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## PUBLIC WORK FOR PUBLIC PROBLEMS

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Two practices in education—community-based learning<sup>1</sup> and deliberative democratic discourse—have been lauded as highly effective in instilling democratic values in students and preparing them to be active citizens. Both practices have the potential to facilitate the formation of publics in the Deweyan understanding—the building block of democratic society and action. However, while both practices can inspire a raised political consciousness and awareness in students, they do not seemingly materialize into active participation on a civic level, as voting rates for 18- to 29-year-olds continue to be less than 50% and lower than any other age group.<sup>2</sup> This failure may stem not just from flaws in the pedagogy, but from a failure to understand democracy in a Deweyan way—as more than simple electoral and governmental procedures and rather a “personal way of individual life; that it signifies the possession and continual use of certain attitudes, forming personal character and determining desire and purpose in all the relations of life.”<sup>3</sup>

This article will briefly examine the potential of both community-based learning and deliberative democratic discourse to encourage citizenship through the formation of Deweyan publics before pivoting to the critiques and possible explanations for their failure to engender action. It will then focus on the concept of *deliberative democracy in community*, a method of deliberative pedagogy that bridges the two practices along with an emphasis on democratic education that focuses on a Deweyan understanding of democracy as a way of life. This reframing of civic action as public problem-solving becomes the focal point for Boyte’s idea of public work<sup>4</sup> and Honig’s conception of “public

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<sup>1</sup> Both within and outside of the field of community-based learning, the terms service-learning, community-based learning, and community engagement are sometimes used interchangeably. While there are important distinctions between these terms, for the sake of limiting confusion, the author will use the term community-based learning to refer to any activity that involves a curricular experience with a significant element of community engagement integrated into the course.

<sup>2</sup> United States Census Bureau, “Voting Rates by Age,” *US Department of Commerce*, May 10, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2017/comm/voting-rates-age.html>.

<sup>3</sup> John Dewey, “Democracy and Educational Administration,” *School and Society* 45, no. 1 (1937): 457.

<sup>4</sup> Harry Boyte, “Deliberative Democracy, Public Work, and Civic Agency,” *Journal of Public Deliberation* 10, no. 1 (2014): 15.

things.”<sup>5</sup> It will close by calling for the academy to reimagine its definition of civic engagement to help it course-correct from an anemic, technocratic modality that ignores the wisdom of the public and fails to galvanize action in its students to a more dynamic form of education for democracy.

THE PROMISE AND SHORTCOMINGS OF COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING  
AND DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRATIC DISCOURSE

The pedagogy and practice of community-based learning has been lauded in higher education circles as a method to increase students’ civic skills and sense of civic responsibility. As part of the academic curriculum of their courses, students are out in the wider community building connections to amplify their in-classroom learning. This may include doing service at local non-profits to contextualize and concretize the issues they are learning about (e.g. a student in a philosophy class on the self working with individuals with developmental disabilities and reflecting on how differing notions of personhood do or do not recognize their dignity). It can also be consulting with community members and utilizing their unique knowledge and expertise to supplement perspectives taught in class (e.g. a history class on the city of Chicago in which students interview senior citizens about their experience of neighborhood change and gentrification over time). Its focus on concrete action paired with reflective practice helps develop informed and participatory citizens. Community-based learning often places students in direct contact with individuals who differ significantly from them. This can foster a broad other-affiliation—the capacity for citizens to recognize each other’s dignity and essential place in community.<sup>6</sup> That recognition of common membership can lead to action for policies that safeguard political and civil rights.

Community-based learning’s ideal of affiliation leading to action echoes Dewey’s vision of how publics are formed. As Dewey says, individuals are drawn into associations with one another through interests and desire and “what man believes, hopes for, and aims at is the outcome of associations and intercourse.”<sup>7</sup> When individuals in association become aware of the consequences of their own actions on others in society and vice versa, they can become compelled to action and advocacy. In these moments, for Dewey, they become a public. Community-based learning’s capacity to facilitate meaningful encounters with others and promote empathy and interest in common causes should draw students into forming publics with community partners. After working at a local transitional shelter, students who had never had relationships

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<sup>5</sup> Bonnie Honig, *Public Things: Democracy in Disrepair* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Eric Hartman, “No Values, No Democracy: The Essential Partisanship of a Civic Engagement Movement,” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 19, no. 2 (2013): 58–71.

<sup>7</sup> John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems: An essay in Political Inquiry*, ed. Melvin L. Rogers (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 76.

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with returning citizens may become equally concerned about the rate of incarceration for non-violent drug offenses and want to see laws changed. Once a part of those publics, students should be drawn into political engagement.

While community-based learning looks at what is beyond the classroom, the model of deliberative democratic discourse focuses on cultivating active citizens in the classroom. In the classroom, deliberative democratic discourse is the process of using the principles of deliberative democracy to inform the way the course is structured and taught. Gutmann and Thompson's view of deliberative democracy holds that citizens should not be treated like passive subjects, but rather should be active agents in an accessible government.<sup>8</sup> Deliberative democracy is meant to create and promote a public, legitimate, and mutually respectful discourse on issues that include a variety of perspectives. They argue that the education system is essential to students forming the democratic skills to understand different perspectives, communicate their own, and engage in moral arguments that arrive at justified decisions. Deliberative skills such as listening, mutual respect, and rational justification can be applied both within the classroom and without and are the basis for a thriving democracy. Deliberation stands in contrast to the typically hierarchical models of communication and procedure experienced at universities and can empower students to value their own voice and the voices of others.

As society becomes more and more diverse, consideration of multiple perspectives becomes even more essential in public problem-solving. Civic problems need complex solutions in order to engage people constructively despite their different identities and social stratification. This comfort with diversity is needed for Dewey's image of society where shared interests lead to the formation of publics only when citizens become conscious of interdependence as well as individuality—resulting in a solidarity that does not obscure individual and group differences.

Both community-based learning and deliberative democratic discourse encourage the values commitments to civil discourse that are central to democracy. These methods are meant to have students examine their own values as they come in contact with other citizens. If the "other" holds a differing belief, they are meant to engage respectfully and attentively. If the "other" holds a similar value, they are encouraged to leverage those common values for action. This reflects Dewey's idea of a democratic faith in the capacity of individuals to hold disputes and conflicts as "cooperative undertakings" that would not only provide an alternative to violence, but enrich the lives of both parties. Dewey said, "to cooperate by giving differences a chance to show themselves because of the belief that the expression of difference is not only a right of the other persons but is a means of enriching one's own life-experience, is inherent in the democratic personal way of life"

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<sup>8</sup> Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Why deliberative democracy?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

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toward the essential dynamic of plurality in democratic citizenship.<sup>9</sup> Rather than separated and segregated communities who exist alongside one another in quiet tolerance, healthy democracy is marked by a lively exchange of ideas, goods, and opportunities. The more one is exposed to other ways of being in the world, the more a citizen of a democracy understands the depth of the freedom they may exercise in speech and deed.

With either form of civic education students should be poised and eager to enter more deeply into political participation. While data shows that students exposed to both practices are more politically aware (e.g. noticing how governmental structures either impede or support marginalized communities, recognizing the power of community organizing), neither practice alone appears to be successful in producing politically active citizens (e.g. attending town halls, voting, becoming civil servants).<sup>10</sup> Students are committed to their values, but appear to hold them in isolation. This problem manifests in in-depth interviews with students participating in community-based learning programs where a significant disconnect is found between students' levels of political consciousness and actual political engagement.<sup>11</sup> They mentally separate their service work from what they define as politics and think of service and political engagement as two wildly different activities, with service being outside the political realm. Some report that they are unsure of how to connect their political interests to political action, while others say they do not believe the current political system to be efficacious. The most common reason for political disengagement was that it was perceived to be too divisive, especially among students who closely identified politics with electoral politics.<sup>12</sup>

Critics also believe that the focus on individual growth in community-based learning programs can prevent political engagement and leads students to see community engagement as a moral, rather than a political act.<sup>13</sup> Service becomes a moral good, unrelated to political systems that might lead to oppression and inequality in society. Community-based learning appears to be forming “participatory citizens”—individuals who assume that to improve society, they must be active and work within established systems and

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<sup>9</sup> John Dewey, “Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us (1939),” in *The Essential Dewey*, vol. 1, eds. Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998): 341.

<sup>10</sup> Dave Harker, “Political Consciousness but Not Political Engagement: Results from a Service-Learning Study,” *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 22, no. 2 (2016): 31–47.

<sup>11</sup> Harker, “Political Consciousness but Not Political Engagement.”

<sup>12</sup> Harker, “Political Consciousness but Not Political Engagement.”

<sup>13</sup> Harry Boyte, “Community Service and Civic Education,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 72, no. 10 (1991): 765–767.

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structures, but rarely if ever reform these systems or challenge the structures that are leading to oppression.<sup>14</sup>

Deliberative democratic discourse would seem to ameliorate this disconnect from the mechanisms of democracy because of the familiarity with democratic process it inculcates in students. However, it can confine the connection between democracy and education to the classroom, making civic learning a purely theoretical exercise. Participatory democratic theorists claim deliberative forums consist primarily of talk but rarely lead to citizen engagement afterwards, with the focus on democratic legitimation and justification lacking a movement toward action.<sup>15</sup> On its own, high-quality public deliberation is necessary, but not sufficient to the creation of empowered citizens and communities.

#### A WAY FORWARD: DELIBERATIVE PEDAGOGY IN COMMUNITY

Faced with these failures, it can be tempting for colleges and universities to abdicate their role in citizen formation and focus instead on academic mastery. However, scholars of both deliberative democracy and community-based learning agree that the educational system is essential to teaching citizens the norms and values of democracy. Dewey believed that education for these values was essential to democracy's survival and that the education system's primacy in that role was paramount.

I think unless democratic habits of thought and action are part of the fiber of a people, political democracy is insecure. It can not stand in isolation. It must be buttressed by the presence of democratic methods in all social relationships. The relations that exist in educational institutions are second only in importance in this respect to those which exist in industry and business, perhaps not even to them.<sup>16</sup>

Space must be intentionally allocated for citizens to have the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in politics, otherwise they often find the jargon and bureaucratic channels of the governmental system overwhelming. Students become civically proficient when they come to understand both social problems AND the democratic process by which change happens.

Civic engagement programs must form and foment students to think critically about large social problems, engage with the community outside their university, and form Deweyan publics. But this shift will also necessitate

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<sup>14</sup> Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, "What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy," *American Educational Research Journal* 41, no. 2 (2004): 237–269.

<sup>15</sup> R. W. Hildreth, "Word and Deed: A Deweyan Integration of Deliberative and Participatory Democracy," *New Political Science* 34, no. 3 (2012): 302.

<sup>16</sup> Dewey, "Democracy and Educational Administration," 459.

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universities redefining the parameters of civic participation to reach beyond electoral activity. Problems seem to stem in part from universities having a truncated view of democracy, seeing democracy more as a form of government and less of a set of principles and practices in public life. Civic engagement should be intentionally political, in a Deweyan sense, in that students learn about democracy by acting democratically. Rather than shrink democracy to simple procedure, Dewey claims that democracy is a way of life.

Democracy is a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature. . . . This faith may be enacted in statutes, but it is only on paper unless it is put in force in the attitudes which human beings display to one another in all the incidents and relations of daily life.<sup>17</sup>

The structures of democracy remain important for Dewey, but as a means of putting into practice a more comprehensive and socially embedded democratic ideal, rather than for their own sake. The state should be the mechanism through which a public is able to take action, but ultimately it is the formation of publics that drives democracy.

Boyte believes that key to this is reframing political involvement as larger than voting and governmental procedure and instead shifting toward a conception of civic engagement as addressing public problems.<sup>18</sup> Framed now as public concerns in which their voices are needed alongside the larger community, students can join with publics around issues and be inspired to join in collective actions.

In Boyte's model, the back and forth of deliberative communication becomes a crucial tool in public problem-solving and the creation of publics. Groups can leverage different voices and go through the intentional process of offering alternative plans and thoughtful consideration of consequences, gaining deeper insight and the potential for better and more widely acceptable ways of proceeding. Dewey called this kind of communicative give and take an imaginative rehearsal of various courses of conduct. By opening up a wider sense of the possible ramifications of both the public problem and its possible solutions, individuals gain a better sense of how consequences affect them.

Longo and Gibson introduce a pedagogy and intentional framework that like Boyte's model, offers a more nuanced approach to democratic education by insisting on the connection of deliberative dialogue with engagement in the community. This integrated approach is called *deliberative pedagogy in community*.<sup>19</sup> Deliberative pedagogy in the community centers the

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<sup>17</sup> John Dewey and James Hayden Tufts, *Ethics*, in *John Dewey, The Later Works, 1925–1953*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 7, 1932 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008), 48.

<sup>18</sup> Boyte, "Community Service and Civic Education."

<sup>19</sup> Nicholas V. Longo and Cynthia M. Gibson, "Talking Out of School: Using Deliberative Pedagogy to Connect Campus and Community," in *Deliberative*

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voices of the community alongside professors and students forming a co-creative learning environment and delivers essential democratic education while positioning the learning in the essential and rooting context of the local community. Connection and contact with the local community gives urgency and materiality to the issues being explored in class. The reflective practices and social change orientation of critical community-based learning brings community experiences back into the classroom and back into dialogue with the course material, further enriching classroom learning and exploring structural issues. When linked through deliberative pedagogy in community, community-based learning and deliberative democratic discourse are able to leverage each other's strengths to address their own failings and expand the understanding of civic action to something that is inherently relational in nature and focused on public problems.

When employed in classrooms alongside community-based learning, deliberative democratic discourse helps to bridge the gap between political consciousness and political engagement through skills-building and modeling new ways of learning. As practiced by university service-learning programs, community-based learning sometimes stays on the level of problematization, distracting from the democratic and constructive purposes that supposedly undergird it. Application of deliberative principles would refocus students toward constructive rather than solely critical ends. It would thus realign civic education with a Deweyan public's primary purpose of shared action (not just critique) on an identified problem.

The experience of a classroom grounded in deliberative democratic discourse would also help equip and prepare students who cite a fear of conflict as a main reason for not engaging in more political activity. Dewey claims we "make our schools the home of serious thought on social difficulties and conflicts" and, taking up this insight, universities should be leaning into potentially conflict-ridden discourse.<sup>20</sup> Deliberative practice emphasizes mutual respect and equal opportunity for all parties to be heard, while reason-giving allows for the creation of a civil space in the classroom where students engage issues deeply and critically. Spaces organized around these principles can show students that politics does involve conflict, but it does not always have to be divisive or unthoughtful.

Deliberative democratic discourse also embodies a new way of proceeding in the classroom. Most community-based learning courses still function under the traditional "sage on a stage" model in the classroom. As a result, students have dynamic experiences in the community, but return weekly

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*Pedagogy: Teaching and Learning for Democratic Engagement*, eds. Timothy J. Shaffer, Nicholas V. Longo, Idit Manosevitch, and Maxine S. Thomas (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2017), 37–48.

<sup>20</sup> John Dewey, "The Schools and Social Preparedness," in *John Dewey, The Middle Works, 1899–1924*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, vol. 10, 1916–1917 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 195.

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to a classroom with traditional top-down hierarchies of knowledge delivery. Rather than building off a lived experience of democracy, students are regularly realigned through an experience in which they passively receive what they are told they need from an authority. This constitutes a threat to a Deweyan democratic education as institutions have the capacity through their impact and procedures to encourage attitudes or abilities in one direction or another. In Dewey's words, "whether this 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."<sup>21</sup>

Direct engagement with the community helps make politically deliberative students participatory ones as well. Meaningful contact with the community helps universities move from the static dynamic of the teaching-yielding-learning model toward a model of collaborative engagement that highlights knowledge production as co-created through reflective public action. As Dewey said, the process of recognizing that knowledge and wisdom could be gleaned and grow from people in dialogue and engaged in collective action is essential. It promises to lay the foundation of a democracy built on faith in "the capacities of human nature; faith in human intelligence and in the power of pooled and cooperative experience."<sup>22</sup>

#### PUBLICS CREATED FROM "PUBLIC THINGS"

Dewey and Boyte have provided the "how" and "why" civic action must be reframed, Bonnie Honig's work *Public Things: Democracy in Disrepair* provides the "where." Honig uses the idea of "public things" as a catalyst for democratic action. This concept helps illuminate where some of the potential for deeper political engagement through deliberative pedagogy in community comes from. Honig intentionally does not precisely define public things, but she does say that they are subject to public oversight and objects of a public's shared value and care—things like swimming pools, sewers, land, schools, and even public telephone booths. Honig calls public things a necessary, if not sufficient condition for healthy democratic discourse—concentrating and focusing citizens' attention and galvanizing their efforts. They help to form publics, spurring collective action and even helping establish identity. Public things "constitute us, complement us, limit us, thwart us, interpellate us into democratic citizenship."<sup>23</sup>

Deliberative pedagogy in community places students in the orbit of public things. For instance, students who normally utilize Chicago's "L" trains for pleasure or recreation find themselves taking the train to their service sites. This initial shift of route allows them to see different residents of Chicago,

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<sup>21</sup> Dewey, "Democracy and Educational Administration," 460.

<sup>22</sup> Dewey, 461.

<sup>23</sup> Honig, *Public Things*, 25.

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redefining their own sense of the makeup of the city and their understanding of what a “Chicagoan” is. Pushed to be in conversation with those different from themselves, the common experience of the train may become a point of conversation with the individuals they work with at their sites. As students learn about their acquaintances’ long commutes to work or experiences with poorly serviced bus routes, their understanding of how the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) functions in the lives of Chicagoans broadens.

From this burgeoning political consciousness, students may find that they have come to show care and concern about the CTA. The placement of bus routes becomes something to which they are paying new attention. They may begin to decry the poor conditions of train cars on primarily south and westbound routes. There is a subtle shift of these students into a larger public that is centered around the CTA as a public thing. Honig says this occurs because a public things framework has publics “first asking not ‘who are we?’ but rather ‘what needs our care and concern?’”<sup>24</sup>

Honig’s framework of “what needs our care and concern?” can actually encourage a deliberative approach that empowers students who might have otherwise found themselves conflict-avoidant and unlikely to join in political action. Although it is ultimately a question of class and economic inequality, the students who are now concerned members of a public emergent around CTA ridership are brought into the question through the lens of access to a public good—a topic many will be more capable of and likely to join in deliberation on. Students resistant to engaging in an “argument around politics” with someone may be more likely to defend the public thing they have come to care for or feel more confident claiming a political position because they can find common ground in a public thing to leverage with their interlocutor.

Public things are named and claimed as valuable by a community. Although not necessarily always publicly owned, they become a flashpoint for public action. This public valuing points to an expression of ideals, something at the core of democracy. Honig is more explicit and makes it clear that public things are, in themselves, never neutral. “Public things are things around which we constellate, and by which we are divided and interpellated into agonistic democratic citizenship. They are not innocent or pure. They are political.”<sup>25</sup> Action on behalf of and around public things on the part of students is an expression of political action.

In some cases it may be blatant political actions, such as protests around local public school closures by secondary education majors. In other cases it may be the sudden deep valuing and increased patronage of Devon Market (a local supermarket that caters to the wildly diverse population of Rogers Park, including a major refugee and immigrant population) in the face of the impending opening of a Target around the corner. Public things expand the framework for dynamic democratic action, reflecting a Deweyan

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<sup>24</sup> Honig, 28.

<sup>25</sup> Honig, 36.

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understanding of democracy as a lived reality of everyday actions and habits rather than an anemic image of democracy as simple “procedures, polling, and policing—all necessary perhaps but certainly not sufficient conditions in democratic life.”<sup>26</sup>

#### PUBLIC WORK FOR PUBLIC THINGS AND PUBLIC PROBLEMS

At its core, deliberative pedagogy in community helps illuminate the need to redefine what society considers and calls political engagement. Models of engagement that focus solely on voting and electoral politics are necessary, but ultimately insufficient to ignite deeper democratic commitments. This expanded vision of democracy helps citizens move from deliberating on values to living them.<sup>27</sup> Apolitical civic engagement without explicit democratic dimensions will continue to keep universities disengaged from the public culture of democracy.

Boyte says that civic education must be recast as the *public work* of education. Public work can be defined as “self-organized efforts by a mix of people who create things, material or symbolic, whose value is determined by a continuing process of deliberation.”<sup>28</sup> Because public work is rooted in a deliberative process, no one community, person, or institution controls its direction in totality. Its existence and progression is contingent on people remaining in conversation with one another as they work toward the mutually agreed upon common good.

Deliberative pedagogy in community can begin conversations about what a pedagogy for public work could look like. Boyte emphasizes that public work must be supported by elements of deliberation because public work’s power is rooted in its capacity to draw a variety of different ideological positions into a common project. “A public work approach does not eliminate the fierce debates about distributive justice or questions of values, but it allows people with great differences on such issues to work together on public tasks of large significance.”<sup>29</sup> Deliberative public work also helps participants come to value each other’s perspective when they reflect on the importance of what they were able to do together. In this regard public things become an ideal site for public work because of both their importance and their relative permanence. Honig says it is

part of the necessary ongoing work of democratic citizenship;  
to join together to build public things, maintain them, and  
(re)secure them as the truly public things—the transitional

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<sup>26</sup> Honig, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Boyte, “Deliberative Democracy, Public Work, and Civic Agency.”

<sup>28</sup> Boyte, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Harry Boyte and Nancy Kari, “Renewing the Democratic Spirit in American Colleges and Universities: Higher Education as Public Work,” in *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*, ed. Thomas Ehrlich (Westport: The Oryx Press, 2000), 57.

objects of democratic life—also learning to accept the sense of futility they sometimes visit upon us when they remind us that they are more permanent than we.<sup>30</sup>

Students working in the community will likely end when the course does. But the CTA and the Chicago Public School system remain, continuing to be sites in which democratic questions are engaged. Students may realize their own impermanence in this work, undercutting the troublesome “savior” tendency that can come from community-based work. They realize that their work, while important, is nothing if not joined with others.

By reimagining politics to move beyond simple electoral and governmental procedures, society avoids simplifying citizenship to private work punctuated by the occasional public response to an emergency. Recentering civic life on citizens, will open up a public realm where meaningful public work is pursued on behalf of public problems and public things, “in which diverse groups learn to work together effectively to address public problems, whether or not they like one another personally.”<sup>31</sup>

#### THE ACADEMY AND “THE MAN WHO WEARS THE SHOE”

Directed toward public problem solving and catalyzed by public things, higher education focused on public work has the potential to begin a new stage of civic renewal. However, this will involve a reevaluation of the academy’s scholarship, culture, and traditional pedagogy. A public work orientation, supported by the educational practices of community-based learning and deliberative democratic discourse, can realign universities to a model of democratic education that fosters substantive political involvement and ultimately teaches students to learn from their fellow citizens as well as their professors. The success of civic education to support democratic processes is demonstrated when students show the ability to learn with and from others and not to rely only on academic expertise and mastery.

This reorientation to the wisdom of the community alongside the wisdom of the academy echoes Dewey’s claim that “the man that wears the shoe knows best that it pinches and where it pinches, even if the expert shoemaker is the best judge of how the trouble is to be remedied.”<sup>32</sup> Facts and vital knowledge of what the public wants and needs is found in the voices of its members, not just in analysis, polling or economic extrapolations. Dewey wrote *The Public and Its Problems* partially as a response to Walter Lippman’s 1922 book *Public Opinion* which advocated that government would be more effectively and safely run by those with expertise rather than the often uneducated and uninformed public. Dewey retorted that “political facts are not outside human desire and judgment” and called for citizens to not abdicate the

<sup>30</sup> Honig, *Public Things*, 11.

<sup>31</sup> Boyte, “Deliberative Democracy, Public Work, and Civic Agency,” 3.

<sup>32</sup> Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 224.

hard work of democracy to technocrats and policy wonks, but to rather bring their stories and experiences into the process as well.<sup>33</sup>

The transformation of democratic education in higher education must begin with a shift away from a simplistic and legalistic approach to civic engagement and toward a more deliberative and democratic frame. This university would cease to understand itself as apart from the broader communities and “those who wear the shoes.” Beyond implementing effective and dynamizing pedagogy, this university would claim a public work mission, sharing their expertise with those without the resources or capacities to fully analyze and resolve public problems. Because public work arises from deliberation, the university would form priorities for action *in conversation* with the larger community, being attentive to an ever-changing conversation about what is needed for the greater good, and not just the institution’s interests. This university would understand itself as a part of a larger public, one of many actors seeking to implement and live into the ideal of democracy.

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<sup>33</sup> Dewey, 43.

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