

THE KETTERING FOUNDATION'S ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

CONNECTIONS

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2012

EDUCATING FOR DEMOCRACY

Stories of
INNOVATION
in
**HIGHER
EDUCATION**





NEW from Kettering Foundation Press

Democratizing Deliberation

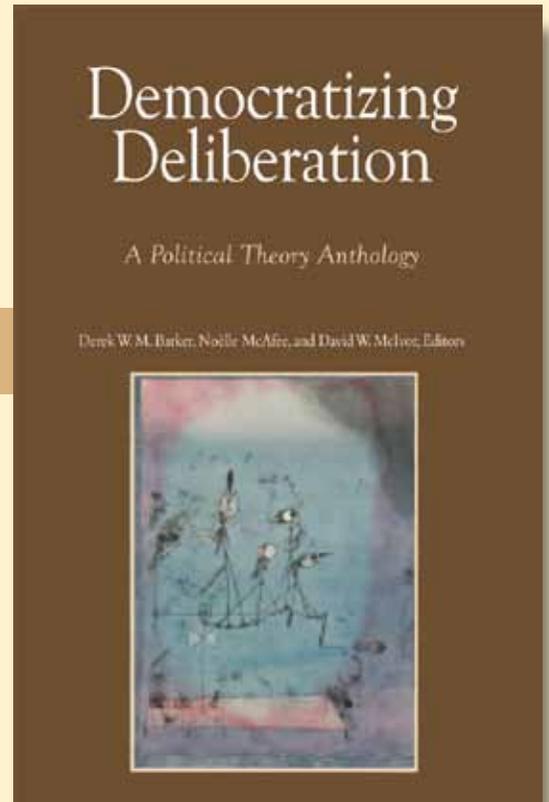
A Political Theory Anthology

Edited by Derek W. M. Barker, Noëlle McAfee, and David W. McIvor

Democratizing Deliberation brings together recent and cutting-edge political theory scholarship on deliberative democracy. The collection reframes deliberative democracy to be sensitive to the deep conflicts, multiple forms of communication, and aspirations for civic agency that characterize real public deliberation. In so doing, the book addresses many of the most common challenges to the theory and practice of deliberative democracy.

Kettering Foundation Press | 2012

\$15.95 • 184 pages • ISBN 978-0-923993-41-2



To read excerpts and purchase this book, visit www.kettering.org.

The Kettering Foundation is a nonprofit, operating foundation rooted in the American tradition of cooperative research. Kettering's primary research question is, what makes democracy work as it should? Kettering's research is distinctive because it is conducted from the perspective of citizens and focuses on what people can do collectively to address problems affecting their lives, their communities, and their nation. The foundation seeks to identify and address the challenges to making democracy work as it should through interrelated program areas that focus on citizens, communities, and institutions. The foundation collaborates with an extensive network of community groups, professional associations, researchers, scholars, and citizens around the world. Established in 1927 by inventor Charles F. Kettering, the foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization that does not make grants but engages in joint research with others. For more information about KF research and publications, see the Kettering Foundation's website at www.kettering.org.

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Living Democracy: From Service Learning to Political Engagement

Alexandra Robinson

“I don’t like the pat-you-on-the-back kind of community service,” asserts Auburn University student Marian Royston. “I want to learn how to work with others to create change we can all live with.” Royston has participated in a recent series of research exchanges at the Kettering Foundation that is exploring how to affect college students’ sense of civic agency through experiences in community. Students like Royston want to do more than good deeds; they want to make a difference in the very fabric of communities. But, what differentiates community experiences that affect students’ sense of civic agency from the traditional community-service experience Royston describes? Kettering’s research exchanges in higher education are bringing together faculty, practitioners, and students from various colleges and universities who share an interest in moving institutions of higher education beyond service and service learning.

Service learning, which arose in part as a response to criticism that community service lacks academic rigor, is broadly understood as a combination of community service and active learning. In the last decade, practitioners have made great strides in incorporating deep reflection and serious academic content into service experiences, and the academic literature is starting to show positive student outcomes connected to service learning.

However, if one of the goals of higher education in a democratic political system is to help students realize their roles as active citizens, service learning may not go far enough. Historically, community service has not been thought of as political. Indeed, federal agencies that fund service learning explicitly discourage recipients from engaging students in politics. Although service learning engages students in a community, this engagement may not be structured to build the knowledge or skills associated with democratic participation or citizenship. Perhaps most worrisome, students sometimes see service as an alternative to politics—a way of performing good works without the hard work of negotiating across differences or bureaucratic institutions, which suggests that service experience could actually undermine students’ sense of civic agency.

Living Democracy

In response to these challenges, students like Marian Royston are starting to demand richer experiences. She is part of a growing movement of students, faculty, and administrators who want to move higher education's community-outreach strategy beyond the conventional community-service approach. This shift is evident in the number of colleges and universities that have renamed their service-learning offices and programming as "civic engagement." Indeed, even proponents of service learning are anxious to show that it goes beyond the soup kitchen stereotype and makes lasting social change in communities. In recent years, there has been an explosion in the

number of organizations and associations dedicated to promoting civic engagement in higher education. While the terminology is clearly starting to shift, a critical question Kettering's research is ask-

ing is whether civic engagement is simply a new label for traditional community service or whether it is leading to substantive changes in students' experiences of civic life.



Living Democracy

A group from Auburn University, including Marian Royston, is participating in the Kettering research exchange; they are implementing an experiment designed to move beyond service learning by immersing students in the life of rural Alabama communities. The project, aptly named Living Democracy, is the

ment? Can they be complementary, or are they in tension? In a study for the Kettering Foundation titled *The Civic Spectrum*, Bernie Ronan suggests that service is part of a continuum leading naturally into politics. In his article “The Necessity of Politics,” Harry Boyte goes further arguing that the framework of service itself undermines

agency and fundamentally opposes democratic politics. He points out that service often denotes altruism and selflessness, which effectively masks the self-interest of the service provider and at the same time obscures the capacities and contributions of those being served. The result of this apolitical stance, Boyte contends, “is moral passion, but little political savvy.” In essence, if service learning helps students to understand the *what* and *why* of change, it is missing the *how* of change.

Whatever the relationship between service learning and political forms of engagement, most agree there is indeed a distinction. Wilson sug-

gests that the two can be distinguished in the following ways. First, service learning is typically *organized* for students in predetermined projects, while democratic politics calls for *organizing*; that is, democratic politics involves students as active participants in a process that they help to create. Second, service learning requires students to give *time* (usually a specific number of hours for which they receive credit), while democratic politics requires an ongoing *commitment*, an ethical attitude in which students have responsibility for their actions. Third, service learning is designed to meet a *need*, which postures the recipients as passive consumers of services, while democratic politics engages *people* as active creators of stories. Fourth, service is typically an activity designed to make the service provider feel *good*, while democratic politics can make students feel *dizzy*, or disoriented, from having to work across challenging differences and navigate entrenched institutions. Finally, service learning is followed by an *exclamation point*, the sense of accomplishment from the completion of a discrete project, while democratic politics is followed by a *question mark* because it is an ongoing and open-ended process.

As Mark Wilson has observed, politics is about engaging people as active creators of stories. What happens next is open-ended, a point in the journey to discover, as Marian Royston put it, “how to work with others to create change we can all live with.”

creation of Mark Wilson, Director of Civic Learning Initiatives in the College of Arts and Sciences; Nan Fairley, a journalism professor; and Ralph Foster, director of the Office of Public Service. Following two semesters of preparatory coursework in civics and community journalism, undergraduate students live in participating communities around the state of Alabama for a summer semester. While living in the community, each student works with community partners to develop and execute a collaboratively designed project. The Auburn University team sees its work as distinct from service learning, writing in a project memorandum:

While [service learning] opportunities are important and useful for students and communities . . . they do not provide students and communities the opportunity to work toward and reflect on the larger purposes of higher education as it relates to democracy: the building of civic capacities and will to solve issues of concern.

This raises an important question: what is the relationship between service learning and political forms of engage-

Service and Service Learning	Democratic Politics
Organized	Calls for organizing
Requires time	Requires commitment
Meets a need	Meets people and their stories
Makes you feel good	Makes you feel dizzy
Followed by an exclamation point	Followed by a question mark

Living Democracy



Another group participating in Kettering research—this time at the University of Dayton in Ohio—illuminates some of these distinctions as they play out in the attempt to move beyond service. The Dayton Civic Scholars commit to a three-year program of ongoing community engagement. During this time, this select group spend a minimum of 360 hours working with community partners, take 12 credits of related coursework, and complete a semester-long internship. In their final year, the scholars must work as a group to implement a capstone project in the city of Dayton. The ultimate goal is simple: to help students learn how to work with others in community. The students are given a few guidelines and a small budget; it is up to them to choose, organize, and implement their own project. Far from being organized for them, it requires student organizing.

In the fall semester of 2011, the senior cohort of Dayton Civic Scholars began planning their capstone project. The scholars initially thought about starting an after-school mentoring or tutoring program with a local high school struggling with low academic standards, high drop-out rates, and a host of other challenges that often accompany urban poverty.

This kind of needs-oriented thinking is often ingrained in the minds of students steeped in the traditions of service and service-learning work. After we reflected on this issue, the scholars realized the direction of their project should be negotiated with the high school students themselves. That insight led the scholars to design a forum that would enable the high school students to help shape the focus of the scholars' project. Through a forum, dubbed "Your Community, Your Future," the scholars found that the high school students wanted to learn more about post-secondary opportunities, specifically how to prepare for and apply to college. With only two months left in the fall semester to plan and prepare, the scholars organized a resource fair geared toward first-generation college students. As a part of the resource fair, a panel of first-generation college students from the University of Dayton, Wright State University, Sinclair Community College, and Central State University engaged the high school students in a frank discussion about pursuing higher education.

Working collaboratively with people in a community, rather than traditional service, demands a great deal of flexibility. The experience can be frustrating for

both students and community partners, who are more accustomed to the predictability of traditional community service. The scholars' project illustrates a larger challenge facing higher education as it attempts to move beyond service learning and into the messier realm of civic engagement. But for the Dayton Civic Scholars, managing the uncertainties of civic engagement was well worth the effort. When the scholars reflected back on their initial plan to implement a short-term tutoring program, they recognized that they could not have imagined such a panel without engaging with the larger community.

As Mark Wilson has observed, politics is about engaging people as active creators of stories. What happens next is open-ended, a point in the journey to discover, as Marian Royston put it, "how to work with others to create change we can all live with."

Alexandra Robinson is a former Kettering Foundation research associate and is currently a graduate assistant and graduate student at the University of Dayton. She coordinates the Dayton Civic Scholars, a program designed to prepare undergraduate students to be civic professionals and citizen leaders through sustained interdisciplinary civic engagement and scholarship. She can be reached at robinsona6@udayton.edu.



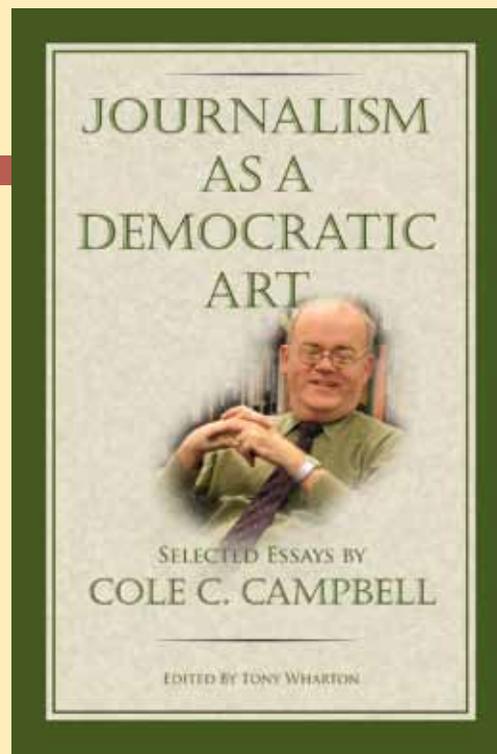
NEW from Kettering

Journalism as a Democratic Art: Selected Essays **by Cole C. Campbell**

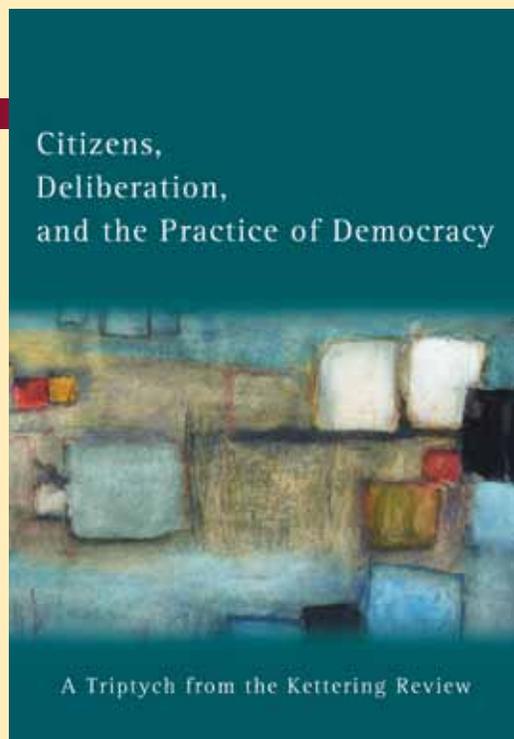
Edited by Tony Wharton

Journalism as a Democratic Art expresses at its heart Cole Campbell's belief that "people expect the press to help their communities solve problems." As one-time editor of the Virginian-Pilot in Norfolk, Virginia, and then the Post-Dispatch in St. Louis, Missouri, Campbell worked to align his profession with that belief, often facing considerable resistance from other journalists.

Campbell's essays address a variety of subjects, including a partly finished dictionary for journalists; timely essays written in the months after Hurricane Katrina and 9/11; and an interview by Jay Rosen, longtime professor of journalism at New York University.



Kettering Foundation Press | 2012
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Citizens, Deliberation, and the Practice of Democracy: A Triptych from the Kettering Review

Citizens, Deliberation, and the Practice of Democracy brings together writing by 19 leading thinkers on the contemporary challenges of democracy. These provocative essays, first published in three issues of the Kettering Review to celebrate 25 years of the National Issues Forums, challenge readers to rethink conventional notions of democracy, public deliberation, and citizenship.

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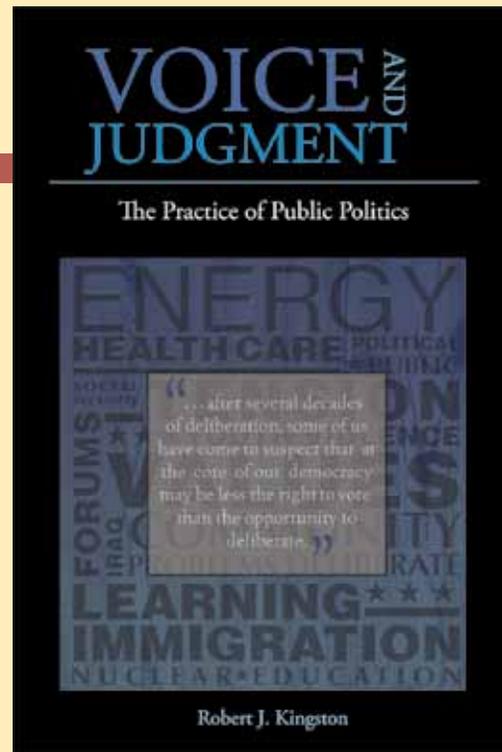
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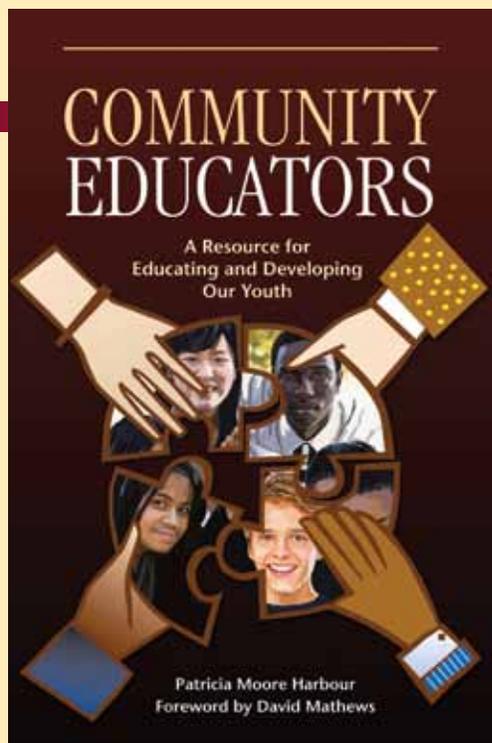
Voice and Judgment: The Practice of Public Politics

By Robert J. Kingston

"We are victims of argument and instruments, from time to time, of circumstance or the influence of others' whims. Our civic movement, however, is from a state of anxiety, puzzlement, blame, defensiveness, or anger, toward the place where contraries meet, where unavoidable tensions remind us that no life is lived without risk . . . or collaboration. A deliberative public begins with opinions but shares experiences; it recognizes shared concerns or 'values' in unexpected, sometimes unfamiliar circumstances; it responds to the divisive with restraint. . . . Public deliberation reveals not a verdict but the making of a 'public,' the formulation of a public will that can be described and put to use."



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Community Educators: A Resource For Educating and Developing Our Youth

By Patricia Moore Harbour

Community Educators asserts that the relationship between education, community, and democracy are inseparable and illustrates that education is broader than just schooling. Current thinking about education is challenged and reveals how the public participates in the education and development of youth. This book is a call for action and responsibility—both individual and collective—to transform education beyond simply reforming schools.

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