

HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE



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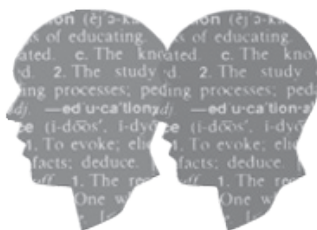
The *Higher Education Exchange* is founded on a thought articulated by Thomas Jefferson in 1820:

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

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

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We dedicate this issue of the *Higher Education Exchange* to Dan Yankelovich, who just passed away. His writing about public judgment has been critical to Kettering's understanding of deliberation. His seminal book *Coming to Public Judgment: Making Democracy Work in a Complex World* is required reading for thoughtful scholars of democracy.

He was not only an emeritus board member of the Kettering Foundation; he was also a great friend. We will all miss him.

David Mathews

CONTENTS

Derek W. M. Barker	Deliberation as Public Judgment: Recovering the Political Roots of a Democratic Practice (Foreword)	1
Jane Mansbridge	Beyond Adversary Democracy	6
Ronald Beiner	What Is Political Judgment?	13
Daniel Yankelovich	The Bumpy Road from Mass Opinion to Public Judgment	21
Noëlle McAfee & David McIvor with Derek W. M. Barker	Beyond the “Informed” Citizenry: The Role of Public Judgment in a Deliberative Democracy (An Interview)	29
Lori L. Britt	National Issues Forum Guides: Eliciting and Habituating Public Judgment	39
Maura Casey	How Civic Engagement Spread Across Six College Campuses	49
Harry C. Boyte	Shaping Our Future: The Public Purpose of Higher Education	53
David Mathews	Democracy Is in Trouble, Higher Education Is in Trouble (Afterword)	61
	Contributors	72

DELIBERATION AS PUBLIC JUDGMENT

Recovering the Political Roots of a Democratic Practice

Derek W. M. Barker

This volume, along with our allied publications *Connections* and the *Kettering Review*, is part of Kettering's annual review of its research. It focuses on how our research programs relate to current trends in democracy in the United States and around the world. In view of recent challenges within our public life, our democracy is increasingly in need of public discourse that transcends partisan divides. A movement for "dialogue and deliberation," informed in part by academic research, has grown in popularity and positioned itself to meet these challenges. However, upon closer scrutiny, our review has revealed a sense of confusion about what these related terms and practices mean. This issue of *HEX* brings together key writings that have influenced Kettering's concept of deliberation, understood as a practice of judgment under conditions of disagreement, and an alternative to the politics of division and polarization. We then reflect on the implications of this concept of deliberation for higher education in general, and specifically for those in colleges and universities working with Kettering to make our democracy work as it should. As an incubator for this movement, higher education can lead the way in recovering the political roots of deliberation, but only if it conceives its civic role in larger terms, beyond the reproduction and dissemination of academic knowledge.

Of course, our democracy has faced ongoing challenges that have been of long-term concern to Kettering: polarizing public discourse, partisan gridlock, and the ongoing loss of confidence in government. Without a doubt, the recent election—not the result, but the process—has exacerbated and intensified many of these trends. A degree of polarization has been built into our political system. To that extent, the current climate is nothing new. The dominant theory of American politics, laid out in the *Federalist Papers*, has always seen politics as a balance of power among competing "factions," rooted in free elections and an institutional system of complex checks and balances. Political and social theorists, from Tocqueville to Robert Putnam and Jürgen Habermas, have

recognized the importance of a healthy civic sphere to moderate the competitive dynamic of electoral politics.

However, our current climate seems to go beyond the founders' vision of healthy competition. While elected officials have always had their disagreements, research has confirmed partisanship in Washington has grown to new levels. Media polarization is also on the rise. According to one recent discourse analysis of cable news television, the polarization of mainstream news shows is almost indistinguishable from satirical shows like *The Colbert Report*. Not only are we confronted with ongoing socioeconomic and geographical divides; now social media further enables segmentation into bubbles of like-minded groups. Ironically, information is now easily accessible to anyone with a cell phone, but now the citizenry cannot even agree upon what constitutes factual information, much less how to interpret its implications.

This climate of tension and divisiveness is at the center of a cluster of related challenges. In addition to the usual gridlock, the discourse of “winners” and “losers” raises the stakes of politics. Each side fears that the other seeks power to impose its will, further increasing the sense of tension and mistrust. As politics comes to be seen exclusively as a competition for power, the outcomes have less claim to be regarded as the expression of a deliberative process that represents the common good. While traditional theories of electoral systems thought that adequate checks and balances could be enough to maintain the confidence of the citizenry, we have observed a continuing loss of confidence in the political system. Indeed, approval ratings of Congress continue to set new record lows, and this lack of confidence has spread to other public institutions. (Kettering has recently heard first-hand from both philanthropy CEOs and university presidents that their institutions have increasing difficulty articulating their public benefits in the highly politicized environment). The project of restoring our capacity for constructive public discourse on complex issues—what we have called “deliberation”—is as urgent now as it ever has been.

As a public institution, higher education would seem to be ideally placed to build bridges across these political divides. However, at least since the rise of the modern university, higher education has construed its neutrality narrowly, attempting to steer clear of politics rather than actively bridge political divides. At least since the advent of the modern research university, higher education has focused largely on the production and transmission of expert knowledge, conceiving its democratic role as informing the public. Higher education institutions are thus built around an epistemology that separates “facts” from “values,” and, understandably, the historical focus has been on the former rather than

the latter. However, if our current dysfunctions have more to do with political divisions than informational deficits, the question becomes what more expansive civic role is higher education capable of playing?

In recent years, higher education has begun to talk more actively about its civic role. As part of this civic renewal, the word “deliberation” has also enjoyed a resurgence, and higher education has played a key role in nurturing a field of practice across professional domains now ostensibly devoted to deliberative democracy. Academic research on deliberation can be found in numerous academic fields, including political theory, communication studies, public policy, and psychology. Related terms, such as dialogue, conflict resolution, visioning, and public engagement, are also on the rise, and are used in ways that overlap with deliberation. Moreover, campuses around the US have begun to move beyond the study of deliberation to actively incorporate deliberation and related approaches into their curriculum and civic programs.

In part because of all this attention, what deliberation means may be more varied and obscure than ever. Depending on their purposes and contexts, practices referred to under the rubric of “deliberation” may have various and even contradictory effects. Superficially, most uses of deliberation share certain similarities. They all use public meetings structured in some way to address conflicts and accomplish certain political outcomes. They all involve dialogue and deliberation practitioners that see themselves as part of a common professional network. At the same time, deliberation is used for strikingly different purposes, including civic education, conflict resolution, input into government policy and administration, and social justice, and sponsoring organizations make a variety of design choices to suit their purposes. Deliberations may serve purely consultative purposes, or may result in binding decisions. Topics may range from the most controversial issues of the day to narrow technical issues. Participants may be asked to consider varying degrees of factual information, or simply brainstorm ideas, with varying roles for experts and moderators (of course, in higher education, in particular, we would expect a natural tendency toward informational approaches with experts playing a stronger role). Despite such differences, the same word, “deliberation,” is used to describe the varied practices and examples taking place.

As a research foundation committed to a particular understanding of deliberation, our challenge is to be clear about what we mean when we use the term. This volume of *HEX* attempts to distill Kettering’s understanding of deliberation, based on 30 years of experience using the distinctive approach now known as National Issues Forums (NIF).

At least two important themes define Kettering's approach. First, this approach to deliberation is *political*. It aims to address dysfunctions of our political system, particularly the polarization of our public discourse and resulting loss of confidence in institutions. Rather than downplaying or avoiding disagreement, the focus of deliberation is squarely on divisive issues, but the idea is to *name* these issues in a public way that includes all concerns, while *framing* multiple options and their trade-offs. Our hope has been that the experience of deliberation could provide a positive political alternative to conventional adversarial politics. We refer to deliberation as a form of *public politics*, distinct from, but no less political than, *politics as usual*.

Second, at the center of our approach to deliberation is the exercise of the human faculty of *judgment*. That is, rather than technical or instrumental problems, we seek to apply deliberation primarily to the complex value questions that most divide our country. Because such questions cannot be answered objectively, no amount of technical knowledge can resolve them. Nor do we expect a unanimous consensus to resolve divisive issues. Rather, a process of public talking and thinking across differences can provide a larger shared understanding of the issues at stake, while reducing the gap between the extremes. While judgment lacks the certainty of scientific knowledge as well as the romantic appeal of a unanimous consensus, we think it is precisely the virtue that is needed to address the communicative dysfunctions of our current political climate.

To recover the political roots of deliberation, we begin with an excerpt from Jane Mansbridge's seminal book *Beyond Adversary Democracy*, an important precursor to the deliberative democracy movement. Mansbridge highlights the inherent adversarial nature of electoral systems, warning against our current challenges and dysfunctions if these tendencies were left unchecked.

We then turn to an excerpt from Ronald Beiner's *Political Judgement* to better articulate the sort of public thinking that is necessary under conditions of disagreement. Beiner distinguishes judgment from expert knowledge by locating judgment within the domain of *phronesis*, or practical reason, a general faculty for making decisions when scientific reasoning is insufficient. As Beiner argues, political judgment is compatible with deep-seated disagreement, on the one hand, and over-arching commonality, on the other, and is thus ideally suited for moderating between adversarial and unitary democracy.

An excerpt from *Coming to Public Judgment* by Dan Yankelovich further helps distinguish public judgment from unreflective public opinion. Most importantly, Yankelovich illustrates how public judgment involves "working through" the perspectives at stake in a contested issue, as well as their trade-offs.

In a new interview, we ask philosopher Noëlle McAfee and political theorist David McIvor to reflect on the democratic importance of judgment and its implications for the deliberative democracy movement. We ask whether practical efforts to promote deliberation may unwittingly emphasize narrow technical questions or minimize deep-seated moral disagreement. A renewed focus on judgment may help these efforts recover their political roots.

To further illustrate Kettering's approach to judgment-centered deliberation, Lori Britt reflects on her analysis of deliberative forum guides used to name and frame issues over years of collaboration with the National Issues Forums Institute.

As I have suggested, the focus of deliberation on judgment across differences stands in contrast to the traditional focus of higher education on technical knowledge. Even when talking about "civic engagement," universities typically mean either extending technical knowledge of experts to the community or engaging students in voluntary service activities. Kettering's research in higher education has focused on bringing deliberation to higher education civic engagement. Maura Casey provides a glimpse of such efforts taking root at Kingwood College under the leadership of Jay Theis, including forums to address the locally controversial issue of guns on campus. Harry Boyte reports on a national experiment that includes dozens of campuses around the country that are using deliberation to engage students and local communities on the mission of higher education and its role in educating young people for the changing world of work.

As our public discourse becomes increasingly adversarial, higher education and other expert professions may be tempted to double down on "informing" the public with expert knowledge. Kettering's research suggests that we are in need of something different, what the Greeks referred to as an *ethos*—a set of skills, norms, and habits for civic discourse in circumstances of conflict. Furthermore, if colleges and universities could help bridge our divides, as David Mathews argues, citizens might better recognize the public importance of these institutions. While higher education is in a position to help bridge our differences, its overwhelming tendency has been to prioritize technical knowledge at the expense of civic *ethos*. Proponents of deliberation may unwittingly compound the problem by confusing the two. We hope this collection will help practitioners of deliberation, as well as higher education as a whole, return their focus to the human faculty of judgment, and recover the political roots of deliberation.



BEYOND ADVERSARY DEMOCRACY

Jane Mansbridge

We begin this volume with an important precursor to the deliberative theory of democracy. As Mansbridge argues, in a large-scale democratic society rooted in elections, politics is likely to take on an adversarial character. However, a purely adversarial system risks losing the confidence of the citizenry. What is necessary is a different kind of politics that allows for disagreement, but enables a divided citizenry to understand political issues, reach decisions, and work together across their differences. The following is drawn from the Introduction (pages 3-7), Chapter 21 (pages 295-298), and Chapter 22 (pages 300-302) of Jane Mansbridge's book Beyond Adversary Democracy, published by the University of Chicago Press, 1983 edition.

The West believes that it invented democracy, and that institutions like Parliament, representation, and universal adult suffrage are synonymous with democracy itself. Every American schoolchild knows that when you set up a democracy you elect representatives—in school, the student council; later, senators, representatives, councilmen, assemblymen, and aldermen. When you do not agree, you take a vote, and the majority rules. This combination of electoral representation, majority rule, and one-citizen/one-vote is democracy. Because this conception of democracy assumes that citizens' interests are in constant conflict, I have called it “adversary” democracy.

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Every step in this adversary process violates another, older understanding of democracy. In that older understanding, people who disagree do not vote; they reason together until they agree on the best answer. Nor do they elect representatives to reason for them. They come together with their friends to find agreement. This democracy is consensual, based on common interest and equal respect. It is the democracy of face-to-face relations. Because it assumes that citizens have a single common interest, I have called it “unitary” democracy.

These two conceptions of democracy persist, side by side, in every modern democracy. The adversary ideal and the procedures derived from it have dominated Western democratic thinking since the seventeenth century. But unitary

ideals and procedures continue to influence the way legislative committees, elected representatives, major institutions like the Supreme Court, and local democracies actually act. In crises of legitimacy, citizens often revert to the unitary ideal, as young people did in the small participatory democracies that flourished in America in the 1960s and early 1970s.

These two conceptions of democracy are not only different, but contradictory. Yet those who talk and write about our democratic ideals never distinguish them. They assume either that adversary democracy is the only legitimate form of democracy or that unitary democracy is the ideal form and adversary democracy a compromise between the unitary ideal and the exigencies of practical politics. . . . [B]oth the unitary and the adversary forms of democracy embody worthy democratic ideals, although each is appropriate in a different context.

The adversary ideal and the procedures derived from it have dominated Western democratic thinking since the seventeenth century.

If decisions are legitimate only when they are “democratic,” it is important to recognize that democracy can come in these two different forms. When interests conflict, a democratic polity needs adversary institutions. When interests do not conflict, unitary institutions are more appropriate. The most important single question confronting any democratic group is therefore whether its members have predominantly common or conflicting interests on matters about which the group must make decisions.



My argument is that we actually mean two different things when we speak of “democracy” and that we will not be able to deal effectively with crises of legitimacy until we recognize that neither conception is appropriate under all circumstances. The task confronting us is therefore to knit together these two fundamentally different kinds of democracies into a single institutional network that can allow us both to advance our common interests and to resolve our conflicting ones.

Lessons for the Nation-State

[One] approach to the unitary ideal . . . assumes that the nation’s major problems are susceptible of technically correct solutions, so that the polity can be concerned with the “administration of things, not the government of men.”

While Mao, Marx, and Engels use the language of “correct solutions,” progressives in American national politics and “good government” organizations on the state and local level make the same assumption, expecting elected officials to act only as facilitators, technocrats, and efficient managers of the business of government.



It would be absurd not to recognize the value of these goals. [Yet the] depressing conclusion is that democratic institutions on a national scale can seldom be based on the assumption of a common good. . . . The method of overlapping private interests becomes the fantasy of “me-plus”: you and you and all others add to my experience, take me out of and beyond myself, deepen my sensations and my thoughts, and take nothing away. Everyone adds; no one subtracts. The self expands, meeting no obstacles. So too with the method of making the good of others and the whole one’s own. No individual can be completely and solely altruistic or wrapped up in the corporate good. A rhetoric, propaganda, or fantasy that praises altruism or reason of state while disparaging all self-regarding interests will make it much harder for those who believe in it to sort out their actual interests.

Because of the size and complexity of any modern nation-state, many citizens’ interests will inevitably conflict. Yet a democracy based solely on the cold facts of national conflict will encourage selfishness based on perceiving others as opponents and discourage reasoned discussion among people of good will. The effect is particularly noticeable in the realm of ideals. Adversary democracy, which derives from a fundamental moral relativism, transforms the pursuit of ideals from a dialogue into a bargain. In an adversary system, one person’s belief is no more right than any other’s; ideals are no different from other interests; the way to deal with ideals is therefore to weight each person’s ideal equally and sum them all up, letting the numerically preponderant ideals prevail. When a collectivity treats ideals as interests and decides to settle such issues with a vote, it has given up on the hope that discussion, good will, and intelligence can lead to agreement on the common good. Few politicians and even fewer ordinary citizens find these consequences acceptable. To avoid them, most people apply to the nation unitary assumptions and a unitary rhetoric that even they themselves do not quite believe. The resulting conceptual and moral confusions help undermine the legitimacy of what is, in fact, a primarily adversary polity.



But a national polity can also try to make some forms of the unitary experience available to its citizens. The safest place to do this is on the most local level, either in the workplace or the neighborhood, where the greater information each citizen can have about any decision helps guard against false unity. With such decentralization, a nation operating primarily as an adversary democracy need not condemn its citizens to selfishness and amorality, anymore than a state with no established church need condemn its citizens to atheism.



In short, by fostering decentralized and highly participative units, by maintaining a few crucial remnants of consensus, by instituting primarily cooperative economic relations, and by treating adversary methods not as an all-encompassing ideal but as an unavoidable and equitable recourse, a nation can maintain some of the conditions for community, comradeship, selflessness, and idealism without insisting that on most matters all its citizens have a common interest.



The subversive effect of adversary procedure on unitary feeling makes it essential that the necessary dominance of adversary democracy in national politics not set the pattern of behavior for the nation as a whole. The effort to maintain unitary elements in the nation in turn depends on widespread rejection both of the cynical doctrine that interests always conflict and of the credulous assumption that they can always be harmonious.



[I]f we want to make our institutions conform more loosely to our democratic ideals, we must first sort out the contradictions in these ideals. Specifically, we must distinguish ideals appropriate to situations where we all have common interests from ideals appropriate to situations where we have conflicting interests. In the real world, we always have both. Thus, for a polity to embody our fundamental conceptions about democracy, it must deal with both common and conflicting interests in ways consistent with our ideals. As we have seen, a polity that purports to be either exclusively unitary or exclusively adversary cannot do this. To maintain its legitimacy, a democracy must have both a unitary and an adversary face. It must intertwine the unitary thesis

and the adversary antithesis, embracing both unitary and adversary forms, becoming neither and absorbing neither, but holding them together so that when circumstances warrant, the constituent forms continue to appear.

On the national level, such a democracy must be primarily adversary. But it must be an adversary democracy that truly seeks to protect interests equally and consequently judges itself on its ability to produce proportional outcomes in moments of conflict. Very small democratic organizations must be primarily unitary. In small workplaces and neighborhood democracies, a citizen could learn the communal virtues . . . and at the same time, learn to adopt different democratic procedures for dealing with common and conflicting interests.

To state that people sometimes have common interests and sometimes have conflicting interests is to state the obvious. Yet most people's day-to-day thinking is dominated either by the assumption that interests always converge or by the assumption that they always conflict. The idealistic anarchist, the committed Marxist, the president of a corporation, the engineer, the city manager—none will let go of the notion that in the well-managed world (or organization) there will be no genuine conflicts of interest. They all assume that most, if not all, decisions can be genuinely in the best interests of all members of their polity.

The average political scientist is equally reluctant to give up his conviction that the combative forms of adversary democracy provide the only guarantees of freedom. In his eyes, unity is always a fraud. Proponents of the adversary model—in political science, in politics itself, and outside both these professional arenas—often love conflict. They enjoy making coalitions, calculating odds, forming strategies, and defeating their opponents. If they win, they try to extract as much as possible from their opponents. If they lose, they calculate ways of giving as little as possible. They reject consociational solutions that yield proportional outcomes or allow for taking turns, partly because such solutions drain the excitement from the battle. It was not just paranoia that made former President Nixon compile an "enemies list"; it was the spirit of adversary democracy.

As a people, we in America are starved for unitary democracy. Because our public life so often consists in the soulless aggregation of interests, we like our national leaders to raise our unitary goosebumps for a moment ("Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country"). But our adversary training has also made us cynical about such appeals, so in the end we mostly ignore them. Unitary appeals fall into an institutional void. Most Americans experience democracy only in the voting booth. Citizens file

into a curtained box, mark a preference, and file out. In special circumstances, if a big-city political machine is at work or if the community is small, they may see someone they know on the way in and out of the box, smile, and exchange a triviality. Most voters see no one they know. They sit in their homes; they consume information; they determine a preference; they go to the polling place; they register the preference; they return to their homes. Small wonder that the preferences so conceived and so expressed should tend toward the private and the selfish.

Yet in a polity with as few unitary institutions as ours, an effective national unitary appeal might well be dangerous. Our citizenry is not educated to know its interests. Adversary issues that would raise consciousness often do not enter the realm of public decision. And even when we have some idea of our self-regarding interests, we have not usually tested this idea against either our ideals or our feeling for others to determine what our “enlightened” choice would be. Because we have had little experience in deciding when our interests converge and when they conflict, we may hunger for a unitary appeal that we cannot wisely evaluate.

In a polity with as few unitary institutions as ours, an effective national unitary appeal might well be dangerous.

A few philosophers have recently sounded the alarm against the increasingly self-interested focus of public life. They call for a return to preadversary conceptions of the common good, to public discussion and debate, and to relations of fellowship and community. Some demand a reform of the economy; others urge the return of politics to small face-to-face forms of debate where citizens can be political actors rather than consumers. To achieve these goals, such thinkers often advocate Socialism, decentralization of state functions, workplace democracy, or all three. Yet their chorus has had virtually no impact on our actual political behavior. Government grows steadily more centralized, the economy not greatly more cooperative, and workplaces remain as undemocratic as ever.



[T]hese recommendations are not just reactions to specific abuses but to the entire conception of adversary democracy. In many cases the recommendations implicitly call for unitary democracy without recognizing the difficulties and limitations of unitary institutions. My aim, on the contrary, has been to show

that preserving unitary virtues requires a mixed polity—part adversary, part unitary—in which citizens understand their interests well enough to participate effectively in both forms at once.



WHAT IS POLITICAL JUDGMENT?

Ronald Beiner

Politics concerns questions not only of facts, but of what to do in light of the facts, particularly when people disagree. While higher education traditionally focuses on technical knowledge, Ronald Beiner explains that what citizens really need is judgment, the intellectual skills and habits of dialogue in circumstances of disagreement. The following is drawn from Chapter 1 (pages 1-4) and Chapter 7 (pages 138-143) of Ronald Beiner's Political Judgment, published in 1983 by University of Chicago Press and Methuen and Co., London. It retains its original style and usage conventions.

Why We Should Inquire

The dominant implicit consciousness of contemporary political societies seems locked into a peculiar bind. On the one hand, rationality is exclusively identified with rule-governed behavior, where the rules by which we are guided can be explicitly specified and made available for scrutiny according to strict canons of rational method. On the other hand, questions of ethical norms and political ends are assumed to be beyond rational scrutiny: here we retreat into a jealously guarded subjectivity where any questioning of our choices or priorities is regarded as a form of moral trespass, an intrusion into the realm of privileged individual 'values and preferences.' . . . Consequently, the monopoly of political intelligence is handed over to experts, administrators, and political technicians who coordinate the rules of administration and decision-making that accord with the reigning canons of method, rational procedure, and expertise. This monopoly goes unquestioned because the exercise of political rationality is assumed to be beyond the competence of the ordinary individual, whose proper sphere of competence is the choice of his own moral and social 'values'. Total political responsibility is ceded to the expert or administrator, provided that the individual's private sphere of values is not invaded.

Under these conditions, political reason is stymied from the outset. It is no wonder that for most of us political life has lost its urgency. Nor should it come as a surprise to us that, according to Jürgen Habermas' analysis in his book *Legitimation Crisis*, modern political systems are depleted of the very resources of moral and political legitimation that would alone make it possible for them to fulfill the expectations that they themselves generate. The types of fiscal, political, and ideological crisis analyzed by Habermas all have their roots in the fact that ordinary political reasoning and deliberation has been drained of its legitimacy. Convinced that the administration of the political system is

the prerogative of specially qualified experts and that the opinion of the ordinary citizen fails to satisfy the established canons of rationality, the would-be citizen retreats to his own private domain where political frustration and malaise well up. Pitched between the rigid demands of rule-governed method and the equally constraining stipulations of reigning subjectivity, the rational opinion of the common citizen fails to find its proper voice.

Convinced that the administration of the political system is the prerogative of specially qualified experts and that the opinion of the ordinary citizen fails to satisfy the established canons of rationality, the would-be citizen retreats to his own private domain where political frustration and malaise well up.

Inquiry into the power of human judgment offers a possible way out of this impasse. Judgment is a form of mental activity that is not bound to rules, is not subject to explicit specification of its mode of operation (unlike methodical rationality), and comes into play beyond the confines of rule-governed intelligence. At the same time, judgment is not without rule or reason, but rather, must strive for general validity. If subjectivity could not be transcended, at least in principle, the rendering of judgments would be an entirely vain activity of asserting claims that could never be vindicated. For there to be the mere possibility of valid judgments, there must exist a way of breaking the twin stranglehold of methodical rules and arbitrary subjectivism.

Judgment allows us to comport ourselves to the world without dependence upon rules and methods, and allows us to defeat subjectivity by asserting claims that seek general assent. In this way political reason is liberated, and the common citizen can once again reappropriate the right of political responsibility and decision-making that had been monopolized by experts. If all human beings share a faculty of judgment that is sufficient for forming reasoned opinions about the political world, the monopoly of the expert and technocrat no longer possesses legitimacy. Political reason, from being a technical science, is restored to a practical science. As Hans-Georg Gadamer states in one of his essays: ‘practical and political reason can only be realized and transmitted dialogically. I think, then, that the chief task of philosophy is to justify this way of reason and to defend practical and political reason against the domination of technology based on science.’ Thus ‘it vindicates again the noblest task of the citizen—

decision-making according to one's own responsibility—instead of conceding that task to the expert'. (Gadamer 316)



The purpose of inquiring into the nature of judgment is to disclose a mental faculty by which we situate ourselves in the political world without relying upon explicit rules and methods, and thus to open up a space of deliberation that is being closed ever more tightly in technocratic societies. In respect of this faculty, the dignity of the common citizen suffers no derogation. Here the expert can claim no special privileges. If the faculty of judging is a general aptitude that is shared by all citizens, and if the exercise of this faculty is a sufficient qualification for active participation in political life, we have a basis for reclaiming the privilege of responsibility that has been prized from us on grounds of specialized competence. Ultimately, what is sought in this study is a redefinition of citizenship.

As Hans-Georg Gadamer states in one of his essays: “practical and political reason can only be realized and transmitted dialogically.”

Our topic, then, should be of concern to everyone, for it affects not just those with a specialist interest in politics but all of us whose lives are touched by politics, no less, when political affairs seem most remote from our grasp. Politics removed from the sphere of common judgment is a perversion of the political, and as such, cannot help but manifest itself in political crisis. It is precisely because there is a deep seated political crisis in the modern world that we are obliged to inquire into what is involved in judging and what makes it possible for us to exercise this faculty.



The Concept of Judgment in the History of Political Philosophy: Brief Survey

The theme of political judgment, historically considered, is a paradoxical one, for its presence within the western tradition of political thought is at one and the same time pervasive and elusive. The first recognition of a human faculty for judging particulars without the benefit of a universal rule goes back to Plato's dialogue, *The Statesman*. The theme of *phronesis* is developed extensively in Aristotle's work, and is transmitted to later thinkers both directly and via the political thought of Aquinas, who transposes into his own terms the

Aristotelian analysis of moral life. . . . To appreciate fully the centrality of the concepts of taste and judgment in eighteenth-century British empiricist thought, one may turn to Hume's essay 'Of the standard of taste', or to the Introductory Discourse 'On taste' added to Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry*, which could not have failed to influence Kant's aesthetic theory.

And yet, despite this repeated occurrence of the term 'judgment' throughout the tradition of western political thought, there is a sense in which the theme of political judgment has hitherto gone without explicit recognition. There is, strictly speaking, no literature on the concept of political judgment, as there are for other leading political concepts, such as justice, property, freedom, rights, equality, power, rule of law, revolution, and numerous others (in spite of the fact that without the concept of judgment none of these others could possibly exist). Where the concept occurs it does so obliquely, introduced within more general inquiries rather than being pursued systematically for its own sake. Although Kant's *Critique of Judgment* is offered as a conceptualization of the capacity of judging as such, its applicability to politics is highly problematical, as we shall begin to explore in a later chapter. We look in vain for a comparably exhaustive analysis of *political* judgment proper in the entire course of western political philosophy.



Scope of the Inquiry

In every contact we have with the political world we are engaged in judgment. Judging is what we do when we read politics in our morning newspaper, when we discuss politics during family or friendly conversation, and when we watch politics on television. Judging is also what we as academics do when we try to keep abreast of the political developments in our world, or when we strive to appraise the course of modern political history. And finally, judging is what we are doing also when we *do* politics, that is, when we act in a public setting or assume public responsibilities for which we are held accountable. So the normal kind of contact that each of us—academics, political observers, and common citizens—has with politics is the opportunity to judge.



Communities

Let us, then, ascend finally to the realm of the political itself, where yet another dimension of reflective judgment is added. This added dimension of

responsibility follows from the very nature of political community, for political judgment entails an implied responsibility for the assumption of what may be termed a shared way of life. All political judgments are—implicitly at least—judgments about the form of collective life that it is desirable for us to pursue within a given context of possibilities. The commonality of judging subjects is internal to, or constitutive of, the judgment, not merely contingent or external to it. (In the latter case, judgment is deliberated upon ‘monologically,’ and therefore submitted to one’s fellows for confirmation or negation only subsequent to one’s having arrived at the judgment independently of them; in the former, the deliberation is ‘dialogical’ that is, proceeding from a form of deliberation that does not abstract from one’s discourse with one’s fellows.) This follows from the nature of the *object* of deliberation, which is directed to the very form of our relating together. For the moment, I can express this no better than by saying that what is at issue here is not ‘what should I do?’ or ‘how should I conduct myself?’ but: ‘how are we to “be” together, and what is to be the institutional setting for that being-together?’ Where what is at stake are arrangements of mutual accommodation defining how we are to associate with one another, the urgency of coming to an agreement is not merely greater but indeed of a higher order. Hence the complexities of this form of deliberation are qualitatively, not by degree, enhanced. (It is not *self*-deliberation about my life, but mutual deliberation conducted *between* agents implicated in a common life.) While this higher level of responsibility can be present in private relationships (e.g. in family life), only the public sphere admits of general deliberation about the form of being-together which governs or regulates our interaction on a truly comprehensive scale. It was this comprehensiveness which according to the argument of Book I of Aristotle’s *Politics*, distinguished the polis from lesser forms of association, including the family. (Aristotle referred to it as the ‘self-sufficiency of political life.’)

If this position can be shown to be compelling, it would follow that in judgments about political relationships, that is, judgments relating to the form of association between men, a quality of intensified responsibility is at work that is not present in delivering a judgment about a chess move, or about the character of a person with whom we are acquainted, or for that matter, about the aesthetic quality of a work of art (all of which are instances of reflective judgment). At most, the form of intersubjective deliberation operative in politics is foreshadowed or anticipated in the less fully developed types of reflective judgment that we have been considering previously. This implies that only political judgment is as a matter of course characterized by the need to come to

an agreement about the common form of our relating-together—and it is this quest that animates the presentation of a judgment for common deliberation, consent, or conflict, and ultimately, the movement of coming-to-an-agreement through rational or not-so-rational consensus (and therefore, what is required of a theory of political judgment is to provide some theoretical account of this process of rational deliberation, consensus, and the hope of coming to an agreement).



The reason why public judgments are possible at all is that the objects of those judgments are shared by those who judge, or are the focus of their *common* concern. For instance, I judge as a member of a community because of a common tradition and shared history, public laws and obligations to which all are subject, common ideals and shared meanings. These ‘public objects’ or public things (*res publica*) allow for judgment of a public character, for these things concern all of us who participate in these traditions, laws, and institutions, and who therefore share in common meanings. Such judgments concern not merely what *I* want or the way of life *I* desire, but rather entail intersubjective deliberation about a common life (how *we* should be together).

Let us examine another aspect of our example, where it is not at all clear where the common relationship is situated. Two parties are in disagreement about a right, in this case the right to possession of territory. The disputants must at least share a concept, namely the concept of a right to possess land, in order to dispute the right. But the sharing of a concept implies some agreement about the kinds of criteria that will potentially decide disputes about how to apply the concept. . . . This certainly does not mean that the *actual* achievement of agreement is assured; rather, one cannot speak of a shared concept where there is no *possibility* of agreement on how to apply the concept. This is not to say that fundamental disagreements cannot arise over such concepts, only that there must be *some* conceptual contact between those in fundamental conflict. (And let us bear in mind that the application of general concepts to particulars is what we have already defined as ‘judgment’.) Thus there must be at least this minimal (or formal) shared judgment if conflicts of judgment are to occur. Even divergent judgments of the most deep-seated and fundamental kind are rooted in some relation of community, otherwise one would lack the concepts with which to disagree.



This (limited) commensurability might seem to preclude the assertion of a tragic dimension to judgment; for if the claims upon us are commensurable, in what way can they be in tragic conflict? . . . But this is mistaken, assuming that by ‘commensurable’ one does not simply mean ‘decidable’. The claims upon us can conflict tragically only if they make conceptual contact with one another, and the only way in which they can come into contact with one another is if there is *some* commensurability between them. Otherwise they would simply pass each other by, without any trace of mutual disturbance. Commensurability in this sense is in fact the *condition* of the possibility of tragic conflict, and theories that postulate moral or intellectual incommensurability are incapable of giving an account of such conflict.

How are such questions of right resolved? Necessarily, they must be submitted to criteria of judgment to which (ideally) all those judging can assent. That is, there must be underlying grounds of judgment, which human beings,

qua members of a judging community, share, and which serve to unite in communication even those who disagree (*and who may disagree radically*).

The very act of communication implies *some* basis of common judgment.

There must be some agreement of judgment on what would count as valid historical evidence, or valid moral considerations, such as would tend to confirm or contradict one political judgment or the other (although it may well be that none of these considerations is strictly conclusive). For

judgment at all to be possible, there must be standards of judgment, and this implies a community of judgment, that is, agreement in judgments at a deeper level that grounds those at the level of ordinary political argument. In this sense, discourse rests upon an underlying substratum of agreement in judgments. The very possibility of communication means that disagreement and conflict are grounded in a deeper unity. This is what may be termed, borrowing Kantian language, a ‘transcendental’ requirement of our discourse.

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Means, Ends, and Identity

Human subjects have no privileged access to their own identity and purposes. It is through rational dialogue, and especially through political dialogue, that we clarify, even to ourselves, who we are and what we want. It is mistaken to assume that we necessarily enter into dialogue with an already consolidated view of where we stand and what we are after, conceiving of speech merely as a means to be used for winning over others, rather than as an end to be pursued for its own sake. On the contrary, communication between subjects joined in

The very possibility of communication means that disagreement and conflict are grounded in a deeper unity.

a community of rational dialogue may entail a process of moral self-discovery that will lead us to a better insight into our own ends and a firmer grasp upon our own subjectivity. Here politics functions as a normative concept, describing what collective agency should be like, rather than abiding by its present devalued

meaning. The political expression of this ideal is the republican tradition. Thus inquiry into the intersubjective basis of moral and political rationality may contribute to a fuller understanding of what Arendt and Habermas call a public realm or public space, what Charles Taylor has called a deliberative culture, and what in the traditional vocabulary goes by the name of a republic. Our hope is that such reflection will ultimately conduct us back to Aristotle's insight that it is through speech and deliberation that man finds the location of his proper humanity, between beast and god, in the life of the citizen.



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THE BUMPY ROAD FROM MASS OPINION TO PUBLIC JUDGMENT

Daniel Yankelovich

As a capacity shared by all citizens, public judgment is different from expert knowledge. However, it is not the same as mere public opinion. Rather, judgment implies a civic process of coming together across differences. The late Daniel Yankelovich illustrates this civic process in a classic study that helped to shape Kettering's understanding of deliberation. The following is drawn from Chapter 5 (pages 59-65) of Daniel Yankelovich's Coming to Public Judgment, published in 1991 by Syracuse University Press.

One must be careful not to denigrate being well informed as a measure of quality in public opinion. This is the dominant norm, and it prevails wherever public opinion is taken into account—in public-policy circles, in academic disciplines that study public opinion, and especially among journalists. What some journalists mean by being well informed is, however, too narrow: it is judging people as if they were memory chips. Fortunately, many journalists (and others who hold this point of view) are too sophisticated to reduce being well informed to a sand pile of data. They have a broader concept that includes coherence of outlook and contextual understanding as well as information about the raw “facts.” But broad or narrow, concepts of quality-as-well-informed all share one common characteristic that differentiates them from the model of quality-as-public-judgment . . . [t]hey all stress the cognitive, information-absorbing side of public opinion. In contrast, the public-judgment model stresses the emotive, valuing, ethical side, which includes the cognitive base but moves beyond it.

In the dominant model, poor quality means that essential information is lacking. In the public-judgment model, poor quality (mass opinion) means being caught in unresolved cross pressures. The difference is striking. Consider a simple example of how, from the point of view of the two models, one might judge poor quality opinion in two people opposed to the nuclear arms race.

Dominant Model. “You can’t take his opinion seriously because he is poorly informed. He doesn’t know that you get more bang-for-the-buck with nuclear weapons than with conventional ones. He thinks, erroneously, that the country can save money on the defense budget by substituting conventional forces for nuclear arms. And he is under the illusion that nuclear weapons accounts for the lion’s share of the defense budget.”

Public-Judgment Model. “You can’t take his opinion seriously because he hasn’t resolved where he truly stands. He is opposed to the nuclear arms race because he fears for the safety of his grandchildren in a nuclearized world, and he wants to see the money now spent on nuclear weapons devoted to some more constructive purpose, like protecting the environment. But at the same time, he is an ardent patriot, and he buys into the argument that loyalty to the administration supports its program of nuclear defense.”

In this example, the opinion holder is poorly informed and is caught waffling between two competing sets of values. But note how different the two

The information-driven model leads to a concept of public education as a one-way process: the expert speaks; the citizen listens.

descriptions are, and more importantly, the implied remedy for poor quality. In the first instance, the remedy is to impart correct information about the relative costs of conventional compared with nuclear weapons, and to gather accurate statistics about the proportion of the defense budget devoted to nuclear defense. In the second instance, the

remedy is to stimulate resolution of competing priorities and values (loyalty to the administration compared with holding opposing convictions).

The information-driven model leads to a concept of public education as a one-way process: the expert speaks; the citizen listens. Questions may arise about the best technique for grabbing the public’s attention and conveying the relevant information. But conceptually, the model is simple and unidirectional: the expert’s role is to impart information to the public skillfully and effectively; the citizen’s role is to absorb the information and form an opinion based on it.

So deeply embedded in our culture is this model that it blocks from view the process of shifting from mass opinion to public judgment. In the dominant model, the remedy for poor quality is to communicate more information. What is the remedy for overcoming mass opinion? How do you get from it to public judgment? Admittedly, the path is difficult—a bumpy road full of potholes and roadblocks and detours. The territory is unexplored because it has been so completely hidden by the more familiar quality-as-well-informed model. But if one steps back to gain perspective, the road from mass opinion to public judgment, as it might be seen on a map, is surprisingly straight and orderly.



There are three stages in moving from mass opinion to public judgment. . . . Only when the full picture of the three stages is clearly set forth can one appreciate how profound the difference is between this concept and the quality-as-well-informed model.

The purpose of bringing the differences between the two models to light is both practical and theoretical. The practical purpose is to develop a methodology for enhancing quality public opinion. American society possesses a wide range of institutions for conveying information and making citizens better informed. So powerful are these that the danger of information overload is greater than the danger of information malnourishment.

And yet, ironically, there is want in the midst of plenty. As we have seen, Americans are not materially “better informed” than they were forty years ago when people were less well educated and not nearly as bombarded with information. This opinion poll finding suggests that something is dreadfully wrong—either in the definition of what it means to be well informed, or with how information is organized and conveyed to citizens, or, as I am proposing, with the very concept of quality public opinion. If we focus on the new model of quality-as-public-judgment, we will discover new technologies for overcoming mass opinion and new ways to navigate the tortuous path to public judgment.

In the several decades I have been studying the differences between mass opinion and public judgment, it has gradually dawned on me that, apart from its practical uses, there is an important theoretical objective to be gained. The “laws of motion” in moving from mass opinion to public judgment are so different from those involved in moving from being poorly informed to being well informed that a whole new light can be shed on the nature of public opinion, and particularly on how Americans gradually force themselves to resolve their conflicting values to form a mature body of responsible public judgment. Therefore, a better theoretical understanding of how public opinion deepens in quality and judgment contributes to our understanding of what makes our democracy work.

Before plunging ahead on the journey from mass opinion to public judgment, it would be good to say a word about the *desirability* of the practical objective. There will be some readers who think: “If American attitudes toward capital punishment and abortion and sex education in the schools are examples of public judgment, then the last thing our society needs is new techniques for generating it more quickly and efficiently. These are divisive, emotion-laden issues on which large parts of the public hold wrong-headed views. If my only alternative is mass opinion, then I will take that. If people are inconsistent and

hold mushy points of view, they are easily persuaded to shift one way or the other, leaving room for leadership to do what is right without ‘consulting’ the public.”

This is not a trivial argument. Moreover, in one form or another, it is held by many of our elites. But it is untenable when examined closely. First of all, not all instances of public judgment are divisive and controversial. Most, in fact, help the country to move toward the kind of consensus on which successful political

If the public is bound to have the ultimate last word—and it is—it is far better that it be based on responsible public judgment, however prickly, than on mass opinion, however malleable.

action must be based. Examples include: public support for the foreign policy of the postwar period, with its willingness to offer reconciliation to former enemies and to devote considerable resources via the Marshall Plan to reconstructing the economies of our allies. It includes also the post-Sputnik consensus that America had to improve its technical and math education in the schools to meet the Soviet challenge in space, and the post-Afghanistan consensus supporting both Presidents Carter and Reagan in their

policies of increasing the US defense budget. The country is now in the throes of forming a national consensus on the importance of doing more to protect the environment. . . . It will take several additional years before public judgment on this issue has jelled, but the direction is clear.

In our system of representative democracy, settling for mass opinion instead of public judgment is not viable. If the United States were not so active a democracy, perhaps this alternative might work. In countries like Japan or Germany, where there are strong traditions of authority, the point of view of elites carries much more weight than does public opinion. In fact, elites often shape public opinion. In the United States, however, elites still exert much less influence than in these other countries despite the creeping expertism that we have already noted. Sooner or later public opinion makes itself felt, sometimes directly, as in the public pressure that undermined the policy of support for the Contras in Nicaragua in the Reagan administration and persuaded President Reagan to withdraw the marines from Lebanon after a number of marines had been killed by a terrorist bomb.

More often, public opinion makes itself felt indirectly through watershed elections. The election of 1980 is a good example. The country turned to the right-wing populist Ronald Reagan out of disillusionment with the

policies of liberalism that had characterized both political parties in earlier years (including the Nixon and Ford administrations). The public forced the change in the country's direction.

If Americans had a choice, if, that is, American culture and its institutions supported governance by elites, with the public staying out of the political process except on rare occasions (as in present-day Japan), then perhaps an apathetic, malleable public mired in mass opinion might be a thinkable option. But given the system as it now exists, there is no way to keep the public out. If the public is bound to have the ultimate last word—and it is—it is far better that it be based on responsible public judgment, however prickly, than on mass opinion, however malleable.



From Mass Opinion To Public Judgment

In the quality-as-public-judgment model, there are three stages of evolution. The first is “consciousness raising.” The second is “working through.” The third is “resolution.”

Stage I

Consciousness raising is the stage in which the public learns about an issue and becomes aware of its existence and meaning. I call it consciousness raising because this term, borrowed from the women's movement, is more accurate than “creating greater awareness.” Consciousness raising means much more than mere awareness. One can be aware of an issue without feeling that it is important or that anything needs to be done about it. When, however, we speak about consciousness raising on the environment, for example, the intention is clear. When one's consciousness is raised, not only does awareness grow but so does concern and readiness for action.



Consciousness raising is a process that our society understands well and that our institutions perform well. More surprising, perhaps, are the number and variety of obstacles that prevent consciousness raising from proceeding smoothly. These obstacles are worth citing and illustrating.

There are several clear-cut features of the consciousness-raising stage. It is largely media driven. Events are a major factor in expediting the process (e.g., the accidents at Three Mile Island and Chernobyl raised people's

consciousness about the safety problems of nuclear power very quickly). Sometimes consciousness raising proceeds with agonizing slowness, but, unlike the other two stages, it is often accomplished with great speed and in “real time” (i.e., in the time it takes to convey the relevant information). And the public whose consciousness is raised can be in a passive and receptive frame of mind without needing to exert any special effort.

In recent years we have seen large-scale consciousness raising on a variety of issues, including:

- the dangers of AIDS;
- the difficulties that beset primary and secondary education;
- the threat to US competitiveness from Japan;
- the end of the cold war with the Soviet Union;
- the importance of nutrition and physical fitness;
- the dangers of drug addiction;
- the mounting threats to the environment;
- the dangers of being dependent on the Middle East for our oil supplies.

Stage 2

For the second stage, I borrow a term from psychology, “working through.” When the consciousness-raising stage has been completed, the individual must confront the need for change. The change may be slight or it may be very great. A woman who has undergone consciousness raising in her marriage may be faced with the prospect of separation or divorce or confrontation with her husband. A man whose consciousness has been raised about the dangers of cholesterol may be faced with the need to make drastic changes in his diet. Many changes are less demanding and traumatic. . . . Often it is not people’s overt behavior that must change, but their attitudes: the man caught in the cross pressures of loyalty to his president and the desire to switch national priorities is obliged to face up to his ambivalence and stop waffling—to come down on one side of the issue or the other.

As observers of human psychology know well, all change is difficult. When people are caught in cross pressures, before they can resolve them it is necessary to struggle with the conflicts and ambivalences and defenses they

arouse. Change requires hard work. Rarely does the course of change proceed smoothly. Rather, it is full of backsliding and procrastination and avoidance. “Two steps forward and one step back” is the apt common description for the process. Psychologists call it “working through,” especially when one is reconciling oneself to a painful loss.

To an extraordinary degree, the requirements of the working-through stage differ from those of consciousness raising. When working through, people must abandon the passive-receptive mode that works well enough for consciousness raising. They must be actively engaged and involved. Rarely is working through completed quickly. Typically, it takes an irreducible period of time—much longer than the time needed to convey and absorb new information. The length of time depends on the emotional significance of the change to the individual.

Though events can sometimes affect the working-through process, they are not critical to it: working through is a largely internal process that individuals have to work at and ultimately achieve for themselves. Nor is working through media driven or information dependent as is consciousness raising.

Generally, people engaged in working through may have all the information they need long before they are willing to confront the cross pressures that ensnare them. And, finally, unlike the consciousness-raising stage, our society

To complete working through successfully, the public must resolve where it stands cognitively, emotionally, and morally.

is not well equipped with the institutions or knowledge it needs to expedite working through. Our culture does not understand it very well, and by and large does not do a good job with it. In brief, then, there is a wrenching discontinuity between consciousness raising and working through that is a major source of difficulty in any effort to improve the quality of public opinion.

Stage 3

Stage 3 is resolution, the result of successful consciousness raising and working through. . . . (To say that public judgment has been achieved is just another way of stating that the public has completed its journey through the three stages.)

The most important point to make about Stage 3 is that resolution is multifaceted. On any issue, to complete working through successfully, the public must resolve where it stands cognitively, emotionally, and morally.

These facets of resolution are interrelated, but they each require hard work in their own right and are surprisingly independent of one another.

Cognitive resolution requires that people clarify fuzzy thinking, reconcile inconsistencies, break down the walls of the artificial compartmentalizing that keeps them from recognizing related aspects of the same issue, take relevant facts and new realities into account, and grasp the consequences of various choices with which they are presented.

Emotional resolution means that people have to confront their own ambivalent feelings, accommodate themselves to unwelcome realities, and overcome their urge to procrastinate and to avoid the issue. Of all the obstacles to resolution, none is more difficult to overcome than the need to reconcile deeply felt conflicting values.

In arriving at moral resolution, people's first impulse is to put themselves and their own needs and desires ahead of their ethical commitments. But once they have time to reflect on their choices, the ethical dimension comes into play and people struggle to do the right thing. Issues such as AIDS and homelessness and health care for those who cannot afford insurance cannot be resolved until the ethical dimension has been considered and dealt with, one way or the other.

Each one of these dimensions is beset with obstacles.



BEYOND THE “INFORMED” CITIZENRY

The Role of Judgment in a Deliberative Democracy

An Interview with Noëlle McAfee and David McIvor

Many of the challenges facing democracy have to do with the inability to address disagreement in a constructive fashion. That is, our dysfunctions are relational rather than informational. However, many approaches to civic engagement, particularly in higher education, emphasize technical knowledge, even when using the language of “deliberation.” Beyond the “informed” citizenry, Kettering’s research has seen the true promise of deliberation as deepening public judgment despite circumstances of disagreement. To distill this understanding of deliberation, Derek Barker, coeditor of the Higher Education Exchange, spoke with Noëlle McAfee, professor of philosophy at Emory University, and David McIvor, assistant professor of political science at Colorado State University.

Barker: As you know, we are hoping that this volume can bring together thinking on the democratic role of judgment that has informed Kettering’s research on deliberation over the years, including our work with higher education institutions. Noëlle, your “Three Models of Democratic Deliberation” essay was one of the first that alerted us to important differences among concepts of deliberation that were emerging in the 1990s. Looking back, what was the central insight of this piece?

McAfee: In academia the prevailing view of political deliberation is that it involves a rational—that is, not emotional—process of reason giving. For social scientists, it means that citizens might come up with more coherent rankings of their preferences. For most philosophers who write on deliberation, it is a way for people to better reason together about which norms are universalizable. Having been a part of these various academic communities, and having also been an organizer and observer of actual public deliberations, I was struck by the way “deliberation” meant tremendously different things to different communities, usually according to their preconceived needs: for social scientists, to gather empirical data better (including what the public thinks); for philosophers, to think about how people reason better; and for citizens, to think about what the hell they are going to do. I took my cue from the citizens, including the many I had observed in National Issues Forums and deliberative polling experiments (the latter designed by social scientists, but featuring citizens with their stubborn

insistence on solving problems), to note that, in deliberating, people are weaving together their multiple perspectives to try to decide what to do. And in the process, they often change their relationships with each other, which the late Hal Saunders saw as a central aspect of politics.

Barker: Let's talk more about what Noëlle described as the "citizen" model. She described a kind of public thinking—more public than simply stating preferences—but different than expert knowledge. Some have referred to this as "public judgment." In light of current trends in our democracy, what do the two of you see as the importance of judgment in our public life?

McAfee: One thing all three models share is the notion that in a democracy public policies should be authorized or legitimated by the public, and that deliberation offers a way for developing sounder public will. Those who focus

Public will is formed in the crucible of having to decide what to do, which includes working through loss over what has to be forgone.

on preferences, such as many social scientists, think public will can be gleaned by aggregating individuals' preferences (voting is a means for doing this). Philosophers like Habermas reject that view for a broader understanding of public deliberation, leading to a public will that policymakers can then use to make binding choices through the legislative

process. But what I see in deliberative public forums is citizens themselves in the throes of what Dan Yankelovich calls "choice work." My view is that public will is formed in the crucible of having to decide what to do, which includes working through loss over what has to be forgone. In making sometimes excruciating choices, people are coming to a truly reflective judgment about what should be done. Policymakers who ignore public will do so at their own peril. Of course, there is a lot of noise and distraction in the political system, so it is often hard to see this. Still, as my late colleague Bob Kingston put it, public deliberation turns on the lights and sets the stage for policymakers to do their work.

McIvor: Public life is not healthy without good judgment, which is to the body politic what exercise is to the individual human body. Unfortunately, there is broad misunderstanding of what judgment is and a host of obstacles to the practice and performance of judgment.

Barker: Excellent analogies! But if judgment is critical, what exactly is judgment?

McIvor: We misunderstand judgment because we associate it with the correct application of principles or rules to given cases or situations. This may

be a part of judgment, but only a part. More important is the reflexive capacity to reason carefully about those principles themselves, “to broaden our reason to make it capable of grasping what . . . precedes and exceeds reason,” as the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty once put it. And this reflexive capacity emerges from and is tested in concrete experiences—hence the intimate connection between judgment and politics, which is inherently action driven. Judgment is not reducible to experience—and for this reason, we should be careful about romanticizing practical experience over theoretical reflection—but judgment is, at its root, a “practical” knowledge insofar as it is a means of being responsive to the predictable and unpredictable consequences of our actions and the actions of others. Aristotle’s old idea of *phronesis* to me still captures the essence of judgment and the importance of judgment for public life.

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There are a variety of obstacles that prevent us from understanding and exercising judgment in public life: institutional, cultural, and even psychological. Institutionally, citizens are seldom asked to practice judgment, and the most prominent forms of citizen choice work—such as elections—rarely call upon skills of judgment, but instead ask us to line up with a favored “team.” Culturally, we de-privilege judgment when we privilege modes of understanding associated with the natural sciences or with technical expertise. While important and valuable, such modes of understanding cannot substitute for good public judgment. Engineers can tell us how to build a bridge or a bomb, but not *whether* to build one or the other. Lastly, as research in cognitive and behavioral psychology has repeatedly shown, human beings often make mental shortcuts to avoid the difficult work of judgment, relying upon heuristics or other “fast” means of coming to a decision. So there are lots of ways we avoid the practice of judgment, which is unfortunate since the only way to improve at judgment—or at any practical activity—is through repeated exposure and continual effort.

McAfee: Let me pick up on David’s point that “engineers can tell us how to build a bridge or a bomb, but not *whether* to build one or the other.” This gets precisely to what is central to political judgment: having to decide in the midst of uncertainty, where there is no correct answer. This was also a point that Aristotle made, that we deliberate when there is no correct answer. We don’t

deliberate about whether the sun will rise or not tomorrow, but we do deliberate about what we ought to do tomorrow. The late Benjamin Barber made the same point, as did Hannah Arendt before him. In politics, there are no banisters or foundations. The difference between politics and the sciences is that in politics the task is to decide what is of value, what to create, what to do. Now, of course, getting the facts right is crucial, but the facts alone will not tell us what to do.

Moreover, in addition to uncertainty, there is often intense disagreement—and no agreed-upon authority on what ought to be done. Barber refers to this as having to decide “under the worst possible circumstances.” There is some truth to that.

But the saving grace is that when people deliberate together, no matter how much they initially disagree, they generally proceed to try to forge some

The saving grace is that when people deliberate together, no matter how much they initially disagree, they generally proceed to try to forge some kind of shared understanding.

kind of shared understanding and possibly even agreement about what should be done. More specifically, I think most people engage in deliberations with others with the expectation that some kind of agreement can be found. This picks up on Kant’s theory of aesthetic judgment, where he argued that when someone claims that something is beautiful then he expects that this would be universally agreed to. I’m not going to go as far as Kant on this, but I do think that

when we are deliberating, we think that if we talk and think long enough with others that we might actually be able to arrive at some kind of mutually agreed upon judgment about what to do or what is right.

Barker: As our research has evolved, we have found it necessary to distinguish between an informed citizenry and a citizenry that is capable of exercising judgment. How would each of you articulate this distinction?

McIvor: Information is the raw material for judgment, but it does not constitute judgment any more than the raw materials of a building constitute the building itself. One has to arrange, assemble, and even throw away material in order to construct a building, and one has to do the same work to construct a sound judgment from the raw material of information.

Daniel Yankelovich’s distinctions and terminology are very helpful here. “Working through” is a key concept for my own work. I have argued elsewhere that a key part of democracy is building up a civic capacity for

“mourning,” which involves facing down the complexity of our political heritage and the inherently tragic nature of political action. Politics is tragic because there are no “win-win-win” situations. Choice means sacrifice. Working through or mourning helps us to take stock of sacrifices and encourages us to listen to those who end up making those sacrifices. In so doing, we can weaken our tendencies toward magical thinking through which we assume that sacrifice or loss can be avoided or blamelessly heaped upon scapegoats. Once again, information is crucial, but information alone cannot guarantee that we do the work of mourning.

Information is the raw material for judgment, but it does not constitute judgment any more than the raw materials of a building constitute the building itself.

McAfee: I’m glad David brought up Yankelovich and the work of mourning. I’ve also found Dan’s notion of choice work—which he hit upon having read a bit of Freud—to be very important, and that set me off on a path of exploring the insights of psychoanalysis for democratic politics. In short, I’ve found that deliberation itself is a work of mourning in that any choice entails loss, either of what might be or what has been. Deliberation is not merely a cognitive practice of assessing and offering reasons, it is an affective process of working through and mourning and, as David says, getting over magical thinking (like “of course we can balance the budget and have better health care and continue all our wars abroad,” etc.). Also, let me add that David’s work bringing together Kleinian psychoanalysis with deliberative democracy is groundbreaking.

As to the distinction between an informed citizenry and a citizenry capable of exercising judgment, an additional point is that this can be like the distinction between a debater and a deliberator, with the first entrenched in his or her own preconceptions and the second leaning forward, open to seeing new perspectives. Those stuck in old traumas, clinging to given identities and positions, exhibit what Freud called repetition compulsions, literally acting out without remembering, much less working through, their experiences and positions.

Barker: Noëlle, related to what the two of you were saying about the difference between judgment and technical knowledge, academics have recently been talking about deliberation in terms of “epistemic” benefits—this notion

that deliberation produces “better” outcomes. Has this become a fourth model? Are you surprised to see academics thinking of deliberation in this way?

McAfee: There are two ways to think about epistemic outcomes of deliberation; one through a kind of correspondence theory of truth and the other a pragmatist one. The school of thought you are referring to is of the first sort and supposes that deliberations can search for and track political truths and hence substantively (and not just procedurally) produce better outcomes. In other words, in the former school, deliberation is not just a fair procedure; it is also one that could ensure better outcomes, better in the sense of tracking some external normative truth. They don’t mean truth about the facts, but a truth about what is the right thing to do. I find this to be a very curious view because it betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of politics, which is about deciding in the midst of disagreement about what external standards are agreeable and binding and still figuring out collectively what kind of actions we can all live with and get behind. So this kind of view smuggles in a truth that politics eschews.

But there is a second way to think about the kind of knowledge produced by deliberation, a pragmatist one along the lines of William James’ view that “the truth is what works” and John Dewey’s view that only a shoe’s wearer knows where it pinches. For a public to fathom the problems that beset it, people need to engage in deliberations with other, different people to get a richer multi-perspectival view of what is going on. This is part of the citizen view I describe, not the so-called epistemic view. I call it an integrative approach because in their deliberations people are weaving together multiple disparate views about what is at issue, about the effects of possible actions on different people, and about their various views about what should be done. This is a production of a public knowledge that did not pre-exist; it emerges in the process of deliberation itself.

Barker: David, I know you are tracking efforts of scientists to get involved in public debates around climate and other science-related issues. Are they thinking of deliberation in epistemic terms?

McIvor: I don’t get the sense that epistemic theories of deliberation have spread very far within the ivory tower of academia, let alone beyond it. I sense within this approach an old anxiety that an orientation toward mutual understanding is not enough, that we want deliberation or democracy to provide some certainty about the truth content of public decisions. Yet again, whether we build a bomb or a bridge is a *practical* matter. There is no context- or procedure-independent standard for determining the truth of that decision. Practical judgments are about better and worse, more reflective or less reflective, not true or false.

As for how academics, scientists, and experts who don't study deliberation understand it, some things are becoming clearer to me. First is the durability of what we would call a "deficit" model of the public or of citizens. For many people in academia—but also for many people within government institutions or the world of business—the authority of their expertise rests on its *separation* from public understanding or common sense. Many academics see themselves as producers of knowledge—and of course this is true for many technical pursuits. The difficulty is when that knowledge is seen as the special possession of its producers and as fundamentally different from the self-understanding of the lay public. From this perspective—where the public is defined by what they *don't* know—deliberation looks very different from how we've been talking about it here. It looks more like a focus group that a business might use for testing an advertisement: the goal is to determine the most effective marketing strategies, not to actually engage people in the work of public judgment. So I hear many people talking about the value of public deliberation as a way of determining what kinds of rhetorical strategies scientists might deploy to effectively communicate their message. The danger is that deliberation becomes another means of manipulation.

For many others in academia and elsewhere, however, there is a growing recognition that a deficit model of public knowledge is a nonstarter for improving the quality of public life. There are some novel academic experiments where academic expertise is, to put it bluntly, being "put in its place." I'm part of one of these experiments here at Colorado State University in the area of public health. From this perspective, deliberation—both formal and informal—is a means of communication, not manipulation. As Noëlle said earlier, deliberation can lead to the development or deepening of public relationships. Those public relationships—across institutional or other barriers—are what can improve the broader ecology of public life.

Barker: David, as "deliberative democracy" has developed from a theoretical ideal to a field with a global network of educators and practitioners, we have been excited about all of the interest in deliberation, but also concerned that the radical potential of deliberation might get assimilated into and confused with conventional notions of politics. Are you seeing this problem as deliberative democracy becomes a "field"?

McIvor: It appears that the critique leveled against technocracy and expert-based public administration that has been part of the deliberative turn in both political theory and practice has started to sink in. Along these lines, I have been encouraged by the growing enthusiasm within public policy and public

administration circles for “collaborative governance.” Collaborative governance literature and practice often emphasize the “wicked” nature of public problems and are therefore in a position to call for and cultivate public judgment rather than pretend that technical fixes or elegant administrative procedures can dissolve those problems. Collaborative governance regimes emphasize co-production of public goods through public-private partnerships, participatory mechanisms, and reciprocal interactions. These regimes are still somewhat marginal and their success is rarely publicized, but they represent a promising institutional development. Ultimately, our public institutions will have to provide space for the work of cultivating public judgment, and collaborative arrangements might be able to play this role. The work of Tina Nabatchi at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University is exemplary in this regard.

There are obvious dangers here as well. We shouldn’t overlook, as you put it, the “radical potential of deliberation.” By this, I understand the way that deliberation can serve as a standing challenge to dominant ways of conducting the public business rather than a “supplement” to institutions that are largely driven by technocratic or bureaucratic concerns. Deliberation is radical because it argues that citizens need to be doing the heavy lifting of public choice work, rather than outsourcing all of that work to formal institutions.

Barker: As Noëlle mentioned above, both of you are interested in the implications of psychoanalytic theory for democratic theory. Some might say that from a psychoanalytic perspective, old traumas are too much for deliberation to handle, that our sub-rational neuroses and dysfunctions are more powerful than our rational faculties. What do you say to that line of thinking?

McIvor: I think it is important to separate at the outset individual traumas from what I would call “public traumas.” Psychoanalysis began with, and focuses mostly on, individual traumas and conflicts. Public traumas manifest themselves within individual lives, but they are social or political in origin. The stigmas and patterns of disrespect attached to race are obvious examples, which I discuss at length in my book. Noëlle’s wonderful book *Democracy and the Political Unconscious* provides marvelous insight into the connections between psychic life and the life of politics.

Public traumas, like private traumas, are painful and difficult to work through, but since they are the product of public life, they require—unlike private traumas—public dialogue and interaction. Deliberation can play a vital role here, both directly and indirectly. By that I mean that citizens can directly undertake efforts for deliberation about the traumas of public life. In

my book I discuss a particular instance of this when citizens in Greensboro, North Carolina, organized an unofficial truth and reconciliation commission, which investigated and held public hearings about the “Greensboro Massacre” of 1979, an event in which five local labor activists were shot and killed by members of the Ku Klux Klan. Insofar as deliberation promotes norms of careful listening and mutual respect, it provides a social space where citizens can start to think together about what might be done in the face of public traumas. In my book *Mourning in America: Race and the Politics of Loss*, that is what I refer to as the “democratic work of mourning.”

McAfee: In your question, Derek, you pose a concern I hear often: that a psychoanalytic process might dig up and activate old traumas in a way that may be overwhelming, so there’s the temptation to let sleeping dogs lie. But I find that individually and collectively, “old dogs” never lie dormant; they are constantly at work, with compulsions getting acted out and repeated unconsciously. Working through does not activate trauma; to the contrary it makes it possible to stop acting it out.

Of course, the space of a public deliberative forum differs from the psychoanalytic clinic. In a forum, we’re not on a couch spilling out our deep dark secrets. But we are giving voice and working through our collective concerns, fears, and worries—often face-to-face with those we unconsciously worry are out to undermine us. So there is still a lot of powerful work that goes on in public deliberations.

My current project addresses the “fear of breakdown” at work in many current collective anxieties, in many communities, especially as more “outsiders” enter. Globally, we’re seeing a kind of stranger anxiety of appalling dimensions, unleashing very primitive defenses.

I should add that a psychoanalytical aspect of deliberation is not at all new to Kettering’s work. It was part of the international work that Hal Saunders engaged in with track-two diplomacy, especially as he brought in the psychoanalyst Vamik Volkan (as far back as the Camp David Peace Accords) to try to understand large-group ethnic identity and trauma, including the ways in which effects are passed down through generations. And it is also central to the very idea of choice work, as we discussed earlier, thanks to Dan Yankelovich’s interest. So now we are seeing a new wave of interest bringing attention back to this central aspect of deliberative politics.

Barker: If trauma is as powerful as the two of you say—and that seems right to me—it would seem that deliberation has a tremendous amount of work to do in our public life, perhaps more than even some of its proponents

recognize. Thank you both for helping us understand and recover the political roots of this important democratic practice.



NATIONAL ISSUES FORUM GUIDES

Eliciting and Habituating Public Judgment

Lori L. Britt

This essay reflects on the concept of judgment underlying the National Issues Forums approach to deliberation. In so doing, Britt argues that judgment, so understood, is central to the civic purposes of higher education.

As a communication scholar, I am immersed in the study and practice of communities engaging in addressing issues that they face, in determining what type of community they want to be, and in developing the communicative spaces that allow this civic work to happen in productive, collaborative ways. As an educator, I am concerned with how we show students what engaged citizenship looks like and offer them an opportunity to gain and practice the habits of engaged citizenship, many of which are communicative habits. Important to both of these pursuits is a keen interest in the language we use when we try to name, understand, and consider ways to address public issues—the language that we use to shape public judgment.

It was out of this interest that I became fascinated with looking at the guides produced for the National Issues Forums (NIF), curious as to what lessons I might learn in looking at the history of the guides and what insights I might gain that would support my role as a practitioner and educator of dialogue and deliberation. For over 35 years, NIF guides have helped shaped conversations about some of our country's most complex public issues. From education to immigration, health care to jobs, drugs to democracy itself, the guides created to stimulate and support forums where citizens together consider these public issues have served to engage citizens in the work of doing democracy.

What is the work of doing democracy? As the essays in this volume note, much of the work of participatory democracy is about coming to public judgment. How do the NIF guides support this work of public judgment, and what can we learn about our shifting conceptualizations of this term in looking at the language and structure of the NIF guides over the course of their history?

Those questions were at the heart of research I undertook in partnership with the Kettering Foundation. My exploration focused on a set of 33 guides,

featuring one from each year from 1982 to 2015 (with the exception of 2004, when no guides were published). The topics of the guides analyzed represented a broad range of public issues but included several issues that were framed in multiple years, such as health care, education, and crime. My focus on the structure and language used in the guides offered a look at how they serve as tools to shape deliberative engagement. I wondered how language use elicited specific work of citizens and how that work was supported in the way the guides were presented.

This approach to my research was pragmatic, seeking to explore how the guides enable or constrain the kind of deliberative work intended. The focus was on how the guides shape possibilities for public talk about the issues in particular ways, influenced by the language choices used in framing. Emerging from the specifics of word usage, verb forms, structural details of the guides, and charting of changes to the guides over the years was a view of how the guides specifically help shape the work of coming to public judgment.

Creating a Space Between Adversary and Unitary Democracy

Jane Mansbridge's seminal distinction between adversary and unitary democracy are foundational for participatory democracy. Mansbridge defines unitary democracy as a form of democracy where people who disagree reason together until they find the best answer to a public issue, rather than resorting, when our interests conflict, to a vote where the majority rules.

As Mansbridge notes, the effort to maintain unitary elements in the nation, in turn, depends on widespread rejection both of the cynical doctrine that interests always conflict and of the credulous assumption that they can always

Differences must not prevent us from addressing critical issues.

be harmonious. The structure of the NIF guides over their history highlights a focus on addressing problems in way that offers a bridge between unitary and adversarial democracy, making constructive discourse possible without any

expectation of agreement. The structure of considering at least three options or approaches to addressing a public problem helps avoid binary thinking of win-lose and forces participants to more deeply reflect on how what they value might be protected or attained through various courses of action.

We always have both common and conflicting interests, according to Mansbridge, and the structure of the NIF guides reflects that reality but also emphasizes that differences must not prevent us from addressing critical issues.

With their structure of naming a domain and a central question as the title of the guide, which emerged as the predominant format by 1991 (for example, *Youth and Violence: Reducing the Threat* and *Economic Security: Taking Charge of Our Future*), NIF focused energy toward problem solving. The language of the guides helped direct participants to concentrate on best ways to address the issue to gain collective benefits. In his introductory letter to the 1983 guide, Keith Melville, then editor-in-chief of the National Issues Forums (now the National Issues Forums Institute), said participants were expected “to air their differences and to begin to identify their common ground,” to come to public judgment.

The guides evolved over time to foreground not more information, but more talk of things held valuable.

NIF Guides Support “Working Through”

Dan Yankelovich offers an important distinction between two perspectives on what denotes quality in public opinion: “quality-as-well-informed” and “quality-as-public judgment.” In the former, which he says is the dominant model, quality is measured by the public having all the facts. The remedy is to provide more information. The earliest NIF guides may have been partially operating under this definition of quality public opinion. They were presented as issue primers, and ranged from 24 to 45 pages between 1982 and 2009. They were later gleaned down to a trim 12 to 13 pages. The earliest guides also featured structural elements, such as glossaries, issue summaries, chapters that elaborated different facets of the issue, and suggested further reading lists, that further implied that one of their functions was to better inform the public.

The shortening of the guides addressed pragmatic considerations of cost and intended use, but also corresponded to increasing access to the Internet and easy availability of information and perspectives about national issues. The guides evolved over time to foreground not more information, but more talk of things held valuable and the inherent tensions between options, trade-offs, and consequences that participants must consider in order to work through the choices facing citizens and the nation.

Yankelovich’s three stages that result in public judgment—consciousness raising, working through, and resolution—are reflected and supported by the structure and language of the NIF guides. That fact that certain issues are framed each year by NIF supports that these are issues that require attention and action. The NIF guides help support this readiness for action by using direct language

of assertions (for example, “prepare students to be successful in the workplace,” “treat substance abuse as an illness,” “provide health care coverage as a right”) when discussing the options or approaches to be deliberated. Stating these options as actions in definitive terms immediately primes deliberation, as it does not require additional explanatory text to help participants begin to envision the types of actions that would support a particular approach or the types of consequences that might arise from particular actions. Using assertions to state the options has been the most frequent linguistic construct since 1982, and has been used almost exclusively since 2007.

Yankelovich’s second stage of working through is really what the NIF guides are designed to support: to help participants work through and recognize competing tensions against a backdrop that recognizes a need for change. Yankelovich posits that this stage is largely an internal process, “that individuals have to work at and ultimately achieve for themselves.” However, the NIF model promotes this working through as a collaborative process. Engagement with others—and hearing how the issue directly affects others in our community—helps participants see that the ways we address issues have unintended consequences.

Finally, Yankelovich offers that stage three, resolution, is multifaceted. Cognitive resolution helps participants enlarge their thinking about an issue by taking new realities into account—realities shared by other participants in the deliberation. Emotional resolution is often assumed of NIF participants, because choosing to come and deliberate about an issue presumes they are no longer content with *avoiding* the issue. And finally, moral resolution requires people to balance their personal needs and desires with the needs of others to find an ethical way to address the issue, to address how we should proceed and act. Of the verbs most commonly used to frame the central question of the NIF guides, the most common is SHOULD, which indicates duty, propriety, and a moral consideration. With this construct, the NIF guides highlight that certain issues are not best addressed using only facts or technical solutions because those issues are value-based problems. They require people to consider together the values that are in tension in any possible path forward.

The Context in which Political Judgment Can Occur

Ronald Beiner offers insight that judgment is a general attitude shared by all citizens, and the exercise of judgment itself qualifies entry into participation in political life. Political judgments, he adds, are judgments about the form of

collective life that it is desirable to pursue *within a context of possibilities*. It is this context that NIF guides offer citizens, a context that changes and requires new questions to be deliberated when the context and its possibilities shift. For instance, in looking at the five guides that have framed the issue of health care between 1981 and 2015, it becomes evident that the context was different for each of these deliberations by the combination of the way the question is asked, the options being proposed, and the description of the problem. The way the issue is framed against this contextual backdrop implies particular work to be done by deliberators. The exploration of the guides showed that six types of work were implied for participants. Depending on the context at the time each guide was released, participants were asked to respond to the public issue in a particular way:

ADAPT: Alerts participants to the fact that something has changed, which requires rethinking the approach to the issue and compels shifting priorities and courses of action;

ADDRESS: Asks participants to decide on actions that need to be taken to deal with a growing problem or hot-button issue, even if they might not currently feel the direct impacts of these issues;

CLARIFY: Requires work to clarify the nature of an issue, the purpose or intent of a program or policy, the vision for the country, or who should make decisions about the purpose, intent, or vision;

DECIDE: Encourages keeping long-term effects in mind and being more future-oriented than present-oriented;

PIVOT: Requires consideration of a large shift in the direction or type of solutions being proposed to address a long-term issue. This framing implies that in addressing an issue, citizens need to decide which way to pivot or how to take a new approach that departs from current practice or thinking;

PREVENT: Similar to the DECIDE framing, the preventative framing requires participants to act wisely now to decide on actions that avoid or minimize future problems, such as passing a crushing national debt on to future generations (2011) and considering what should go on the Internet (2013).

The Issue of Healthcare: Framing the Issue Against Different Contextual Backdrops

Year	Title and Choices/ Approaches	Problem and Contextual Backdrop	Typology Category/ Specific Work to Be Done	Citizen Agency
1984	<p><i>The Soaring Cost of Health Care</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RX for high medical bills: more competition • The government's role: redefining benefits, regulating prices • The high cost of heroic measures 	<p>"The problem is money." Examines high costs of extending care to such a large portion of the population.</p> <p>"This nation has put a priority on health care, and as a result, this has been America's leading growth industry." The question is, how to curb its appetite for additional resources.</p>	<p>ADDRESS</p> <p>Purpose is not to examine all of the factors that contribute to health-care costs or to assemble a list of "villains" on whom the problem can be blamed, but to examine some of the proposed solutions to soaring costs and to "provoke debate" about them.</p>	<p>Make choices to impact reduction in costs of health care at individual and societal levels.</p>
1993	<p><i>The Health-Care Cost Explosion: Why It's So Serious, What Should Be Done</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plugging the Leaks: Waste, Fraud, and Excessive Profits • Medical marketplace incentives to economize • Drawing the line on medical miracles that we cannot afford 	<p>Most Americans think the health-care system needs to be fundamentally reformed. But there is no agreement about how to proceed. How far do we need to go to contain costs? Which direction is the best direction?</p> <p>Then-president Clinton emphasized the effects of hemorrhaging health-care costs that were increasing faster than any other federal budget item and, if unaddressed, would "bankrupt the country."</p>	<p>CLARIFY</p> <p>Understanding the complexity of rising costs, "which is no easy matter."</p> <p>Examine the source of the problem. Why have health-care costs risen more rapidly than all of the other goods and services we consume?</p>	<p>Learn about a complex and technical issue and infuse the technical knowledge with social values.</p>

Year	Title and Choices/ Approaches	Problem and Contextual Backdrop	Typology Category/ Specific Work to Be Done	Citizen Agency
2003	<p><i>Examining Health Care: What's the Public's Prescription?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connected parts, not fragmented pieces • Partners, not just patients • Care for all, not just for some 	<p>The US spends more than any other country in the world on health, yet serious problems with access, cost, and quality persist, depriving many people of the care they need and jeopardizing the health of our nation.</p> <p>More than 41 million Americans are without health insurance, are using ERs, getting inconsistent care, and postponing care until problems are difficult to treat.</p>	<p>PIVOT</p> <p>Careful thought and deliberation are needed to understand the nature of the problems in health care, its impact on people's health, and possible courses of action. These approaches are based on the broad and deep concerns expressed by Americans.</p>	<p>Consider a new approach to taking on an issue that is continuing to have negative consequences for individuals and the nation.</p>
2008	<p><i>Coping with the Cost of Health Care: How Do We Pay for What We Want?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the threat of financial ruin • Restrain out-of-control costs • Provide coverage as a right 	<p>People say they are worried that they will be wiped out financially by medical expenses; that they feel taken advantage of by out-of-control prices for health care; and, that it's wrong for some to get good care while others don't because they can't afford it. Worries about being able to handle health-care costs outstrip anxieties about losing a job, terrorist attacks, crime, and losing savings in the stock market.</p>	<p>ADAPT</p> <p>Decide what choices we can live with as individuals and a nation in trying to pay for what we need. Should we tinker with the system we have, or try something new?</p>	<p>Make necessary but difficult choices about what to give up.</p>

Year	Title and Choices/ Approaches	Problem and Contextual Backdrop	Typology Category/ Specific Work to Be Done	Citizen Agency
2015	<i>Health Care: How Can We Reduce Costs and Still Get the Care We Need?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a nation and as individuals, we need to live within our means • Make health care more transparent, accountable, and efficient • Take responsibility for lowering health-care costs by focusing on wellness 	Americans worry about their ability to pay for health care and the US spends 22 percent of our national budget on health care, but it is not buying us better health. The US ranks last among 16 other high-income democracies in infant mortality and life expectancy, with higher rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, chronic lung disease, and general disability. Need to understand what is driving the increasing costs.	PIVOT Broaden our understanding of what factors and behaviors contribute to these high costs.	Recognize the system is not working and consider actions beyond paying more as an individual or nation.

Learning From the History of NIF: Developing a Capacity for Public Judgment in Higher Education

My research into how National Issues Forums guides have been framed over the past 35 years, and my participation in framing and facilitating National Issues Forums has reinforced the value I see of helping students see themselves as civic actors who play a crucial role in shaping public judgment. There is no doubt that higher education advances discovery, helping to find answers to questions about our world and generating more questions. However, higher education should embrace as fully a commitment to consideration of how to use the knowledge generated to address complex public issues—*wicked* problems for which a single perfect solution does not exist. It is against this backdrop of complexity that institutions of higher education can help to shape the kinds of thinkers that can embrace the challenges that face our world, challenges that have the potential to further polarize people instead of harnessing energy toward reasoned and thoughtful deliberation. Some universities and colleges are embracing this facet of their mission, and I am proud to work at a university that recognizes and takes seriously this responsibility.

At James Madison University, our efforts are influenced by our name. We owe a great deal to James Madison, not only as our University's namesake, but also as a public leader and father of the Constitution. Shaping and leading our nation required him to grapple with very complex issues both publicly and privately. We draw on Madison himself to offer students an understanding of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions one needs to cultivate and use to play a vital role in shaping our communities and our nation by addressing public problems. In presenting him as a civic role model, we recognize that he exhibited many traits desperately needed today. At the same time, we refuse to idealize him; he had numerous flaws and foibles, and his legacy, like our nation's, is mixed.

James Madison University seeks to provide opportunities for students and faculty, as well as our campus and broader communities, to deeply explore public problems, explore how these problems are experienced, and begin to consider how complex issues can best be addressed in ways that bring our public values into discursive consciousness.

These opportunities are woven into curricular and co-curricular experiences across campus and throughout a student's course of study. Many involve engagement with broader communities, and focus on using deliberation as a pedagogical tool as well as an instrument of democracy. Through our Institute for Constructive Advocacy and

Dialogue, designated as a Kettering Center for Public Life, we engage students in designing and facilitating difficult conversations about complex public issues on campus and in the community. Students have helped shaped conversations about mental health, services and support for refugees and immigrants, comprehensive city planning, police and race relations, community gardens, and

more. Students learn how to model and support these civic habits that can encourage thoughtful, just deliberation that shapes public judgment. As facilitators, students recognize that keeping people focused on the work of making choices and considering trade-offs and consequences can help to ingrain a sensibility for considering options richly and fully before abandoning an idea or perspective. This opportunity has primarily tapped communication

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and public-policy majors, but we recognized a desire to reach students in every discipline.

Framing issues to enable public judgment is one of the best academic endeavors we can offer our students. Engaging in this process of exploring an issue thoroughly and understanding multiple concerns and values that are in tension allows students to see that addressing public issues is not simple, and that this is not just the work of elected officials. It requires students to practice almost every civic habit and disposition as they delve deeply into contemporary and localized public issues.

We have recently developed a new curricular approach that revolves around framing public issues for a required general education communication course. As a starting point, we are offering this course to all 200 of our incoming honors students, who represent every discipline and program on our campus. They will work throughout the term on not just researching a public issue and developing presentations *about* the issue (which is a hallmark of introductory communication courses), but also on designing conversations to *engage with* others to address the issue. In essence, student teams are collaborating to explore and frame a conversation and produce an NIF-style guide. This is more than an activity or project; the approach is committed to helping students shape a deliberative mindset and show the value of participatory approaches to addressing public issues.

Our efforts at James Madison seek to continue the work the National Issues Forums have been supporting for decades, helping citizens experience the work of coming to public judgment. As a public university, we strive to educate citizens equipped with the ability to consider what we *should* do about the complex challenges that are an inevitable part of the public landscape. We look forward to learning from and with other institutions of higher education that are heeding this call to influence public judgment by creating generations of graduates who have the habits and skills to engage productively to find the best ways to address public problems.



HOW CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SPREAD ACROSS SIX COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Maura Casey

While most colleges and universities see themselves as important to our democracy, too often this is understood in terms of academic knowledge. Recently, however, we are starting to see campuses making a serious commitment to using deliberation to help their students develop the skills of working together on divisive issues. Maura Casey documents a notable example at Lone Star College.

Jay Theis had a newly-minted doctorate in political science when he became concerned about the fate of a Methodist church that was closing across the street from his Kansas City home.

It was then, he said, that he truly learned about politics.

He began to ask questions about what would happen to the building, contacting residents and organizing people until he was working with five neighborhood associations. Through the process, Theis got to know both his state senator and state representative.

He was hooked.

“For the first time in my life, I began to see what politics was like. I wanted to bring that to the students I was teaching in political science classes,” Theis said.

He began looking for ways to give students more experience with democracy that went beyond voting. At the request of his department head at the college where he taught, Theis met with a Minnesota group interested in civic engagement. One person from that group, Harry Boyte, talked about helping people identify issues in their community and getting young people involved. “I thought, ‘This is exactly the experience I want my students to have.’ So I told them, ‘I’m in. Political science doesn’t teach this stuff. Let’s figure out how to do this.’”

“For the first time in my life, I began to see what politics was like.”

It began a nearly 20-year involvement that, in turn, led to civic engagement and, eventually, the Kettering Foundation. Along the way, Theis discovered that his passion led him to find ways to get more involved, and in turn, helped his students experience hands-on learning. When he left Kansas City and

applied for jobs in Houston, at every juncture he spoke about his desire to help his students get involved in democracy. “When you go through an interview process, every school asks what you do that nobody else does. The thing I did that nobody else did was civic-engagement work,” Theis said. Kingwood, one of six campuses in the Lone Star College system in Texas, responded and hired him.

Katherine Perrson, president of the Kingwood branch of Lone Star College, is a true believer in public engagement. “Like most grand efforts, we started small,” she said. Theis worked with high school juniors and seniors attending Kingwood’s early college program, and matched them with college students who acted as mentors. They picked a project to improve their community and worked on it all year as part of the public achievement program.

“The kids think that this kind of change is simple. But it takes more planning and working with people, even if the aim is just to keep a skating rink open a few more hours,” Perrson said. “What was always fun to hear about is what they did when Plan A didn’t work.”

Theis’s efforts eventually brought him to Dayton, Ohio, for a series of research exchanges on the democratic mission of community colleges and the deliberative role they can play. “I got an invitation to go to the Kettering Foundation around 2011, based on the public achievement program I was involved in. I thought this deliberation stuff looked kind of interesting. Deliberation is an essential democratic skill. The way we talk about politics is so vitriolic sometimes that getting students to just talk about these controversial issues is not only valuable for them as citizens, but I found that other faculty members really gravitated toward it and it became a good way to get them interested in civic engagement,” Theis said.

He introduced deliberation to students using a variety of issue guides, and recruited a speech professor to train a group of student moderators, which grew to include 20 students. He also began to approach other faculty to get involved. “I would tell them, ‘If you let me bring in my students and let your class deliberate on the issues, it could be one day you don’t have to prepare a lecture.’ It was very appealing. So we got into some education and history classes,” Theis said.

Theis became an evangelist for deliberation and civic engagement. He presented his ideas and activities to professors informally and at systemwide events. Using a National Issues Forums issue guide, he conducted a forum on the future of higher education where the president and senior leadership of the college grappled with the issue. Word spread. Theis led a group of faculty that began to invite speakers to evening meetings. The efforts began to change

the campus culture. “Students who are involved with the college are more likely to complete their degree,” he said.

Then-sophomore Prince Winbush couldn’t agree more. “If I didn’t have these activities, I would have dropped out by now. This has been an anchor for me,” he said.

When Winbush first attended Kingwood, he heard about the Center for Civic Engagement, which Theis began with several other faculty members. “I thought it would be amazing to get involved,” Winbush said. After receiving moderator training, he moderated three forums, helped register voters at three different campuses, got involved with collecting food donations for local food pantries, and is looking forward to volunteering for Kingwood’s book festival next year, which brings more than 100 authors to the campus.

The center, which coordinates various activities, also offers six different service-learning or emersion trips on a variety of topics during spring break, two of which are international. One is on the immigrant experience, in which students meet with members of the Border Patrol, talk to documented and undocumented immigrants, and meet with immigrant-advocacy groups. Another is “Civil Rights and the Blues,” which involves going to Mississippi and meeting civil-rights veterans and those who registered African American voters in the Delta during the 1960s.

Through these activities, Perrson said, the college became comfortable with having community-wide dialogue on difficult issues, such as racism. When the public debate concerning guns on campus became heated, Perrson knew what to do. She asked Theis to organize deliberations on the matter. Theis called in all of his student moderators, built on the partnership that had developed with Windy Lawrence at University of Houston-Downtown to involve their moderators (ultimately, he arranged for 30 moderators to help), and wrote an issue guide on the topic. Within two weeks, he had arranged to hold deliberative forums in the biggest area on campus, at tables capable of seating 10 each. Theis assumed 200 people would attend. About 350 showed up, including Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and members of Open Carry Texas, a gun-rights group, whose members not only joined the discussion, but also videotaped it.

When the public debate concerning guns on campus became heated, Perrson knew what to do. She asked Theis to organize deliberations on the matter.

The next day, Open Carry Texas posted the video, praising the event as fair and expressing the opinion that more such forums should take place. Theis considers it his biggest success so far.

Last year, Perrson released Theis from an obligation to teach classes, and the chancellor gave him a budget, appointed him director of the center, and asked him to organize all the college campuses in the system around civic engagement—six different schools, 90,000 students, and 6,000 employees.

So what's next?

"I want to get the community involved in a way that has an impact on politics. I want deliberation to be done in a way that increases community-campus partnerships. There is potential here to broaden the reach of these practices," he said.

"There is a public purpose to education that goes back to the founding of public schools. It helps make our democracy work better. Too often, our

"There is a public purpose to education that goes back to the founding of public schools. It helps make our democracy work better."

notion of democracy is voting and going home, and waiting for leaders to fix our problem. But that isn't democracy. Democracy should be working with leaders, working across differences, parties, fixing things in our community. To do that, we have to talk to people, figure out where they are coming from, craft solutions that don't divide people.

"It's simple," Theis said. "Basically, I have taken the skills of organizing the community around the church and the skills I taught in my classes and I applied them to my college."



SHAPING OUR FUTURE

The Public Purpose of Higher Education

Harry C. Boyte

When higher education institutions attempt to “engage” the community, that can mean a number of things, depending on how the institution views its civic role. Most often, colleges and universities see themselves in an informational capacity, distributing expert knowledge to the community to solve problems that are conceived as technical in nature. Deliberation represents a fundamentally different approach to engagement and a different understanding of the civic role of the institution. In this essay, Harry C. Boyte reflects on a national initiative of campuses that used deliberation to engage their communities in a national dialogue about goals and purposes of higher education.

Some years ago, our Center for Democracy and Citizenship undertook a project with the Department of Epidemiology at the University of Minnesota. I recounted this project in an essay for *Agent of Democracy: Higher Education and the HEX Journey*. The project focused on alcohol use among teens in eight small towns in Minnesota and Wisconsin. The epidemiologists asked us to work with them using a “community organizing” approach. Yet their view was a far cry from what we understood the concept to mean. They believed that communities should adopt strict “carding” legislation (punishment of bar owners who failed to query the age of drinkers), which research showed had some effect in lowering underage alcohol use. In other words, they had a predetermined goal. The scientists also believed themselves to be undertaking “civic engagement” through the application of expert knowledge. This is the dominant view of the public mission of higher education. Or, as a university advertisement in the Denver airport put it more cryptically, “community problems, university solutions.”

Such technocratic politics—domination by experts removed from a common civic life—has spread throughout contemporary society like a silent disease.

In these terms, as Ronald Beiner said in *Political Judgement*, “the monopoly of political intelligence is handed over to the experts, administrators, and political technicians who coordinate the rules of administration and decision making that accord with the reigning canons of method, rational procedure, and expertise.” Such technocratic politics—domination by experts removed from a common civic life—has spread throughout contemporary society like a

silent disease. It is a politics presenting itself as an objective set of scientifically derived truths that turn groups of people into abstract categories. It decontextualizes “problems” from the life of communities. It erodes the experience of equal respect. All these features can be seen in modern political campaigns in which candidates market their platforms to voters conceived as customers.

In the project aimed at underage drinking, our center argued for three years with the epidemiologists. In our view, assuming “experts have the answers” robs

***We call this a different
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public work.***

communities of their own agency, and also ignores their moral, cultural, and local wisdom. In one community, Tomah, the limits of the expert-knows-best approach became clear as community deliberation among a highly diverse group led to the realization that carding didn’t address the nub of the local epidemic of underage

drinking. The problem-under-the-problem was the annual “beer bash” that created wide norms for casual drinking. The community did public work to change the festival. The problem of teen alcohol use significantly lessened. We call this a different kind of politics—citizen politics based on deliberation, public work, and communities self-organizing to generate and implement their own solutions, drawing on expert knowledge but not determined by it.

Deliberation in Higher Education

The National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI), the Kettering Foundation, and the Center for Democracy and Citizenship developed two deliberations on the crisis of legitimacy facing higher education. The deliberations added to understanding of what Kettering Foundation calls problems of democracy, which contrast with discrete problems *in* democracy. Problems *of* democracy are problems-behind-the-problems, such as polarization, citizen distrust of public institutions, falling levels of citizen participation, and expert-knows-best politics. The deliberations also helped to illuminate another dimension of technocracy, expert-knows-best approaches: the *philosophy* that justifies detachment of experts is what historian Samuel Hays has called “the Gospel of Efficiency.” The gospel produces constant pressure to achieve goals taken as a given and rarely interrogated. In higher education, these include preparation for individual careers in jobs narrowly defined, as well as cost savings, more efficient delivery of information through distance learning, and competitive rankings.

“Shaping Our Future: How Should Higher Education Help Us Create the Society We Want?” was launched in September 2012. Involving NIFI, Kettering Foundation, and Center for Democracy and Citizenship, the national conversation grew from an initiative to emphasize the public purposes of higher education called the American Commonwealth Partnership, undertaken with the White House Office of Public Engagement, the Department of Education, Imagining America, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, and the Democracy Challenge, a coalition of community colleges.

Over the next two years, participants in well over 115 “Shaping Our Future” discussions across the country considered possible purposes of higher education, such as preparing a skilled workforce, providing educational opportunities to poor and minority citizens, strengthening values like responsibility, integrity, and respect for others, and developing skills of citizenship. “Shaping Our Future” involved nearly 2,000 students, parents, professors, employers, and others. It surfaced worries that the “mind-opening” functions of education are eroding. One woman in Kansas, quoted in the report *Divided We Fail*, expressed the view that higher education should get students out of their bubbles. “If you have a higher education . . . you’ve been exposed to different cultures, different lifestyles, different religions, different belief systems. You have a heart and mind that are opened.” Discussions showed a gap between policymakers and lay citizens.

Again and again I was taken with how surprised people were at the question of purpose itself. Dave Senjem, Republican minority leader of the Minnesota Senate, told me, “What’s the purpose of higher education?” is a profound question that we’ve never discussed in all my years in the legislature.”

This surprise at posing the question of purpose brought home how little serious discussion there is about public purposes in education or elsewhere. It reminded me of the opening chapter in Betty Friedan’s 1964 book, *The Feminine Mystique*, which helped to launch the modern women’s movement. Friedan described loss of memory about even how to name problems. “It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction,” wrote Friedan. “The problem lay buried, unspoken for many years. There was no word of this yearning in the missions of words written about women, for women, in all the columns, books, and articles by experts telling women their role.”

In the forums, people were also often surprised by option two, which proposed that higher education should help people “work together and repair an ailing society.” Many agreed with the statement from the issue guide *Shaping Our Future*, used in the forums: “We’ve become a divided nation and a ‘me first’

society. Many people worry that crucial values like responsibility, integrity, and respect for others are failing. Too many Americans who work hard and play by the rules are slipping out of the middle class, and too many poor youngsters never get a fair chance at a good future in the first place.” But as in *Divided We Fail*, the Public Agenda report on the results of the forums, the discussions also showed that people knew of few examples of higher education contributing to civic repair. Many also “worried that their vision of higher education is in jeopardy from changes sweeping through the country’s economy, government, and colleges and universities themselves.”

The next deliberation was on “The Changing World of Work: What Should We Ask of Higher Education?” To develop the accompanying issue guide, a design team from six Twin Cities schools—Augsburg College, Century College, Hamline University, Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, and St. Paul College—worked with the Kettering Foundation and the National Issues Forums Institute. We gathered opinions from nearly 1,000 people in communities, institutions, and on campuses, hearing views about how colleges and universities might better collaborate with their local communities to address the challenges of today’s work environment. We often heard people’s sense of powerlessness. Arjun Appadurai’s cultural theory says that people develop “capacity to aspire” only as they experience agency. Even stories that showed people that making change in work is *possible* had a significant impact on students’ sense of possibility.

Both deliberations surfaced important themes. Their main weakness, in my view, was that they had few examples of what lay citizens might *do* to create the higher education we need. People were mainly in the role of an audience whose judgments are about the right course of action for others to take, not judgment about how they themselves might help implement solutions.

An exception underlines the point. When Katherine Persson, president of the Kingwood campus of Lone Star College, asked John Theis, director of Lone Star’s Center for Civic Engagement, to hold a deliberation among the administrators at Kingwood, he saw a striking increase in intensity. “They were highly energized,” Theis told me, “because they could see possibilities for themselves, as administrators, to take action.”

The impact of deliberations that are connected to public work—in which everyday citizens see *themselves* as part of the solution—emerged from several deliberations at Lone Star College (partnering with the University of Houston). Four discussions, two on higher education, one on energy, and one on guns on campuses, involved 195 students who were highly diverse in terms of age, race,

and cultural backgrounds, and many of whom had had public work experiences in efforts like the youth civic education initiative called Public Achievement. Afterwards, questions designed to explore the impact of the deliberations—not only on students’ views, but also on the ways they thought about their own agency—showed significant change, suggesting that deliberation on large questions may help students to name the significance of public work in stronger ways. Students expressed increased hopefulness, changing views of politics, more confidence in the capacity of others to take action, and more feelings of agency in themselves. More than 71 percent indicated that their understanding of the importance of *listening* to others’ views and beliefs, rather than simply *changing* other people’s views, increased. “In terms of building students’ own political efficacy to be an active part of their democracy, the forums seemed to have a huge impact,” John Theis and Windy Lawrence noted in their report on the forums. As one student put it, “forums like this present a healthier model of political exchange than what we see on television or in our current Congress.” “I’ve never been fully exposed to politics before,” said another. “It was a brand new experience for me.”

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Reconsidering the Gospel of Efficiency

In April of 2017, when I visited Lone Star College, I heard from faculty about constant pressures to meet outcome measures set by efficiency experts. The receptionist in the student union worried about losing her job to a robot. When I traveled across Texas to San Antonio, I thought of little towns along the way hollowed out by the closing of more than 1,000 schools as part of school consolidation, justified by principles of efficiency like cost-cutting and economies of scale. Reflecting a loss of a sense of schools as community centers and sources of civic pride, PTA membership in Texas has fallen by 200,000 members over the last 15 years, while student enrollment increased by more than one million. Such school consolidation turns out to be built on false promises.

In the last fifty years, tens of thousands of schools have been closed as part of school consolidation. Research on the effects shows the damage: “In terms of its influence on teaching and learning, contemporary school consolidation

efforts often fail to deliver the promised enhancement of academic offerings,” write Craig Howley, Jerry Johnson, and Jennifer Petrie in an overview of the evidence. “Even when consolidation does produce a wider menu of educational experiences for students, evidence suggests that large school and district size negatively affects desirable academic outcomes. . . . A sizable body of research investigating school size has consistently found larger size (after moving beyond the smallest schools) to be associated with reduced rates of student participation in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, more dangerous school

Scientific management speeds us toward what David Mathews calls a “citizen-less democracy.”

environments, lower graduation rates, lower achievement levels for impoverished students, and larger achievement gaps related to poverty, race, and gender.” Finally, the impact on communities as a whole can be devastating. “The influence of school and district consolidations on

the vitality and well-being of communities may be the most dramatic result, if the one least often discussed by politicians or education leaders,” they write. “Put simply, the loss of a school erodes a community’s social and economic base—its sense of community, identity and democracy—and the loss permanently diminishes the community itself, sometimes to the verge of abandonment.”

In 1902, Jane Addams warned about this danger of technocratic politics designed and implemented by outside experts. “We are all involved in this political corruption,” she countered. “None of us can stand aside; our feet are mired in the same soil, and our lungs breathe the same air.” She saw the corrupt ward boss, whom she battled constantly, as more democratic than such well-intentioned experts.

The efficiency principle, using techniques derived from science and technology to make every process faster and cheaper, is the justifying guiding philosophy of expert interventions. Americans in higher education, as elsewhere, are caught in a rat race to get there faster and faster, with scant discussion of whether “there” is where we really want to go.

Application of the efficiency gospel also produces widespread feelings of powerlessness. Scientific management speeds us toward what David Mathews calls a “citizen-less democracy,” in which algorithms, smart machines, and manipulated opinions and emotions take the place of citizens’ efforts.

To overcome the dominance of the efficiency gospel, we need to vastly complicate “one best way” logic. The concept of the citizen as deliberator and co-creator, not simply voter, consumer, or victim, accomplishes this

complexification. There are also rich traditions to draw on. As Andrew Jewett describes in an essay in *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*, in the 1930s a movement of “scientific democrats” gained substantial footholds in the USDA and other federal agencies. USDA scientists, in partnership with land-grant colleges and educational, business, and civic groups, organized “Philosophy Schools” for 35,000 extension agents and others, aimed at helping professionals understand their work in larger democratic ways. As Jewett describes, “Many . . . understood the term ‘science’ to include the social forces that shaped the application—and perhaps even the production—of scientific knowledge.” In such a “dynamic concept of science,” said Charles Kellogg, a leading soil scientist in the USDA, “the relevancy of fact is as important to truth as fact itself.” For Kellogg, questions about “Is it so?” needed always to be accompanied by “So what?”

In local communities, home economics agents in cooperative extension were often “citizen professionals” whose main interest was in helping communities develop capacity for self-directed deliberative public work. They challenged conventional yardsticks of success. To paraphrase Isabel Bevier (1860-1942), one of the pioneers in the democratic purpose and practice of home economics, extension work represented an idealism and cultural element missing in a narrow focus on economic productivity—a “new measuring stick.” Previous to this, results had been measured largely in terms of livestock or crops, rather than the “kind of life produced.”

Higher education needs a 21st century version of Bevier’s “new measuring stick.” Rather than moving faster and faster to narrower and narrower goals, we need to revive a politics in higher education that deliberates about what “kind of life is produced”—and recall that citizens in communities are the ones who will produce it.



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DEMOCRACY IS IN TROUBLE, HIGHER EDUCATION IS IN TROUBLE

David Mathews

Historically, higher education has been one of the principal vehicles for expanding and strengthening democracy. This was evident beginning with the creation of state universities to replace colonial colleges and continuing through the creation of land-grant colleges, new institutions for African Americans, and colleges specifically for women. Now, unfortunately, fewer and fewer people see a public role for higher education, much less a role in democracy. This change in attitude is reflected in the defunding of higher education. If colleges and universities primarily benefit individuals, then the argument is, why shouldn't students pay for the education that benefits them personally? That may be one of the reasons tuition costs have risen dramatically. The loss of a public mission is a serious challenge to both higher education and democracy—but there are ways to address it.

To reverse this trend, colleges and universities, both public and private, are going to have to revalidate their democratic mission. And since a public mission has to come from the public, this means that higher education is going to have to reengage a democratic citizenry. How to do that depends on how academic institutions understand citizens.

Currently, higher education tends to see citizens, at least implicitly, as people who receive services and provide institutional support. A democratic citizenry, however, is far more. Democratic citizens are agents and producers, not just consumers or advocates. Citizens must decide and act together to produce things that benefit the common good. How should higher education relate to such a productive citizenry? Getting an answer will probably push colleges and universities to go beyond the admirable work they already do in public service and community engagement. One step in that direction, which some institutions have already taken, is to prepare their students for deciding and acting together on controversial issues by giving them experiences in exercising the human faculty for judgment through public deliberation. That is why this issue of *HEX* has devoted so much space to explaining what kind of deliberation promotes sound judgment.

The next chapter in the history of higher education and how it relates to a democratic citizenry hasn't been written yet. Hopefully this issue of the *Exchange* will contribute to thinking about what has to be done.

The Connection Between Higher Education and Democracy

The citizenry in a democracy is naturally concerned about the challenges facing democracy, and these are mounting. And because of the history of higher education in the United States, when democracy is in trouble, higher education is in trouble. This suggests that we need to step back and look at the challenges preventing democracy from working as it should.

Much of the research these days on democracy is troubling, even alarming. Four fundamental problems or challenges facing democracy today stand out. I'll describe them briefly now and elaborate later:

1. Citizens are roundly criticized, even by other citizens, for being inattentive, uninformed, and, even when attentive, easily manipulated. Many are believed to be incapable of making sound judgments, particularly in elections. Citizens, on the other hand, feel estranged from the government and pushed out of the political system, which they say includes the media. Americans often doubt they can make any real difference in the system beyond voting and writing their representatives.
2. Frustrated by the problems in the national political system, people are turning more to their communities to solve problems. Yet communities may be too divided in all sorts of ways for citizens to work together effectively. Furthermore, people may not recognize the resources they have or the opportunities in everyday community routines to use their assets to make the difference they would like to make.
3. Public confidence in major institutions, not just governmental but nongovernmental as well, continues to stay at a historic low—despite numerous initiatives in citizen participation, accountability, and community engagement. These measures may even add to citizens' loss of confidence. Partisan gridlock and polarization in Washington probably further contribute to this declining confidence.
4. While there is evidence of vitality in civic life at the grassroots or local level, there is little connection between this, the politics people refuse to call politics, and the politics of elections and government. This disconnect was noted in reports that I will elaborate on later.

Research on Representative Government and Civic Democracy

With these four general findings in mind, I would like to go into more detail on the research that we drew on in our analysis.

Since the 1980s, the foundation has been tracking the public's attitude about the political system through analysis of public deliberations in National Issues Forums (NIF), along with other sources. Whatever the issue being addressed in the forums, they have often involved questions about the role that the government should play. In 2012, John Creighton analyzed the results of a number of NIF deliberations, concluding, "It would be difficult to overstate the cynicism people feel toward elected officials." Other studies of citizens' perceptions of government agencies, and the reactions of the agencies, show that the cynicism and distrust is often mutual. People may have little confidence in the government, and the government sometimes has little confidence in the people.

A key piece of research for Kettering came in 1991. In *Citizens and Politics: A View from Main Street America*, Rich Harwood found that, contrary to the then-conventional wisdom, the American people were not apathetic about the political system. Many were "mad as the devil." Significantly, the Harwood study went beneath the usual popular dissatisfaction with government and politicians to discover an abiding sense of civic duty, which is why people were so angry about being pushed out of what they considered their rightful place in a democracy.

Since that report, we have seen more evidence of this civic spirit, despite negative feelings about government. To be sure, people express doubts about their fellow citizens. Nonetheless, we continue to hear stories about citizens joining forces to solve problems and assist one another. This has been especially evident recently in communities that have been hit by natural disasters. And there have been studies showing that the politics of neighborliness and civic life are not dead but flourishing in some locales—so much so that it brings with it a sense of opportunity, even optimism.

Many studies show that public distrust of government is not confined to the United States. One of the more interesting studies, *The Democratic Disconnect*, was published by the Transatlantic Academy in May 2013. The report pointed to a "yawning" gap separating citizens from the institutions of government. Although recognizing that "internet-empowered social activism of a new generation has never been more vibrant," the study found that "little of this participatory mobilization from civil society seems effectively to connect with formal structures [of government] and institutional processes." Yet

they also found that “strong potential exists for renewal.” They argued that “the key” to revitalizing democracy is “enhancing the participatory vibrancy that represents the cornerstone of high quality democracy.” The report concluded that, “visions of top-down problem solving are insufficient. Open-ended and vibrant democratic deliberation is needed.”

This suggests that if democracy is taken to mean only representative government, it is in very serious trouble. However, if democracy is also understood to include the work citizens do with citizens, the outlook is less grim. The difficulty, as this report argued, is that representative government and civic democracy, although often estranged, are nonetheless interdependent. What citizens do with citizens is the oldest form of democracy, even older than ancient Greek democracy. This civic or citizen democracy is like the wetlands of the political ecology; it is where political life begins. If the legitimacy of institutional democracy is to be restored, efforts have to begin in these wetlands.

Organizing the Research Around the Actors

Because the research on democracy from all sources is voluminous and growing, we have found it useful to group the studies around the people and organizations that will need to respond to the challenges facing democracy: the citizenry, communities, and institutions, both governmental and nongovernmental. The four fundamental problems facing democracy today, with which I began this piece, affect all the actors in various ways.

Citizens

As implied in the word *democracy*, the role of the *demos* (“the citizenry”) is central. “We the People” are sovereign in the US Constitution, yet, as noted, people have often been criticized for not exercising sound judgment. That criticism has been sharper recently because of the decisions people have made as voters. One conventional remedy is to provide citizens with more factually correct information. That’s fine; however, the most important political decisions are often about what is *right* or *should be* done. These normative questions can’t be answered with facts alone. They require the exercise of human judgment. When this distinction isn’t recognized, the political debate is carried on with dueling facts that degenerate into polarizing wars over solutions rather than addressing what is behind the problems.

The highly adversarial tone of political discourse today can prevent common efforts needed to solve shared problems. Encouraging people to be more

civil is fine; however, there is no substitute for doing the hard work of making shared judgments. Such “choice work” changes relationships, making them more pragmatic and less adversarial. Choice work is also called “deliberation.” Unfortunately, conventional definitions of deliberation may make no mention of deliberation as the exercise of human judgment.

Lack of civility is often a result of ideological polarization. This can be reduced by deliberations in which people weigh possible solutions against what is really valuable to them, what they hold most dear. Most of us want to be secure from danger, to be free to act as we think best, and to be treated fairly. The source of the conflict is not that we don’t share these concerns but that people give different priorities to what they value because of differences in their circumstances. Recognizing this distinction can change the tone of the disputes. This helps combat polarization because even though people still differ on what should be done, it is easier for them to find ways to move ahead—despite lack of full agreement.

Research on deliberation and public judgment speaks directly to concerns about citizens and the soundness of their decision making. This research needs to extend to political discourse online. At Kettering, we hope to learn more about how online platforms can facilitate the exercise of good judgment. That question can’t be answered, however, without more experimentation with making the technology friendly to democratic purposes.

Concerns about the ability of people to be responsible citizens also have obvious implications for civic education. People aren’t born knowing how to be citizens; they have to learn to carry out the duties that come with citizenship. But *how* they are to be educated has been a subject of continuing controversy. One school of thought considers familiarity with historical documents like the Constitution to be essential. I’m a historian by training, so I would agree. Others would add familiarity with the operations of government, such as how a bill is passed. Having served in government, I would also agree. However, I’ve been a teacher, and I know how hard it is to get young people to pay attention to things they consider unrelated to their day-to-day experiences. They may see the functions of government as irrelevant and the history lessons dry. As a student once wrote in his textbook, “If the world is filled with waters high, dear teacher, this book will still be dry.”

Fortunately, there are now experiments that help animate civic education by giving students actual experience with doing the most basic work of citizens—making decisions with others. These experiments are happening in colleges, secondary schools, and even elementary classrooms. Museums have

also been trying this same approach to civic education in order to make their exhibits more meaningful. For example, trying to make the choices being debated in adopting the Constitution makes that document come alive for students. Given the problems our political system is having now, rethinking civic education couldn't be more urgent.

Citizens and Communities

The places where people live, work, raise their families, and deal with everyday challenges are at the center of the political world. This is what I mean by "community," although I recognize there are other valid definitions.

As I said, communities are also susceptible to the divisions that can make it difficult for people to work together. But at the same time, the foundation is seeing many examples of the politics of neighborliness. For example, see Nancy Rosenblum's book *Good Neighbors* and James Fallows' article "How America Is Putting Itself Back Together" in the March 2016 *Atlantic*. Communities are more pressured than ever to come together and combat their problems, and many of these problems are the kind that only citizens can solve because the remedies are in the human interventions that only people can make. Community institutions, hospitals for instance, can care *for* you but only other people can care *about* you. And that care is powerful medicine.

Perhaps the spotlight has shifted more to our communities because people have lost confidence in national institutions. I'm not saying that people don't value what the federal government does or that it is as ill executed as it sometimes may appear. Nonetheless, the frustration with inaccessibility of many centralized institutions is real, and that frustration appears to be pushing people to look for local solutions. Research on how people in communities can come together, despite their differences, and do the work of producing things that make life a bit better for everyone is critical in today's circumstances.

I think that focusing research on citizens doing the *work* of citizens in their communities is particularly critical. I emphasize work because the work of democracy is real work—hard work that is often a struggle to do. I've already talked about the choice work involved in making shared decisions in spite of differences. However, there is more to this work than deliberation alone. In fact, decision making isn't an isolated act; it is one part of a body of interrelated work. There isn't anything mysterious about this work. The problem to be solved has to be identified. Ways of combating it have to be considered and decisions made about who needs to act. The actors have to commit themselves and then garner the resources they need. The work also has to be organized to be as effective as possible. And, under the best circumstances, the people doing

the work learn from what they have done so that when the next problem comes along, they will profit from their mistakes and be better able to respond.

The difficulty, from a democratic point of view, is that citizens may not recognize they are doing some of the work already or that there are overlooked opportunities. The critical question is, what will make these opportunities more apparent? Here is an example: People seldom, if ever, act without a reason, and that reason is reflected in how a problem is identified or described. Yet, as I mentioned earlier, this naming usually happens so unconsciously that people may not recognize how important it is. Often communities move straight to action. But even then, the name of the problem is implied in the action. A democratic opportunity is lost when citizens don't add the distinctive names people give problems.

People describing problems in terms of what they hold dear is not the way professionals are trained to name problems, which, as it should be, is in expert terms. One example I have often used is that citizens want to feel that they are safe in their homes, and this feeling of security is less quantifiable, yet more compelling, than the statistics professionals use to describe crime. Politicians name problems taken from a partisan agenda, which may not speak to people's experiences. Partisan names capture what a politician hopes will be a winning argument. The challenge is to recognize *all* the names, even those that aren't scientific or objective but rather experiential.

In each of the other aspects of civic work that I have listed, there are opportunities for citizens to make a difference—*if* they recognize the opportunities. Seeing them, however, is difficult because the way citizens do their work is different from the way professionals do theirs. For instance, the options for action taken by citizens are different from the options for professionals. If the problem is a rise in street crimes, which people see as a threat to the safety they value, one option for action might be citizens setting up neighborhood watches. When people name problems in terms of how the problems affect them and their families, it can prompt them to be civic actors.

The way citizens go about decision making in their communities is distinctive as well. Citizen decision making is seldom just a technical process of cost-benefit analysis. As noted earlier, public decision making at its best involves the exercise of public judgment. The resources people use to act are also different; so too is the way people organize themselves and evaluate results. At each point in community work, from the time a problem is named to the time the work is evaluated, there are opportunities for citizens to empower themselves. When people don't see these opportunities, it contributes to a sense of powerlessness,

which damages people's sense of responsibility. How can they be held accountable for what they cannot affect?

More research needs to be done on how people can recognize empowering opportunities. The same can be said about officials and administrators recognizing that citizens do their work in distinctive ways. The challenge isn't to get citizens to do what professionals do but for them to appreciate what they themselves can do.

Citizens and Institutions

Among all of the problems in our political system, none is more glaring than the public's declining confidence in our major institutions, not only governmental but also nongovernmental. More effective measures to bridge the divide separating the public from government and other institutions are badly needed.

One reason is our large institutions can't be optimally effective without assistance from the productive work of citizens. Elinor Ostrom won the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2009 for demonstrating that. Unfortunately, there are obstacles standing in the way of what should be a win-win for both the public and institutions—governments, schools, hospitals, and so on. One is that people don't always see opportunities to make a difference. Another, just mentioned, is that the way institutions usually work may not align well with the way citizens usually work. The result of this misalignment is that the potential for collaboration between the citizenry in a community and the community's institutions often remains unrealized.

Our institutions are effective technically because they are staffed by competent professionals who contribute their considerable expertise. The downside is that these professionals may see citizens the way some physicians see citizens, which is as patients, rather than as workers or coproducers of the things hospitals, schools, and government agencies need.

A study by Monica Schoch-Spana et al. on the way professionals could better engage with citizens during disasters and epidemics is revealing. According to the authors, "The prevailing assumption is that a panic-stricken public, blinded by self-preservation, will constitute a secondary disaster for authorities to manage. Some emergency authorities also have mistakenly interpreted citizen-led interventions in past and present disasters as evidence of failure on the part of responders."

Or take the case of colleges and universities that have admirable community outreach programs, conduct publicly beneficial research, and give their students opportunities for public service. What do these commendable

efforts imply about the role of citizens? It is easy to think of citizens simply as people who need information and services. This perception does not recognize that citizens also have resources and the capacity for action. The crucial question is, how can institutions of higher education relate to citizens as coproducers?

Government agencies and nongovernmental organizations face the same challenge. Working with citizens doesn't mean that professionals have to compromise their expertise or give up their power. It does mean, however, that professionals and their institutions have to open up space for citizens to act on their own—and be more than volunteers. Although professionals can't do the work of citizens, they can encourage and precipitate it, *if* (and that's a big *if*) they can be comfortable with sharing control.

Given the public criticisms of institutions and the danger of losing their legitimacy and authority, rethinking the role of professionals and exploring the possibilities for what has been called a more civic professionalism is necessary.

Benefits and Responsibilities

No strategy for overcoming the problems of democracy, whether they have to do with citizens, communities, or institutions, is likely to be effective unless it serves the self-interests of those who have to carry out the strategy. And carrying out any strategy imposes responsibilities. Some of these self-interests are obvious. Citizens want to make a difference in shaping their future, but that requires doing work that can be taxing, like the choice work needed to confront and then work through the tensions associated with difficult decisions. Will people do this kind of work? Some already are. More should. In the United States, there are now a number of nonpartisan organizations sponsoring public forums on difficult issues that could promote not just informed dialogue but also deliberative choice work.

Communities benefit when their citizens join forces to combat common problems. However, that requires dealing with the myriad differences that put people and groups at odds with one another. Is there any perfectly harmonious community? Of course not. Still, there are some communities that benefit from greater levels of collaboration. That is often evident after natural disasters, but cooperation isn't limited to tragedies. It could happen more often in more places. And that isn't just wishful thinking.

Despite doubts about what citizens can and will do, there are signs of renewed civic vitality in our communities. The key is recognizing that people don't have to be alike, or even to like one another, to work together. They just have to recognize the obvious—they need one another.

Who might benefit from bridging the divide separating the public from the government and other public-serving institutions? In the case of governments, it might help to give officeholders ways to connect to a public that is more than interest groups, constituencies with demands, or the statistical public in polling data. What about connecting to a deliberative public? A citizenry that deliberates has something in common with officeholders who have to exercise their best judgment on issues that can't be decided by data alone. As I mentioned earlier, these are matters where the issue is what is the *right* thing to do; these are normative *should* questions, and they are difficult decisions for officials to make. Officials have reason to want to understand how citizens go about making up their minds on such difficult issues.

Another obvious benefit: as I mentioned, governments have already made a number of efforts to combat declining confidence through public participation initiatives, civic-engagement projects, and demonstrations of accountability. Yet confidence has continued to fall, which suggests a need to go beyond current engagement practices to strategies where institutions work more *with* the public than just *for* the public. Kettering has found that when people are involved in collaborative work with institutions—when they are agents, not just subjects—they are more likely to have confidence in the institutions. A February 2017 white paper published by the World Economic Forum suggests a similar strategy:

The 21st century needs a new model of government, a government *with* the people. Olli-Pekka Heinonen, Director General of the Finnish National Board of Education, writes that this revolutionary shift happens if we, instead of providing public services to citizens, learn to achieve results with citizens. This means a fundamental change in how the identity of citizens is seen; a shift from consumer-citizens to value creator-citizens.

We live in a time when democracy faces challenges on a number of fronts, and no one knows all that needs to be known about how to meet them. We need more experiments by governments, schools, colleges and universities, communities, neighborhoods, civic organizations, and citizen associations to combat these challenges. We can shake our fist at our problems, but there has seldom been a time when these problems were more obvious to more people who realize that something has to be done. This opens the door to invention. And that's the good news.



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