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Educating for Democracy by Walking the Talk in Experiential Learning

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Engaging students as actors in rather than audience of their education. This is both the primary feature of experiential education as John Dewey envisioned it and its underlying link to education for democracy: the flourishing of democracy requires citizens who are empowered actors, and such citizens cannot be produced through educational processes that deny participation and power to students. In this article we share and examine ex-

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amples of experiential learning practices that try to walk the talk of democratic purposes and discuss associated challenges and design principles. Our goals are to encourage and empower the community of experiential educators to understand, enact, inquire into, and continue developing the full potential of our work as it contributes to educating for democracy.

> Absence of participation tends to produce lack of interest and concern on the part of those shut out. The result is a corresponding lack of effective responsibility.… [Similarly] where there is little power, there is correspondingly little sense of positive responsibility. About larger matters, a spirit of passivity is engendered…. Habitual exclusion has the effect of reducing a sense of responsibility for what is done and its consequences.… [T]he best way to produce initiative and constructive power is to exercise it. (Dewey, 1937/2010, p. 128)

John Dewey was a pioneer of experiential learning who thought and wrote extensively about education, democracy, and the relationship between them. In Dewey's understanding, the flourishing of democracy requires responsible citizens with democratic sensibilities and capacities who are empowered actors. Such citizens cannot be produced through educational processes that deny participation and power to students and thereby habituate passivity, disconnectedness, and lack of responsibility. This is the primary argument for and feature of experiential education as Dewey articulated it: engaging students as *actors* in rather than *audience* of their own education. Making an eloquent case for the importance of such alignment between democratic purposes and democratic processes in pedagogical design, Dewey (1937/2010) concluded:

> Whether [the] educative process is carried on in a predominantly democratic or non-democratic way becomes therefore a question of transcendent importance not only for education itself but for its final effect upon all the interests and activities of a society that is committed to the democratic way of life. (p. 127)

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Simply put, education must walk the talk of democracy.

The co-authors of this article share a commitment to cultivating empowered-actor-learners through participatory, experiential education in which power is shared among students, faculty, staff, and community. Rather than simply telling our students they should be responsible for their learning, we design teaching and learning environments and practices that position them as—and build their capacity to be—agents of their own and others' learning. And we have come to recognize, value, and embrace the linkages between such empowered-actor-learners and empowered-actor-citizens. (To clarify, we use the word "citizen" to denote a person who is engaged with his or her community and the world at large, not legal status.)

Although specific conceptions of democratic purpose vary among us, we find compelling the notion that the academy can and should play a considerable role in nurturing democracy, strengthening communities, and supporting the flourishing of all life (e.g., Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011; Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003). We want our students to become builders of a better tomorrow (Hartman, 2013)—co-creators, with us and others, of a world that is increasingly peaceful, compassionate, just, inclusive, and verdant. And we believe that our day-to-day work should contribute actively and effectively to these ends. So we articulate civic as well as disciplinary and vocational goals and seek ways to integrate those goals within the full range of our professional activities.

Further, following Dewey, we seek educational practices that walk the talk of our goals by engaging everyone involved (students, faculty, staff, community members) as mindful, deliberate, responsible, collaborative, and critical builders of that better world. Dewey's framing of education for democracy calls us to invite students to join us in practices that, in our day-to-day worlds of classroom, campus, and community, engage us all as empowered actors and co-creators. It also provides a lens through which we can examine and refine our understanding of and approaches to experiential education.

Examining our own varied approaches to designing for democratic ends through democratic means makes explicit the ways in which experiential education that walks the talk of democracy can emerge from and be leveraged for a rich set of academic and civic learning goals and possibilities. For us, as for Dewey, democracy is both a way of life and a political system, and the two are intricately interdependent. We are, therefore, interested in both (a) the alignment of democratic purposes and processes in experiential education and (b) how such education can contribute to democracy as both a way of life and a political system.

Efforts to heed Dewey's call are neither new nor unique to us, although it is our intention to expand and deepen the inquiry to date. In the pages that follow we share examples of practice that several of us have designed intentionally (in collaboration with others) to try to walk the talk of democratic purposes. Informed by these examples, we identify and discuss associated challenges and design principles, offering them for the reader's use, adaptation, and critique. Our goals are to encourage and empower the community of experiential educators to understand, enact, inquire into, and continue developing the full potential of our work as it contributes to educating for democracy.

WALKING THE TALK: EXAMPLES

Our first example is at the program level. Through a tight focus on a clearly articulated goal and on processes that walk the talk of that goal, Yale's Center for International and Professional Experience is systematically shifting its culture. Expectations and behaviors of staff and students are being transformed toward greater student responsibility for their own learning and development. The Center is intentionally examining the ways in which their own processes can be better aligned with their purpose of cultivating empowered-actor-learners; in doing so, they are nurturing in their students and in themselves the democratic ways of being on which the flourishing of democracy depends.

EXAMPLE 1. DESIGNING PROGRAM-LEVEL OPERATIONS TO CULTIVATE STUDENT OWNERSHIP

Kelly McLaughlin, Yale University

Yale University's Center for International and Professional Experience (hereafter referred to as the "Center") was established during the course of several years through the integration of previously separate offices for career services, fellowships, study abroad, and summer study. We took significant steps forward as a Center when, guided by educational consultant Patti Clayton, we worked together to determine our collective, guiding purpose, which we refer to as our "North Star" (following the Center for Service and Learning at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis; see Bringle, Studer, Wilson, Clayton, & Steinberg, 2011).

Sharing across programs the opportunities we each saw to deepen our impact, staff members agreed that an ever-growing number of students were coming to us with a strong sense of entitlement, assuming access to our programs as a matter of course or expecting advisors to select opportunities and find funding for them. We saw in this dynamic an opportunity to cultivate empowered-actor-learners and empowered-actor-citizens. Enhancing student ownership of their education and personal development became our North Star. On many occasions since, Center staff have asked, "What would North Star say?" as a way to help us walk the talk of our focus on student ownership when considering programming choices, confronting an issue related to learning outcomes or assessment, or deciding how best to respond to particular student behaviors. Discussed briefly below are three examples of our efforts to align our processes with this purpose.

Model of student engagement. Seeking to align our purpose of enhanced student ownership and our processes for accomplishing that goal helped us see how heretofore independent offices could work in synergistic ways. We began to appreciate how experiences across the Center's spectrum of opportunities could help students—as agents of their own education and development—design a clearer roadmap for defining and achieving their goals in highly personalized ways. Specifically, examining the full range of our programs through the lens of our focus on student ownership generated an organizing framework, the Model of Student Engagement, that makes visible how student ownership can, does, and should interact with programmatic Center support (see http://www.yale.edu/yalecollege/international/pdf/CIPE_Model_of_Student_Engagement.pdf).

Mapping various programmatic opportunities in light of our North Star made clear what levels of agency and what associated competencies are most clearly present in particular activities. For example, the Richard U. Light Fellowship funds highly structured language programs in East Asia, whereas the Yale Fields Language Study Program and a variety of internships and research fellowships require a high degree of student agency. The highly structured programs are less flexible, led by others, and have predetermined foci. The high student agency opportunities are more open-ended, student-led, and customized by individual students in light of their own goals. The highly structured activities involve student competencies, such as following instructions and using existing resources well, while the high student agency programs are associated with problem-solving and finding one's own resources. These clearly defined characteristics and competencies of particular opportunities form the basis for goals-based advising that prompts critical reflection among students regarding their readiness for, goals for, and approaches to the Center's offerings.

Terms of engagement. Supporting the Model are our Terms of Engagement, which make explicit the roles that students and Center staff play as partners. As the excerpt below demonstrates, the Terms attempt to establish clearly that while the Center will support students, it is they who must take ownership of their own learning processes (for example, by thinking about their own goals and doing some research on related opportunities and requirements before they come to us):

The Center offers...
- *The opportunity to discuss the student's plan of action with an advisor who will guide critical reflection, goal-oriented activity, and thoughtful program selection.*
- *Support throughout the application process, after selection, during the experience, and upon return.*
- *One courtesy reminder to complete requirements.*
- *A culture of mutual respect for student and staff time.*

Students are expected to...
- *Be active participants in their own development by utilizing the Center's resources (on-line tools, advising, peers, funding, etc.) to maximal and intentional benefit.*
- *Be able to conceptualize and express how their plans connect to their own short- and long-term development.*
- *Respect peer and staff time by meeting deadlines, keeping appointments, and completing any requirements associated with the experience.*

Fellowship pre-advising questionnaire. Realizing that our advising practices were enabling students to come to us having given little or no thought to their goals, the nature of our programs, or the potential fit between them, we developed a Pre-Advising Questionnaire. While students can apply for fellowship funds without completing the questionnaire, and while meeting with an advisor is not an application requirement, the questionnaire must be submitted to secure an in-person advising appointment. As the following excerpt demonstrates, the Questionnaire attempts to make clear that the Center values and expects student ownership, agency, and responsibility:

To make the most of your individual appointment, we ask that you fill out this questionnaire to the best of your ability. In this way, not only will our advisers be better prepared to answer your questions, but you will also be better prepared to reflect upon and engage in a conversation about your proposed idea, your application strategy, and your long-term goals.
- *Please provide general information about what you will be proposing to do and where you are proposing to do it (in 2-3 sentences).*
- *With whom have you discussed your application and/or proposed idea? Please include any contacts you have made at your activity site.*
- *Briefly (2-3 sentences), what is one of your longer-term goals, and how might your proposed experience relate to this?*
- *Please list the fellowships to which you plan on applying.*
- *Click here to verify that you and your proposed activity (if applicable) are eligible for the fellowships you've listed above.*
- *If you have any particularly challenging circumstances or questions that you would like to discuss with an adviser, please describe these here.*

Advisors receive these questionnaires at least 24 hours prior to meeting with the student. Advising sessions, therefore, begin with the advisor and the student both having given thought to and gathered important ideas and resources. Our advising practices thereby better walk the talk of the kind of partnership we aim for in the Terms of Engagement—one of mutual respect and shared responsibility.

As our "North Star" ethos takes fuller shape, the Center is just one piece of a burgeoning, institutional reexamination of the tension that comes with providing students access to substantial resources without also designing opportunities (if not requirements) for them to reflect critically about their own roles in that educational partnership. Not all members of the institution, least of all some students and families who see themselves as paying customers, share this concern. But in this tension between students as consumers and students as responsible learners and citizens, our North Star is a framework for promoting the "positive responsibility" (*sensu* Dewey) that is at the heart of democracy.

The changes instituted by Yale's Center for International and Professional Experience highlight the possibilities for and importance of designing practices that move our students and ourselves toward more democratic ways of being. Relatedly, if students are unaccustomed to participatory, power-shared, experiential approaches in the classroom—which is often the case after years of being positioned as recipients of others' knowledge—they must learn how to be empowered actors. Our second example illustrates how an instructor begins to cultivate such capacities by designing the first days of the semester to jump-starting students' shifts from passive spectators (audience) to collaborative actors.

EXAMPLE 2. DESIGNING THE FIRST DAYS OF CLASS TO BUILD STUDENTS' CAPACITIES AS EMPOWERED ACTORS

George Hess, NC State University

If I walk into the classroom on day one and read the syllabus with all its attendant rules and power dynamics, it's hard to convince students that my course is an opportunity for learning in experiential and democratic ways. I have designed the first two days of my Natural Resources Measurements course as microcosms of the semester—exposing the students to what is, for most of them, a very different way of learning while also introducing the content of the course. The days are a mixture of teamwork activities with embedded technical content, framed by critical reflection. My original goal was to begin establishing an environment in which students assume responsibility for their own and others' learning and for course outcomes; I have come to see such responsibility as having democratic as well as academic purposes.

Some context: Natural Resources Measurements is an upper-level undergraduate course that is completely wrapped around a community-engaged project. For example, in 2014, 37 students and I evaluated the human and wildlife use and environmental condition of the Raleigh, North Carolina, Capital Area Greenway System, in partnership with Raleigh's Department of Parks, Recreation, & Cultural Resources; the NC Museum of Natural Sciences; and the WakeNature Preserves Partnership (see go.ncsu.edu/RaleighGreenways2014).

Day 1. Interdependence and teamwork. The 75-minute class period starts at 1:30 p.m. in a classroom with moveable furniture and large-screen computers. Students entering the room find a large note on the board directing them to instructions on the tables, which in turn refer them to instructions on the course home page (see go.ncsu.edu/nr300; Box 1). Essentially, I ask them to get started and inform them that I'll arrive shortly. My absence at the beginning of class is intended to begin setting expectations that students will organize themselves, work interdependently, allocate and keep track of time, and complete tasks by a deadline. The activity itself is designed to begin building trust among the students, which is the foundation of good teamwork—a key learning objective of the course.

BOX 1. INSTRUCTIONS ON THE COURSE WEBSITE [*Asides in brackets explain my rationale for the instructions.]*

- There are 6 large monitors around the room. Please arrange the room so that there is a cluster of people around each of the monitors. Clusters should be of approximately equal size, and you should try to be with people you don't know.
- Review Patrick Lencioni's (2002, 2005) *5 Dysfunctions of a Team* HERE and HERE. [*Although the title frames the issue negatively, the book is focused on effective teamwork. Links lead to summaries of key points*.]
- Trust-building teamwork activity: Within each cluster, each person should take a turn using google maps to show the others where s/he grew up. Talk briefly about what it was like growing up there. [*Ice-breaking and team-building activities are integrated with technical content. Students will use google maps for their work during the semester.*]
- Be finished by 14:05 and ready to debrief - you need to allocate your time so that you can make this deadline. [*Making clear that students are responsible for managing their time*.]

I enter the classroom 5-10 minutes before the deadline and walk around, listening in and introducing myself informally. This allows me to counter any brewing concern that I wasn't there at the beginning because I am not committed to the course. If students don't stop themselves at the deadline, I wait about 5 minutes longer before stopping them. Most semesters, they do not stop in time, allowing us to discuss, when we reflect on this later in the class period, responsibility for tracking time and meeting deadlines—in a nurturing rather than scolding manner.

At this point, I introduce myself to the class and begin a structured, critical reflection process called DEAL, which is the acronym for the model that guides students to Describe, Examine, and Articulate Learning as they reflect on experiences (Ash & Clayton, 2009). I explain the process and ask them to describe, objectively and without

interpretation or value judgments, what happened from the time they entered the room to this moment. This typically gets off to a halting start. Students are not sure what to say, tend to leave out lots of details, or quickly begin to attach causes and values to the events. I coach them through this stage, prompting for details and noting when they go beyond observation. Natural resources inventory work requires keen, minimally biased observations, so this activity addresses core professional skills while teaching students how to reflect critically.

Together, we examine the events just described and discuss the "whys" and "hows"—why did certain things happen, why did I set up this activity, why didn't I show up at the beginning of class, how did this differ from what they are used to in the classroom, and how did they feel about that? I relate all of this to the structure, content, process, and culture of the course. We discuss expectations—mine and theirs—and what we all need to learn to be successful.

Finally, we take some time to articulate explicitly what we're learning from examining these activities. We do this orally as a class, and I also ask each student to take five minutes to complete a worksheet that documents the most important thing they learned, how they learned it, why that learning is important, and what they will do differently in future as a result of the learning; this is the usual structure for the Articulate Learning step in the DEAL model. I also emphasize that this is recording *their* learning, not repeating something I said. I ask them to put name and date on the back of the worksheet and request permission to scan and share the front side (i.e., anonymously) with the entire class through the course website. The scan-and-share establishes a pattern of learning from one another and the democratic sharing of information. Each of these steps is important to the course objectives, because effective teamwork relies on being explicit, documenting work, understanding that people learn differently, and transparency.

Day 2. Teamwork, process, and technical skills. The centerpiece of the second day is a statistical sampling activity that blends technical content with further development of teamwork, organizational, and time management skills. I direct the students to develop an estimate of the number of blades of grass in a large field (approximately 12,000 square meters) next to the building, working in small teams (Box 2; Hess & Keto 2009). This is a 75-minute version of the entire course: students are given a task that seems impossible. They have to muster the resources to complete it with the team and time at hand—and they do! The activity blends academic content (i.e., sampling and statistics) with the possibilities of positive, democratic process (i.e., accomplishing what appears impossible through organizing with others).

BOX 2. GRASS COUNTING ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

Specific objective Bring back your best estimate of the number of blades of grass in the area mapped on the reverse ***and*** a list of reasons why your estimate may not be a good one. [*I define the task and focus attention on what could go wrong. This highlights the importance of retrospection, self-evaluation, and self-critique. It allows me to introduce the notion of the scientist as a healthy skeptic—always asking questions about "how we know."*] Allocate your time among planning, data collection, calculations, etc. as you wish. You need to be back in the classroom and ready to present results and debrief by **time to be announced** at the latest. [*Again highlighting their responsibility to organize and be ready on time.*]

Method. Your choice. If you have a question about how to proceed, write down the question, make a decision, write down the decision, and carry on! [*This highlights the importance of taking responsibility for and documenting issues and decisions so they can be examined by others. This is firmly in line with professional and democratic practice.*

Invariably, small groups of students go their separate ways with little planning within or across teams, moving as quickly as possible from the classroom to the grassy field. In the 10 years I have been facilitating this activity, I have never seen the students combine as a single, cohesive unit to complete the job well and efficiently. This is both an organizational and a statistical failure, and it reflects a deeply socialized student mindset. They either do not consider the potential value of integrating small teams into a large team to better accomplish the task, or they dismiss that thought and adhere strictly and literally to my instruction to "form small teams" rather than claiming the power to organize themselves otherwise to be more successful. We discuss this during our debriefing, with my main goal being to have students realize that fidelity to the question and the best way to address it, rather than a preconceived notion of "how school is done" (with its attendant defaults to hierarchical power dynamics), is key to success. Fruitful discussion of this and other process issues allows me to inspire students to "think outside of school"—to unlearn the autocratic approaches they have become accustomed to and take a more democratic approach to constructing their learning environment and solving problems.

The key elements of the activities during these two days are highlighting shared responsibility among students and instructor; clarifying expectations for initiative and interaction; nurturing *esprit de corps* and pride of ownership; and being very explicit and transparent about why I've organized not only these introductory activities but also, in collaboration with my community partners, the entire course in this democratic way. Because it is so different from what most students have experienced before, this must be done carefully, in a manner that communicates caring and support and that makes it clear that this is all about building up, not tearing down.

The design of the first days of a semester can shape students' orientation to a course as either audience or actor; it can also begin to build their capacities for unfamiliar ways to collaborate with others, within the classroom and in broader communities, as both learners and citizens. Community-engaged pedagogies and engaged scholarship are particularly well suited for students to engage collaboratively

and, sometimes, directly with the structures and policies at the heart of democracy as a political system. Our third example takes the form of community-based research and advocacy, one of several strategies for integrating theory and practice of democracy and human rights by building students' agency—along with their knowledge and capacities—within political, educational, and legal systems.

EXAMPLE 3. DESIGNING A COURSE TO ENGAGE STUDENTS LOCALLY IN INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE

Julie Shackford-Bradley, University of California at Berkeley

Part of the American Cultures / Engaged Scholarship (ACES) program at the University of California, Berkeley, my course, Human Rights in American Cultures, introduces students to human rights structures and strategies. The main academic learning goal of the course is the development of students' working knowledge of international human rights frameworks and their application in the United States. During the course, we examine the ways in which a human rights lens can reframe how we address social justice issues (through both discourse and action) and can clarify complex issues by peeling back layers of ideology, political positioning, and "othering." The course expands upon the framework of civil and political rights in the U.S. to include economic, social, and cultural rights (in line with a more international approach) and presents students with arguments about the interconnectivity of these categories of human rights.

To integrate theory and practice, I first present the human rights framework and then demonstrate its application through local case studies of violations that have inspired people to take collective action for systemic change. As they learn about human rights in class, students are invited to build community as fellow "rights-holders" and then to expand on that sensibility in their work with community partners. Emphasizing the link between rights and responsibility, the course is designed to give students more choice and more accountability in their own learning and development. During the semester, they can choose to focus on readings and research projects that are directly relevant to their lives or career goals. In lieu of a midterm or final, they write four reflections on the readings, responding to prompts that invite them to integrate a discussion of the academic content of the readings with their own perspectives and lived experiences. This approach positions students as agents in their learning process. Likewise, we build a learning community together in the classroom as students lead discussions of the readings and, through peer discussions, are given the chance—but not pressured—to open up to each other about how they have (or have not) been affected by the rights-related issues we study.

We address the foundations and principles of human rights through close reading of and personal engagement with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Students are asked to read the declaration, choose a right that is important to their own lived experience, and share their stories of connecting with that right in class discussion. Through this process, students are invited to engage human rights on their own terms while also recognizing the diversity of the groups' stories and interests; in the words of one student, "Hearing people who were close to me talk about the human rights abuses they personally experienced really hit close to home."

The course focuses on a key contribution that international human rights makes to democratic practice in the United States, namely, an emphasis on the interconnectivity between what we have come to know as civil and political or "democratic" rights—rights to free speech, democratic participation, and due process—and what in international human rights are known as economic social, and cultural rights, or rights to equal education, fair remuneration for and safety at work, health care, food, and housing. It is important for students who will be working in local communities to understand that one cannot exist without the other: People with limited resources and education are less likely to seek change through democratic participation (for example, engaging the City Council, running for office, promoting candidates from their communities). At the same time, people experiencing violations of economic, social, and cultural rights understand and can readily articulate structures of oppression and know what they need.

To illustrate this point, I show the film *At the River I Stand*, featuring Martin Luther King Jr.'s last campaign: the 1968 sanitation workers' strike in Memphis, TN. In our discussion of the film, we focus on the fact that, despite the successes of the civil rights movement (including passage of the Civil Rights Law in 1964), these African American workers continued to experience violations of their economic, social, and cultural rights—they were paid poverty wages and worked with no protection. Students are asked to consider the ways in which the iconic placards stating simply "I am a Man" convey the concept of human dignity, which is a fundamental human rights principle that can only be realized when people's basic economic needs are met. We then connect that historical example with our case studies, which focus on economic, social, and cultural rights violations as experienced by children caught up in the juvenile justice system, undocumented immigrants, and people who experience environmental injustice due to their proximity to toxic industrial areas.

In recognition of how human rights discourse and practice promote human agency, we focus on examples of people coming together through grassroots community activism linked with human rights networks to realize and struggle for their rights to clean water, fresh air, equal education, due process, and so on. To emphasize the critical aspect of human rights activism, the course features many guest speakers (from lawyers to academics to the community activists) who have devoted their lives and careers to struggling for human rights. Through this variety, students are invited to recognize and respect multiple forms of knowledge, including that which is gained by lived experience, and to see the value of collaboration across difference.

Students participate in community-based team research projects around the San Francisco Bay Area, bringing their different disciplines and unique skills sets to bear on work in communities to extend and protect human rights. In the process, they develop capacities for leadership, communication, problem solving, and conflict resolution. To ensure that expectations are aligned, I work closely with community partners before the course begins and invite them to the class during the semester to talk about their organizations and strategies for social change. Once teams are established, I provide support but otherwise let students chart their own paths with their partners.

Recently, three teams of students wrote human rights reports on current issues that will be sent to Geneva through the Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute. Another team partnered with Community Works, an organization that offers youth with felony-level offenses an alternative pathway through Restorative Justice Community Conferencing, to transform an overstuffed, unused binder full of resources into a website that lists the resources by category and maps them (see http://info4027.wix.com/communityworks). In neither example did the undergraduates come into direct contact with people experiencing human rights violations; however, they took direct action by researching and writing on local issues or producing a tool to support youth, their families, and communities. In addition to the team-based research projects students develop with community partners, they also write a "human rights briefing paper" as human rights actors would, framing the issues they face in the local community through human rights discourse and legal argumentation. In the context of such engagement with community issues, a human rights frame can reduce the incidence of the "white knight" phenomenon as students come to recognize that they have the same rights as those with whom they are working in community partnerships and have struggled, or someday will be struggling, for a particular human right themselves.

Through these experiences, students come to understand how people "do" human rights at the community level, linking the legal articulation of rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with community action and democratic practice. As one student described it, "We put our feet on the ground and experienced the struggle for human rights firsthand in this class." Another student reflected on a "new sense of urgency as I see these issues plus many more in front of me to take action and not be a bystander…." A third wrote of his increased awareness that "Every law and every rule that we have currently established was thought up by ordinary people…. nothing is set in stone and we should act to change it for the better." These quotes demonstrate students' awakening to their own agency and ability, individually and in collaboration with others, to align democratic process with purpose and strategy to work toward the realization of international human rights through localized community engagement.

Having considered some of the complexities and possibilities associated with designing a course in which students engage with people outside the university to investigate and address public issues, we turn in our next example to the development of a four-year curriculum focused on community-engaged learning and partnerships. Curriculum development is often conducted by teams of faculty, sometimes in consultation with business or industry partners, to ensure that students gain skills employers would like them to have. But if we are designing an academic program that teaches students to engage in democratic processes for public purposes and if we intend to do that design work in ways that walk our talk, it seems not only reasonable but necessary to bring that public into the process. Our next example is a recent effort to do exactly that.

EXAMPLE 4: DESIGNING AN ACADEMIC PROGRAM AS PARTNERS, FOR PARTNERSHIPS

Barbara Harrison, University of Guelph

A team of community members, students, university staff, and faculty recently worked together over five months to design a new four-year higher education program centered around community engagement. We anticipate that this program will be inquiry-focused, with a high degree of student leadership. As part of a collaborative co-teaching environment, individuals from academic and community settings will share in the teaching and learning and will work as partners on the various projects that are the focal point of the courses.

Our team's task was to design the overall framework and learning outcomes for the curriculum. We shared a commitment to collaborative design that was democratic and community engaged because we wanted our process to match the content of the program, a community-engaged process to design a program focused on community engagement. We also wanted to establish and foster the type of working relationships that we wish to continue as this program is built. We met five times, with some team members taking on tasks between meetings. The team's work products were submitted in a report to the provost at the end of the process.

People were invited to join the team based on their individual strengths and their experience with community engagement in higher education. We had a roughly equal number of people working at the university and in community-based settings. Our team of 16 people comprised executive directors of nonprofit and community-based organizations; a senior manager working for the local municipality; an undergraduate student and a recent graduate; a doctoral student; two faculty members; and several staff members, including a university librarian, an educational designer, and a researcher. All but one member of the team (an international faculty member) lived in the local geographic area. Very few of us had designed a curriculum or academic program before or been part of such a diverse, trans-disciplinary team

of people from varying backgrounds working on a curricular project. When our team first came together, some of us knew one another and had worked together before, and others were meeting for the first time.

It was evident and predictable that at the beginning of the process some team members were more comfortable with the task of designing a curricular program than were others. Some members were also more comfortable with a fairly unstructured process than others, and this became more apparent as we started to envision the program together. Although our meetings were warm and hopefully felt inviting, our process felt stilted at times, perhaps due in part to the many unknowns. As we progressed and elements of the program became clearer, it appeared that people became more confident in their roles in the design process and increasingly had a sense of how the program was coming together. By the fourth meeting, the team gelled and ideas began to flow organically, with team members enthusiastically putting forward ideas and actively engaging in solving problems together. By the end of the fifth meeting we had designed the framework for the program, articulated course outcomes, and assembled some sample course outlines (which were developed by individuals seen to be specialists in the focal areas of the courses). At this last meeting, we reviewed what had been accomplished and talked about how to keep the project moving forward.

While our co-design process was a rich one, and the team worked very effectively together, there is much to be learned from our process that might suggest refinements. I share several insights from our experience.

a) Trying to walk the talk of our commitment to incorporating the diverse skills, knowledge, and beliefs of the stakeholders engaged in the design project was complicated by disparate levels of familiarity with the task and with one another, as well as the need to balance task orientation with attention to process. Although we regularly enjoyed a casual lunch together, which gave us time to get to know each other and to chat informally, we might have benefitted from additional, structured opportunities to learn about one another and our interests in the project, to build trust and otherwise deepen our relationships, and generally to cultivate the team becoming a community.

b) We struggled early on with each member of the team being confident that he or she belonged there and had a contribution to make. It took a few meetings before some team members seemed to feel comfortable that they had relevant knowledge, experience, and expertise. We dedicated our first session to the context of our task and to creating a platform from which we could co-design the program. Yet, our process would likely have been stronger had we dedicated more time to getting to know one another's possible areas of contribution and exchanging ideas about the project before beginning to make decisions. In part, such attention to process early on helps integrate the voices of individuals who have been involved with a project for some time and individuals who are new to it. It can also help facilitate discovering the

best approaches for engaging everyone throughout and ensuring that everyone continues to share a common vision and understanding of how to move toward it together.

c) While it might be ideal in principle to have everyone fully involved in every aspect of the design process, it likely was not realistic, and we assumed it was also not desired. Project facilitators believed that democratic processes do not require that everyone be involved at all times or in the same ways as long as everyone has opportunities to make comments, offer suggestions, and propose alternatives; and this is how we tried to approach the design process. Looking back on it, what co-development means should have been more fully discussed at the beginning to ensure that everyone at least had a voice in the decision to proceed this way and was reasonably comfortable with it. I now also wonder if we should have revisited during each gathering the question of how each could best participate, as a way of checking in with one another and ensuring that we were fully drawing on each other's expertise and fully tapping each other's interests. Doing so would have nurtured an even more democratic environment in which everyone felt free to critique one another's ideas, including those of the facilitators, and would have transparently addressed implicit power differences among team members.

d) Walking the talk of our democratic purposes was further complicated by external forces, likely a common dynamic in such collaborations. Our work had to fit within agendas and structures over which we had no influence. For example, we decided together when and how frequently to meet, but within a fixed, five-month time frame. Many of the opportunities noted here for better walking our talk are very much in tension with time constraints, including building stronger relationships within the team, determining the various types of contributions individuals could best make, and having sufficient opportunities for and levels of comfort with critique to allow for further development of design ideas. The reality of limited time can lead to unsatisfactory trade-offs and misalignments between purpose and process. As another example, at times there were tensions between what the university systems or senior administrators required and what our team would have chosen. Although some of us voiced concerns about particular elements of the ultimate design that were incorporated in order to accommodate these institutional pressures, we lacked final decision-making authority on some of the key elements of the program. It is important to acknowledge, which is not to say accept uncritically, the externally enforced parameters within which a process attempting to be democratic may unfold.

While this program has not yet come into being and remains funding-dependent, the participants in the design process remain enthusiastic advocates, seeking ways to bring it to fruition. Our work together demonstrated that while our intentions may be democratic, when working within external constraints we sometimes make trade-offs that may compromise our democratic ideals. It has served as a

valuable learning opportunity for us and perhaps can do the same for others engaging in co-design processes with a wide variety of stakeholders.

The co-designers of the program in our fourth example experienced tensions among the need to establish relationships that support democratic community engagement, the time it takes to allow various perspectives to be voiced and considered, the need to generate a product in a short timeframe, and tacit power dynamics. Similarly, our final example is an intensively co-created, multi-stakeholder experiential learning project grounded in the deeply democratic practices of popular education and community-engaged participatory research as both ends in themselves and means to social, economic, and political transformation. The example highlights the interdependence of co-learners, the influence of organizational values, the central role of relationship building, and the possibilities for challenging entrenched mindsets in ways that can help reshape how communities understand and advance social justice.

EXAMPLE 5: DESIGNING POPULAR EDUCATION AND GRADUATE WORK TO ADVANCE SOCIAL JUSTICE

Kathleen E. Edwards, University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Interactive Resource Center

As a doctoral student in a cultural foundations of education program, I intentionally structure and infuse my teaching, learning, and scholarship with community-engaged principles, practices, and content. I believe that everyone is a co-teacher and co-learner, that we learn *with* each other, and that learning can happen anywhere, not only within the walls of a traditional classroom. This democratic orientation has influenced not only *what* I study but *how* I engage in learning. My graduate work is an extended experiential learning opportunity, including numerous collaborators from and with whom I learn and whose teaching and learning I help to facilitate.

The experiential learning project I share here integrates popular education and community-engaged participatory research—democratic processes that walk the talk of the political, social, and economic transformation purposes my partners and I share. Popular education and community-engaged participatory research share democratic commitments to de-centering (but not dismissing) academic knowledge, emphasizing the value of knowledge gained through lived experience, and attending to community assets and capacity-building. How I view and practice popular education is as a justice-oriented form of non-traditional, community-based education in which co-teachers and co-learners harvest, develop, and enhance knowledge; ask critical questions; reflect upon and examine lived experiences; question the status quo; resist inequity and oppression; and imagine and work toward possibilities that require structural, systemic transformations. Similarly, community-engaged participatory research includes community and academic partners who collaboratively design, implement, analyze, and report on questions relevant to all partners; it specifically examines justice-oriented topics related to the community.

The project, *storyscapes: mapping the narratives of space in downtown greensboro,* is an interactive art installation that re-maps downtown Greensboro, North Carolina, through storytelling by people experiencing homelessness (see gsostoryscapes.wordpress.com). I undertake it in partnership with the Interactive Resource Center ("the Center"), a daytime center for people experiencing homelessness. The Center opened in 2009, and I began working with them in the spring of 2010. An average of 220 people visits the Center daily; many of them also contribute to shaping how the Center runs: its policies and procedures, its day-to-day management, its growth and development. The Center describes its approach to working with people experiencing homelessness as asset-based and grassroots, and this has created an environment that makes popular education and community-engaged participatory research clear avenues for walking the talk of democracy understood in terms of both co-learning and social justice transformation. *storyscapes* emerged and grew from moments of authentic discussion that occurred while picking up trash around the building, preparing community meals, and playing cards in the Center's dayroom (a large community gathering space in which guests, staff, and volunteers mingle, rest, read, create art, wait for appointments, etc.).

There is no clear beginning to *storyscapes*; it is an unconfined, undetermined, and non-linear exploration of critical storytelling, radical mapping, and community building. The catalysts for this project were two service-learning courses I co-taught with the Center's volunteer coordinator, Tiffany Dumas, in fall 2012 and spring 2013. To align our pedagogies with our intentions to elevate the lived knowledge of people at the Center experiencing homelessness and to disrupt stereotypes associated with homelessness, Tiffany and I designed the education courses so that both UNCG students and community members (staff, clients, volunteers) at the Center could participate. This meant moving the classroom from the university to the Center's dayroom. We started building our community by participating in story-circles, sharing and investigating stories of our own experiences in traditional educational spaces. From these personal accounts we began to map an understanding of education that exposed social, political, and historical issues and systems that obstructed the democratic potential of education. Students described these classes as powerful moments of learning due to the lived knowledge shared by everyone, specifically the Center's guests; and the guests began to identify themselves as active educators in students' learning rather than passive objects to be studied.

One of the most significant takeaways from the courses was interest in the role of stories in destabilizing systems of oppression. In response, another Center staff member, Gwen Frisbie-Fulton, and I co-designed a framework for what became *storyscapes*: a walking tour of downtown Greensboro based on the stories of places important to people

experiencing homelessness that included 12 poetry and art installations by seven authors, installed at the very locations of the stories. By the time the first *storyscapes* installation series was launched in September 2013, more than 100 community members—Center staff, guests, and volunteers; UNCG students; and others who were supportive of the project—had participated in some active and significant way. At the core of this first phase was a creative team consisting of the authors (Forrist Willis, Isiahm Wardlow, Shannon Stewart, David Pigue, Melea Lail, Donna Harrelson-Burnett, and Gwen Frisbie-Fulton, who also volunteered her time outside of her job with the Center), and me. Within that team we developed a shared philosophy about storytelling, and thus about *storyscapes*, which kept us focused as we planned and implemented the various elements of the project (writing workshops, event planning, fundraising, promotion, and education):

> Storytelling serves as a catalyst for community engagement and agency. While we tell stories to convey a narrative of real or fictional events, we also use stories as a way to define ourselves in relation to the world around us; stories allow us to connect to the experiences of others. *storyscapes* uses stories to give reverence and respect to the humanity of those experiencing homelessness and celebrate their significant contributions to our community. Additionally *storyscapes* provides an opportunity for new meaning making for those sharing their stories and for those listening to them. (*storyscapes*, "the power of stories," 2nd para., n.d.)

Just as *storyscapes* evolves in new and unimagined ways in response to the voices of co-creators and participants, so do the roles and relationships of the individuals involved. In this project I have moved in and out of the roles of co-teacher and co-learner, co-researcher, popular educator, activist, meeting facilitator, friend, and outraged community member. Others in the project have also played multiple roles, which have shifted for various reasons; we readjust when someone wants to learn a new skill, someone has a lot of knowledge about a particular topic, someone has particular access to people or processes; or because of the practicalities of time and availability.

Decisions regarding roles and role adjustments are always grounded in two basic questions: (a) Do these changes serve our purpose to generate discussion and change regarding homelessness, community, and public space within *storyscapes*; and (b) Do these changes challenge and support us in becoming more engaged and critical members of our communities beyond *storyscapes*?

These questions reflect our effort to be mindful of both the immediate work we are doing and how this work contributes to our broader lives as members of a participatory democracy. Holding to them requires that we be flexible. When people are simultaneously

looking for housing and jobs, visiting doctors, and meeting with various social service agencies, it is challenging to maintain a continuous co-researcher/co-creator role for the full length of the project. In response, we've revised continuity to mean a *continuous opportunity and invitation* to participate. Being flexible with respect to continuity creates challenges with training co-researchers and catching up new co-researchers; at times I find myself without anyone else to move the project forward with me. But it provides a necessary flexibility that makes the research possible for people who are homeless or transient.

Storyscapes continues to unfold, and it holds deep meaning for us because the subject of the project has emerged democratically and organically from the lived experiences of people who are currently or previously homeless. As we design future phases of this project, we are planning storytelling and radical cartography workshops both on campuses and at community centers in an effort to ignite local community conversations about the roles and values of multiple perspectives in a participatory democracy. The project will continue to be designed and conducted through a collaborative process by Center guests, staff, and volunteers (including members of the UNCG community), in a reflective manner and with a shared commitment to exposing the social, economic, and political inequities that silence the voices of people experiencing homelessness.

This project began with building relationships, not with identifying research questions or establishing learning goals. Such an approach requires an investment in people and a fundamental belief that everyone has valuable knowledge, skills, and attitudes that can contribute to advancing our communities. With the maturing of the relationships have come increased trust, deepening reciprocity, and a growing familiarity that lends itself to greater co-ness. These democratic processes also prepare all of us to use our knowledge, skills, and attitudes in other aspects of our personal and public lives. From experience, we know that working together creates something far more powerful than any of us could accomplish alone.

WALKING THE TALK OF DEMOCRACY: DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

Although the co-authors share an aspirational vision of our students as builders, with us and others, of a better world and a corollary commitment to cultivating empowered-actor-learners and empowered-actor-citizens, specific conceptions of democratic purpose vary considerably among us. As suggested by the examples we have shared here, for us, collectively, such purposes include cultivating capacities associated with:

- assuming responsibility for one's own growth;
- disrupting stereotypes;
- de-centering authority;

- seeing the dignity of all, including those rendered "invisible" by oppressive and marginalizing social structures;
- collaborating effectively with diverse others;
- investing oneself in local communities;
- valuing individuals beyond immediate geographical or interpersonal communities;
- working to defend and extend individual rights;
- claiming the legitimacy of one's own and others' stories;
- seeking out perspectives that challenge one's assumptions and the norms of one's communities; an
- working to change structures so as to remove obstacles to and actively nurture the flourishing of all life.

Our five examples further suggest the wide range of contexts in which experiential learning can be designed to walk the talk of education for democracy. From single advising sessions and class periods to semester-long and multi-year projects and from individual interactions to learning communities within courses to multi-partner collaborations, we and many others are attempting to align our teaching and learning processes with democratic purposes.

Each of us brings a set of personal, institutional, or cultural influences to our context-specific conceptualization of democratic purposes and well-aligned democratic processes. Some of us are unlikely to initiate and invite students to join protests in support of social policy reform but will relentlessly cultivate in our daily interactions with students a deep awareness of interconnectedness and a strong sense of responsibility for how choices enshrine or challenge dominant, hierarchical paradigms. Others among us will always push students to think and act beyond the personal and local and to engage directly with structures that limit or negate basic democratic and human rights. Still others seek to cultivate capacities for effective and purposeful change agency in realms local to global, personal to systemic, concrete to abstract. We invite you to consider your own most closely held conceptions of democratic purposes and the ways in which your teaching and learning practices might most meaningfully walk the talk of those purposes.

DESIGNING FOR POWER SHARING

Regardless of where each of us locates ourselves with respect to our particular mix of democratic purposes and processes in experiential learning, we will face challenges and we must be intentional designers. We see the main challenge and opportunity of walking the talk to be cultivating the conviction that we are all empowered-actor-learners and -citizens rather than spectators. As Dewey (1937/2010) suggested, design for power sharing is key because in its absence,

> automatically and unconsciously, if not consciously, the feeling develops, 'This is none of our affair; it is the business of those at the top; let that particular set of [leaders] do what needs to be done.' … What the argument for democracy implies is that the best way to produce initiative and constructive power is to exercise it. Power, as well as interest, comes by use and practice. (p. 128)

This challenge should not be underestimated. Power dynamics among students, faculty, staff, and administrators are intricate and frequently tacit (Sandmann, Kliewer, Kim, & Omerikwa, 2010). They are enshrined in everyday language, including in the little words *for* and *with*, which can be so revealing of the differences between technocratic and democratic orientations, and in words such as *just* as in "I am just a student, but I think …" (Jameson, Clayton, & Jaeger, 2011). Nor does shared power necessarily mean equal power or power derived from the same sources, which increases the complexity of discussions of and efforts to establish power-shared processes.

In our experiential education practices, we seek to make power dynamics visible, to design inclusive processes that avoid ignoring or marginalizing anyone's contributions, and to reflect critically on the causes, consequences, and alternatives of and to enshrined systems of power. Specific attempts to share power in our examples include:

- making visible through our communications venues (e.g., websites, syllabi, assignments) the ways in which we and our students share responsibility for defining goals, shaping how we work together, and producing outcomes;
- inviting all participants in course activities and community-engaged projects into positions of shared responsibility for question identification, project planning, time management, product design, resource mobilization, data gathering and analysis, dissemination, and other functions often assumed or dictated by instructors;
- crafting assignments that facilitate students in articulating their own learning rather than repeating the understandings of others;
- inviting students to critique theories, policies, and practices through the lenses of their own lived experience;
- co-creating syllabi and academic programs with students and community members;
- moving class sessions into the community and inviting a full range of stakeholders to participate as teachers, learners, and researchers; and
- soliciting marginalized or otherwise often overlooked individuals as co-creators in all of our activities.

In our experience, while many may express dissatisfaction with being on the receiving end of others' power, opportunities to share, claim, and use power are not always readily embraced; this is both a challenge and a design opportunity.

ENCOUNTERING CHALLENGES DUE TO COUNTER-NORMATIVITY

The power sharing at the heart of cultivating and becoming actors rather than spectators can be deeply counter-normative (Clayton & Ash, 2004; Howard, 1999) in an educational system and a society that casts faculty as producers and dispensers of knowledge and students and community members as consumers and recipients of knowledge—in other words, as audience. As academics we often operate within a technocratic (expert-driven, deficit-based, hierarchical) institutional culture grounded in policies and norms that hinder, if not actively thwart, engaging with others in ways that honor and nurture a democratic, co-creative, asset-based, power-shared orientation (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009). The shift from a technocratic (hierarchical) to a democratic (collaborative) orientation requires attending to the ways in which norms and structures influence how, why, and with whom we have relationships in all arenas of our work. Experiential learning is part of the shift from technocratic to democratic paradigms and practices, in many ways pushing beyond, but also caught up in, technocratic norms and systems. When we foreground explicitly democratic purposes and processes, experiential learning often becomes even more challenging.

Positioning and nurturing students as empowered actors may evoke confusion or resistance among them, especially in institutional, disciplinary, or cultural contexts that are highly technocratic. In our examples about first days (second example) and human rights (third example), some students have a difficult time embracing personal accountability in learning and blame instructors and staff for not providing answers or incentives as they have come to expect and rely on. Some temporarily lose confidence in themselves as they learn how to learn and collaborate in unfamiliar ways, which not only calls for ongoing reassurance and capacity building but can also be discouraging and, at least in the short term, disempowering to them and to us. Some do not recognize the value of democratic processes or the relevance of democratic purposes, which occasionally leads them to express frustration unproductively in class discussions or course evaluations. Critical reflection that is designed to surface, examine, and problematize the underlying issues of individual and institutionalized norms around power can help increase understanding and reduce frustration.

Faculty, staff, and community members may also find themselves outside their comfort zones and hesitant about or resistant to counter-normative practices such as these. Professional staff in the North Star (first) example sometimes feel torn between their desires to “help” students and to maximize the number of program participants and their “North Star’s” guidance to hold themselves and students accountable for shared responsibility, mutual respect, and learning outcomes that, even if challenging in the moment, represent higher education at its

best. More generally, hesitancy also extends to faculty members’ frequent reluctance to engage in explicit discussion regarding the requirements of justice- and rights-oriented values (Hartman, 2013).

For all participants, democratic experiential learning processes frequently raise the challenge of time and can raise tensions between effectiveness, efficiency, and integrity. Technocracy generally privileges efficiency, and our efforts to walk the talk of our democratic purposes often put us at odds with established incentive structures and the expectations of others. In our first days (second) example, George sometimes has to trade off technical content he would otherwise cover to devote time to activities that build his students’ capacities for the unfamiliar tasks of co-creating a community-engaged course and project; his challenge is to integrate these objectives creatively, which requires extended preparation and reflection time on his part. In our popular education (fifth) example, Kathleen must continually navigate and negotiate the tensions between inclusiveness and progress toward a looming dissertation deadline, just as her community partners sometimes find it difficult to participate fully when they must also allocate time to other priorities. Despite potential short-term inefficiencies, we believe the relationship building at the heart of democratic engagement is desirable and necessary if walking our talk is to be effective. The working, growing relationships developed through democratic engagement among administrators, community members, faculty, staff, and students serve well the democracy Dewey envisioned—both the way of life and the political system.

DESIGNING TO LEVERAGE COUNTER-NORMATIVITY

As we see it—and constantly remind ourselves—these and other challenges associated with trying to walk the talk of educating for democracy also have, as their flip sides, the potential to transform us and the broader systems within which we live and work. In other words, it is because these practices are so counter-normative—because they require and foster shifts from technocratic to democratic paradigms, identities, and structures—that they have transformative potential (Clayton & Ash, 2004). We seek, not despite but because of the challenges, to embrace and leverage this counter-normativity.

From this position, we encourage the design of experiential learning in ways that are intentionally disruptive and highlight, problematize, and offer democratic alternatives to currently enshrined technocratic approaches. Although our practices almost certainly remain imbued with intentional or inadvertent technocratic elements, each of our five examples is intentionally disruptive. Disruptive experiences alone, however, are inadequate to generate learning. They are seedbeds of potential learning—learning that undergirds becoming actors—that grow through critical reflection that surfaces, explores, and deepens their meaning. Intentionally designed critical reflection is essential to experiential education in general and especially to leveraging the

counter-normative nature of education that walks the talk of democracy.

By critical reflection here we mean much more than descriptive accounts that summarize experiences at their conclusion. Critical reflection is an intentionally designed process that "*generates* learning (articulating questions, confronting bias, examining causality, contrasting theory with practice, pointing to systemic issues), *deepens* learning (challenging simplistic conclusions, inviting alternative perspectives, asking 'why' iteratively), and *documents* learning (producing tangible expressions of new understandings …)" (Ash & Clayton, 2009, p. 27). It is grounded in and designed to foster critical thinking through prompts, feedback, and assessment that emphasize asking *why* questions, considering multiple perspectives, making evidence-based judgments, and representing others' ideas fairly (Ash & Clayton, 2009). And it "turns the spotlight squarely onto issues of power … [by] uncovering and challenging the power dynamics that frame practice" (Brookfield, 2009, p. 298).

The "counting grass" activity in our first days (second) example, which sends students out to work on their own without guidance, integrates critical reflection on how and why they do and do not function as a team, how and why they respond personally to this unfamiliar approach to teaching and learning, and what all of this reveals about the sources and significance of hierarchy and power. Our program co-development (fourth) example demonstrates the necessity of critical reflection on both the substance and the process of a power-shared project if participants who have been excluded historically are to be at the table as empowered co-creators. Without critical reflection that is carefully designed to generate learning in accordance with our democratic purposes, such disruptive activities are likely to leave all of us bewildered, frustrated, or even angry; with critical reflection, we can fully leverage the transformational potential associated with the counter-normative nature of power-shared, experiential learning.

GROUNDING DESIGN WORK IN A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Aligning our processes with our democratic purposes in critically reflective experiential learning requires that we have a reasonably clear sense of those purposes. Precise articulation of the learning goals and objectives we seek to cultivate through processes that walk the talk enables focused design and transparency (as well as assessment). Given the importance of beginning with the end in mind (Covey, 1989), we suggest the utility of being guided by conceptual frameworks that can inform and help articulate what we mean by democratic purposes.

Intrigued by his conviction that "we grow up in educational … institutions that treat us as members of an audience instead of actors in a drama, and as a result we become adults who treat politics as a spectator sport," we highlight here as one framework that aligns with much of our thinking and practice the work of educator, author, and activist Parker Palmer (2011, p. 45). In many ways a contemporary successor to Dewey, Palmer has long and deeply reflected on and given

voice to meanings and possibilities of education, community, and social change (most famously in his 1998 book *The Courage to Teach*). Some of his recent work speaks specifically to the capacities citizens must develop if democracy is to flourish and to the ways in which such learning is dependent on educational practices that are themselves democratic. In *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, Palmer (2011) proposes five "habits of the heart that help make democracy possible," clarifying that by "habits of the heart" he means "deeply ingrained ways of seeing, being and responding to life that involve our minds, our emotions, our self-images, our concepts of meaning and purpose" (p. 44, see Figure 1 for excerpts from pages 44–46).

As with Dewey before him, Palmer sees links between these habits that facilitate democracy and the manner in which education is conducted. The language differs with the century, but the fundamental concepts are the same: We learn from *how* we are taught as well as *what* we are taught, and it is important that we learn democracy … democratically. Pedagogies that treat students as passive recipients of knowledge yield passive citizens without a sense of personal responsibility and agency who are ill prepared to function within a democracy. Neither learning nor democracy is a "spectator sport" (Palmer, 2011, p. 133).

Figure 1: Palmer's (2011) "habits of the heart that help make democracy possible" (pp. 44–46) [NOTE: We have excerpted heavily and encourage reading Palmer's full explication and discussion of the habits as there are additional important ideas and nuances not conveyed in these excerpts.]

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1. *An understanding that we are all in this together.* … Despite our illusions of individualism and national superiority, we humans are a profoundly interconnected species, intertwined with one another and with all forms of life …. We must embrace the simple fact that we are dependent on and accountable to one another ….
2. *An appreciation of the value of "otherness."* … we spend most of our lives in "tribes" or lifestyle enclaves—and ... thinking of the world in terms of "us" and "them" is one of the many [associated] limitations ... The good news is that "us and them" does not need to mean "us versus them." … the stranger has much to teach us … [if we] actively invite "otherness" into our lives ....
3. *An ability to hold tension in life-giving ways*. Our lives are filled with contradictions—from the gap between our aspirations and our behavior to observations and insights we cannot abide because they run counter to our convictions. If we fail to hold them creatively, these contradictions will shut us down and take us out of the action. But when we allow their tensions to expand our hearts, they can open us to new understandings of ourselves and our world, enhancing our lives and allowing us to enhance the lives of others.
4. *A sense of personal voice and agency.* … many of us lack confidence in our own voices and in our power to make a

difference . And yet it remains possible for us ... to find our voices, learn how to use them, … expressing our version of truth while checking and correcting it against the truths of others…. and know the satisfaction that comes from contributing to positive change

5. *A capacity to create community*. Without a community, it is nearly impossible to achieve voice … [or to] … exercise the "power of one" in a manner that multiplies …. In a mass society like ours, community rarely comes ready-made. But [we can create] community in the places where we live and work [and thereby] … kindle the courage we need to speak and act as citizens.

All of the co-authors and many experiential learning practitioners who seek to cultivate empowered-actor learners and citizens have long held conceptions of purpose similar to these habits. Palmer's framework is useful because it provides an organizing structure with which to articulate and further refine our goals in light of their implicit and explicit democratic dimensions–to ourselves and as we communicate them with others.

As just one example, the human rights tradition springs from an understanding of all human beings as fundamentally "in this together" (Hartman, 2013). Julie's course (human rights, our third example) introduces students to a theoretical lens and worldview that highlights a profound mismatch between articulated ideal (i.e., legal) commitments and individuals' everyday experiences. Julie invites students to inquire into that tension as it emerges in their own lives and as it has historically served as a catalyst for social change advocacy. Through the service-learning project in the course she gives students a structure within which to focus their own agency on helping to close this gap in the arena of human rights. Her democratic purposes, therefore, converge at least with the first, third, and fourth habits Palmer articulates.

This framework also offers a foundation for further development, as we conceptualize our goals, of the linkages between democracy as a way of being and as a political system. Continuing with discussion of our human rights (third) example, the democratic rights tradition agrees that we exist in broad communities with one another and further specifies that, as a consequence, we owe each other structural guarantees that embody deep respect. The structure of human rights, accordingly, is a necessary expression of a shared commitment to the inherent dignity of every person (Hartman, 2013). This tradition requires us as members of local, national, and global communities to work continuously to understand and advance the rights project as a co-created ideal, as exemplified in Julie's course. To a greater extent than is made explicit in Palmer's habits—and thus an important supplement for those whose conceptions of democratic purpose emerge from the rights framework—this tradition directs our attention beyond our individual identities and immediate interpersonal relationships.

It leads us to examine the ways in which the social, economic, and political structures that we continuously permit and co-create affect everyone's opportunities for empowerment. This tradition encourages us to investigate what structures must be created to better recognize the dignity of every person.

Although experiential educators with varying conceptions of democratic purposes may not all agree with Palmer's emphasis on the "spaces within [that] carry at least as much clout as any external command … [in] liberat[ing] or limit[ing] us" (p. 152), we find particularly significant his insistence that the inward work of democracy is intricately intertwined with the outward expression of its ideals in terms of broad democratic structures:

> If we want to teach democratic habits of the heart … [and] … if students are to be well served and are to serve democracy well, we need to … help [them] explore their inner potential [and] their outer potential …. There are at least two ways to do this: by engaging students with democratic processes in the classroom and the school and by involving them in the political dynamics of the larger community …, [in either or both ways] drawing them into a live encounter with democracy in action. (pp. 128 and 130)

When we look, in retrospect, at our set of examples, we see the distinctions between inner and outer and between campus and broader community. Our North Star (first) example focuses more on the inner realm of personal responsibility for learning and development and on interpersonal interactions through intentional design of on-campus programs. The human rights (third) example emphasizes the outer realm of social change through a project that engages students with community members in explicitly political activities. We also see possibilities for integration across and, indeed, blurring of these distinctions, especially in our popular education (fifth) example, which positions a practitioner-scholar with an identity as both academic and community member, its linkages between personal storytelling and structural transformation, and its interweaving of graduate research and social justice activism. Finally, we see in all five examples expansion beyond a focus on students alone to integrate faculty, staff, or community members into "inner/outer" and "campus/community" processes as co-learners and co-creators, which we view as essential to walking the talk of education for democracy, given its inherently lifelong and collaborative nature. We suggest that this typology may be useful as experiential educators design in various contexts and in ways that seek to build a bridge between democracy as a way of being and a political system.

Palmer's habits could be used in several specific ways to support design of experiential learning that walks the talk of education for democracy. Incorporating them as lenses through which to reflect

critically on experiences can help to cultivate the habits as learning outcomes and metacognitive structures; to establish conceptual and practical connections between agency on campus, in local communities, and in broader global systems; and to make visible, navigate, build capacity for, and leverage the counter-normativity of power-shared processes. In our first days (second) example, George might use the habits in critical reflection to facilitate making connections between agency in the classroom, the profession, the community, and the political arena and leverage the counter-normativity of power sharing by asking such questions as:

> What did we do this afternoon that invited you to act as an agent? On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident were you that you could effectively influence our process? Why? In that light, what might be some of the forces that more generally limit individuals in using their voices in a) the classroom, b) our profession, c) broader communities, and d) political arenas? What are some specific strategies we can use as we collaborate during this course to help one another use our voices with confidence? What form might those strategies take in the other three arenas (professional, community, political)?

Palmer's habits might also serve as design principles for us as experiential educators, guiding us to examine our processes critically with an eye to how authentically they walk the talk of democracy. Do we really believe that we are "in this together" with our students and others and do we reflect that in, for example, language of "we" rather than "us and them"? Do we, in our course design, class discussions, and advising sessions, truly invite "other" knowledge sources beyond those with which we are familiar and comfortable? Do we, in fact, invest in creating community with our students and other partners in ways that position everyone involved as a community builder? Do we understand and implement critical reflection as "democratic critical reflection"—in other words, is it "designed by all partners in light of learning goals shaped by all partners and for the participation of all partners" (Bringle, Clayton, & Bringle, forthcoming)?

A well-chosen framework makes transparent the knowledge, skills, and dispositions we are educating toward while also helping us to operationalize them. According to Hartman (2013), educating for democracy "may at times require explicit values commitments in the classroom and in the public sphere" (p. 60); such explication can be aided by an organizing conceptual framework, such as that offered by Palmer (and perhaps supplemented with others, for example, a more explicitly democratic rights framework as discussed above). Palmer's framework can help us hold in creative tension being—and encouraging our students to be—critical of the technocratic status quo yet also imaginative of more democratic possibilities. It can heighten our collective awareness that democratic commitments, practices, and policies are not settled orientations but rather choices that we need to

make and continually remake if we are, in Hartman's words, to "push from imagined ideal to implemented reality" (p. 67).

CONCLUSION

With the ultimate stakes encompassing both "general social welfare" (p. 124) and the "full development of human beings as individuals," (p. 124) Dewey (1937/2010) argued that democracy must "become part of the bone and blood of the people in daily conduct of its life" (p. 129); and education, he believed, might well be the single most significant determinant of that outcome. In *Dewey's Dream,* Benson, Harkavy, and Puckett (2007) make the case that "for universities and colleges to fulfill their great potential and really contribute to [democracy] ..., they will have to do things very differently than they do now…" (p. 84). What, though, does this mean for the work of experiential educators?

In this article we have shared some of our own conceptions of democratic purposes and some of our continually evolving attempts to walk their talk through intentional design of our processes. It may bear clarifying here that we privilege none of these processes or conceptions of purpose. As we see it, some of them, in Dewey's framing, relate more to democracy as a way of life and others more to democracy as a political system. Policies and structures that underlie democratic governance and institutionalize expectations for, if not the reality of, respect for human dignity and moral equality do not, on their own, make for a vibrant democratic culture. In turn, democracy as a political system may be especially well suited to the development of a pervasive and deep democratic consciousness insofar as it foregrounds awareness that we are fundamentally in relationship with one another and share responsibility for individual, community, national, and global well-being. A rich mix of interconnected and mutually reinforcing democratic purposes and processes, such as we have sought to illustrate here, is likely necessary in a comprehensive education for democracy.

We close with what we have come to see as an important common thread in our own work and what we commend as a powerful "North Star" for the community of experiential educators— Dewey's (1937/2010) eloquent articulation of "the foundation of democracy":

> faith in the capacities of human nature; faith in human intelligence and in the power of pooled and cooperative experience. It is not belief that these things are complete but that if given a show they will grow and be able to generate progressively the knowledge and wisdom needed to guide collective action. (pp. 124-125)

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