his understanding of power structures and oppression. Eubanks also argues that phronetic researchers should not abandon objectivity, but rather adopt Sandra Harding's concept of “strong objectivity,” which is “best achieved when a number of different standpoints are put in conversation with each other in the context of social justice oriented research and action.” (241)

Phronetic researchers' desire to avoid privileging “expert” knowledge frequently leads them to embrace democratic practices: “[P]hronetic social scientists rely on public deliberation and the public sphere, not because these set-ups are perfect, but because they are the best we have for collective decision-making.” (286) Many of the researchers included in this volume have worked closely with partners outside the academy in order to create broader social impact. Of course, this work requires a difficult balancing act between the divergent responsibilities of academic scholars and other groups, and between research and action goals. As Corey Shdaimah and Roland Stahl argue, “Collaborative research requires that conflicts be engaged actively and openly while a research project is carried out. In other words, the conflicts among the scientific, advocacy and public spheres are recognized and negotiated within the collaboration.” (133)

Many of the individual studies of “applied phronesis” presented here are compelling. Flyvbjerg's own contribution to this volume supplements his previously published research on “mega-projects”—large-scale construction projects, often developed through public-private partnerships. Gathering data from across the globe, this research determined that estimates for such

projects habitually underestimate costs and overestimate benefits. These findings were published in Flyvbjerg's 2003 book *Megaprojects and Risk*. But in the essay published here, Flyvbjerg describes his attempts to publicize these findings through the mass media, to reach a wider nonacademic audience. In his view, this is a fundamental phronetic strategy: "phronetic social scientists are explicitly concerned about public exposure, because they see it as one of the main vehicles for the type of social and political action that is at the heart of phronesis." (97) In describing his own experience, Flyvbjerg argues both that the mass media is an essential tool for academic findings to have a real impact on public policy, and that interacting with journalists need not make significant demands on scholars' time.

In discussing his own experiences of attempted intimidation by government bureaucrats, Flyvbjerg also provocatively argues, "If nobody is against a specific piece of phronetic research, most likely the research is unimportant as regards its implications for practice. Phronetic researchers are power researchers, and as such they do not expect consensus for their work, but conflict. . . . [A] *priori* consensus is considered dubious, because too often it is an illusion created by disregarding power." (117) As the editors of this volume point out in their conclusion, Leonie Sandercock and Giovanni Attili's essay presents a contrast to this perspective, as they "seem to trust dialogue and consensus a bit more than some of the other authors in this book." (292) Sandercock and Attili's essay describes the authors' creation of a documentary film about conflict between Native American and white settler populations in Burns Lake, British Columbia, where a tax dispute had recently led the non-native municipality to shut off water and sewer services to the native reserve. Sandercock and Attili write, "The goal is to produce an input into the ongoing social dialogue and praxis of a society, rather than to generate ultimate, unequivocally verified knowledge." (143) With this phronetic goal in mind, they carefully constructed their documentary in partnership with both the native and settler populations of Burns Lake in order to capture multiple narratives and to promote intergroup dialogue.

Flyvbjerg's use of the mass media to expose government misinformation and Sandercock and Attili's attempts to reconcile a divided community are clear examples of applied scholarship.

But not all the essays in this volume describe such nontraditional academic roles. For example, Tricia Olsen, Leigh Payne, and Andrew Reiter describe amnesty laws in Brazil, preventing prosecution of historical human rights abuses by the military. These authors present an international comparison of human rights indices, examining the effects of different strategies for resolving traumas and abuses. They conclude, “Combining and sequencing trials and amnesties, or trials, amnesties and truth commissions, is more likely to improve democracy and human rights than adopting a preferred single mechanism.” (217) This is compelling analysis, and the policy implications are clear, but it is not obvious how this essay—which employs esoteric academic methods and is published in an academic collection—will contribute to changing Brazil’s transitional judicial practices. The global comparative nature of this research also appears to contradict Schram’s statement that “phronetic social science understands that social science is best equipped to offer contextualized knowledge appropriate to particular settings and focused on specific problems.” (24) The editors of this volume argue that “Phronetic social science scales well” (287), and indeed it must if it can embrace both an international comparison and a study of a Canadian community of 3,000 people.

But more than disparities of scale, what is problematic here is a lack of agreement on what constitutes the definitional practicality of phronesis. The question is so unsettled that William Paul Simmons’ essay in this volume states, “What is not clear is the extent to which Flyvbjerg is calling on social scientists to get involved and *do* politics in lieu of merely *studying* politics.” (247) The editors of this volume (including Flyvbjerg) respond to this question with the “unequivocal answer . . . that the phronetic call to social scientists is exactly to become virtuoso social actors in their chosen field of study and to *do* politics with their research . . .” (287) But the essays in this volume take a wide range of approaches to research that “*does*” politics.

This variety is both the strength and the weakness of this book. Its various chapters contain such diversity of discipline, methodology, theory, scale, geography, and practical goals that it can be difficult to see such disparate studies as integral parts of a coherent intellectual tradition. However, this same diversity demonstrates the rich possibilities of approaching academic work through

the concept of phronesis. Whatever the differences between them, the scholars in this book have all been energized by the call to produce research that contributes to society's practical knowledge. And although this book's editors can prescribe no singular method for phronetic research, their concluding comments on the concept of "tension points" might help to guide engaged scholars toward social impact: "In phronetic research, tension points are power relations that . . . are fraught with dubious practices, contestable knowledge and potential conflict. Thus, even a small challenge—like problematization from scholars—may tip the scales and trigger change in a tension point." (288) *Real Social Science* provides a useful resource by collecting diverse views from academic scholars, attempting various strategies to discover tension points, and seeking to trigger social change.

ENGAGING THE WORK OF DEMOCRACY

By David Mathews

All of the Kettering Foundation's research is done from the perspective of citizens, so the foundation asked the *Higher Education Exchange* to bring that perspective to each issue. For example, the research on the mission of higher education, which I mentioned in last year's issue, requires starting with people's concerns—and then finding out what, if anything, they expect colleges and universities to do about them. Research is already underway that moves in the opposite direction by starting with the mission of higher education. In the near future, I hope we will begin a companion study that puts the public's concerns in the forefront. It should tell us a great deal about the public's perspective.

The public's point of view is crucial because it has implications for the considerable effort that colleges and universities are putting into engagement projects and service learning. Those efforts are helpful, yet a democratic public isn't a constituency to be served; it's a producer of *public goods*, things that benefit society or a community as a whole. Those range from goods that benefit a community, like *building* a playground for children, to products that benefit the entire country, like *organizing* mothers to stop drunk driving. The public is a working body, a dynamic force, and effective engagement has to engage the work itself. It isn't just the playground that's important; it's the building. It isn't just stopping drunk driving; it's the organizing that has to be engaged. I mean that the work that institutions of higher education do should reinforce the work citizens do in building and organizing. And that requires looking closely at how citizens do the work of producing public goods.

Much of the foundation's research has gone into trying to understand this work. The more we all know about it, the more effective engagement can be. So far, Kettering has been able to find six practices that are essential.

What the foundation has learned is that the work of citizens begins in identifying or naming problems that need to be solved. If people are to become invested in solving these problems, the

names have to capture the things people hold dear, the things that affect them personally or the well being of their families. In past issues of *HEX*, I used safety, freedom, and being treated fairly as examples of these common imperatives. Unfortunately, academic names of problems, while accurate, aren't enough to engage citizens.

Of course, naming a problem doesn't solve it. Usually people put forward a number of options for action. And the options reflect the things people hold dear. The question is, what is the *right* thing to do? When all of the options are on the table, it creates a framework for decision making. The nature of that framework is also crucial. The options have to be presented with full recognition of the tensions that grow out of the advantages and disadvantages in every course of action. People have to make difficult trade-offs.

When making decisions, people tend to respond with first impressions and reach hasty conclusions. To move to more shared and considered judgment, the decision making has to be deliberative; that is, all options have to be weighed carefully against the many things people hold dear. This is real work; in fact, some call deliberative decision making *choice work*.

Action requires people and resources, and finding them is another part of the work of citizens. Often useful assets go untapped because they aren't the most obvious ones, like money, facilities, or equipment. Citizens have other resources that need to be used—such as people's capacity for caring for one another, the strength in the networks they can form, and their personal skills and experiences.

Decisions aren't self-implementing, and civic actions can be so diverse or even competitive that little is accomplished. Institutions organize their actions through planning and bureaucratic coordination. Citizens, on the other hand, have a capacity for self-organizing; we see examples just after natural disasters when volunteers organize their own relief efforts. They have a shared purpose—survival. Self-organizing can also occur at other times if deliberative decision making has been able to identify enough common purposes so diverse civic actions can reinforce one another. Creating the deliberative habits that make complementary action possible is also part of the work of citizens.

The most important practice in the work of citizens is learning how to fail successfully. Failing successfully is learning

from mistakes. This learning has to be collective; it isn't like the individual learning that goes on in classrooms. Collective learning is key to keeping up the momentum necessary to combat persistent problems that every community faces. The work of citizens is full of ups and downs; success can be elusive. Learning from failures is key to moving ahead. And every practice in the work of citizens creates an opportunity to learn.

Not only are the ways citizens do their work distinctive, but also are their goals and the results their efforts produce. Research done with the foundation shows that getting people to work together is, itself, an important objective of citizen politics. As one of the people cited in the research reasoned, "If all the people in the city are banded together to make it a better place to live, then it will be a better place to live."

The objectives of the work citizens do may seem quite modest, but they are also quite practical. When it comes to realizing our dreams for our country, grand visions and all-encompassing reforms don't seem as credible as small projects where citizens take responsibility, decide on what should be done, and do much of the work themselves, according to findings in Richard Harwood's book *The Work of Hope* (Kettering Foundation Press 2012). Homegrown change is appealing because it is authentic. Unsure that they can trust large institutions, people look to their fellow citizens to fix what is out of whack through joint efforts that build confidence. For example, neighbors who decide to paint a school together may not do it just because the school building will be more attractive; their real purpose may be to demonstrate what can be accomplished when citizens join forces.

This research also found a connection between local issues and national resilience. As Harwood wrote, "The people we met believe the country faces enormous challenges that require significant action. The purpose of starting small and starting local, and . . . meeting one achievable goal after another, is to rebuild the confidence and sense of common purpose in the nation." But what about global problems? Those who believe in starting small say that, without a sense of efficacy and shared purpose, people won't be able to tackle larger problems. And they point out that local efforts can and do grow into larger movements.

The foundation has not only learned a great deal about the tasks that make up the work of citizens (naming, framing, etc.), but also learned about the character of the work. For instance, the foundation calls the ways citizens go about their work *practices* in order to distinguish them from techniques. Practices have an intrinsic value; they do more than accomplish an immediate task at hand. Hammering a nail is a technique; few go out to hammer nails just for the fun of it. Playing a piano, on the other hand, has a value beyond striking keys on a keyboard. It creates music that can stir the soul. Similarly, a practice like deliberating to make a decision promotes values like fairness and civility.

Kettering also sees the practices citizens use in doing their work as *democratic* when these practices give citizens a stronger hand in shaping their future. To name problems in terms that resonate with the things people hold dear creates ownership. To employ resources that citizens can draw on from ordinary life empowers them. These are democratic practices.

In addition, we are seeing that the democratic practices used in the work of citizens are interrelated. They are part of a whole, the way a golfer's swing is one fluid motion that integrates the backswing with the striking of the ball and the follow-through.

The foundation is eager to compare what it is learning about how citizens do their work with others who are observing and analyzing that work. And, as I wrote earlier, we think what can be learned from this work has significant implications for college and university engagement. Most of this engagement is done by providing valuable resources that these institutions have in abundance, like expert information, professional advice, technical assistance, and other forms of service, some of which come from student volunteers. All of that is useful, and sometimes it's critical. It can augment the work of citizens. However, from the public's perspective, this kind of assistance is not all they care about. People want more power in their own hands to shape a future that seems increasingly dangerous and unpredictable. So the relationship they would like to have with colleges and universities has to be more than one that provides services, however valuable and appreciated those are. It has to be a relationship that is more than one that's responsive to their needs, even if people get to define those needs. Democratic citizens want

a relationship that puts more levers of control in their hands. They don't want to be empowered as much as they want to empower themselves.

What I have just written about the work of citizens reflects the foundation's best guesses to date. These guesses are based on more than 30 years of observing scores of communities where citizens have tried to join forces to solve a wide variety of problems. For more details, see the forthcoming book *The Ecology of Democracy* (Kettering Foundation Press 2014), which includes a composite case study of one community, Suggsville, and one university's efforts to reinforce what citizens were doing. But we realize that what we have found to date is incomplete and, in some cases, probably in error. So Kettering is looking for cases where colleges or universities are trying to align their work more closely and constructively with the work of citizens. We would appreciate hearing from any of you who are trying this.

CONTRIBUTORS

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