

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

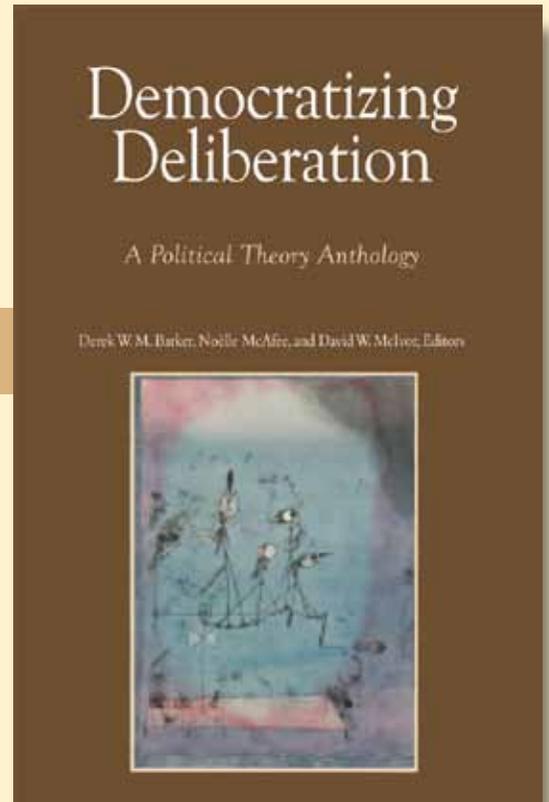
A Political Theory Anthology

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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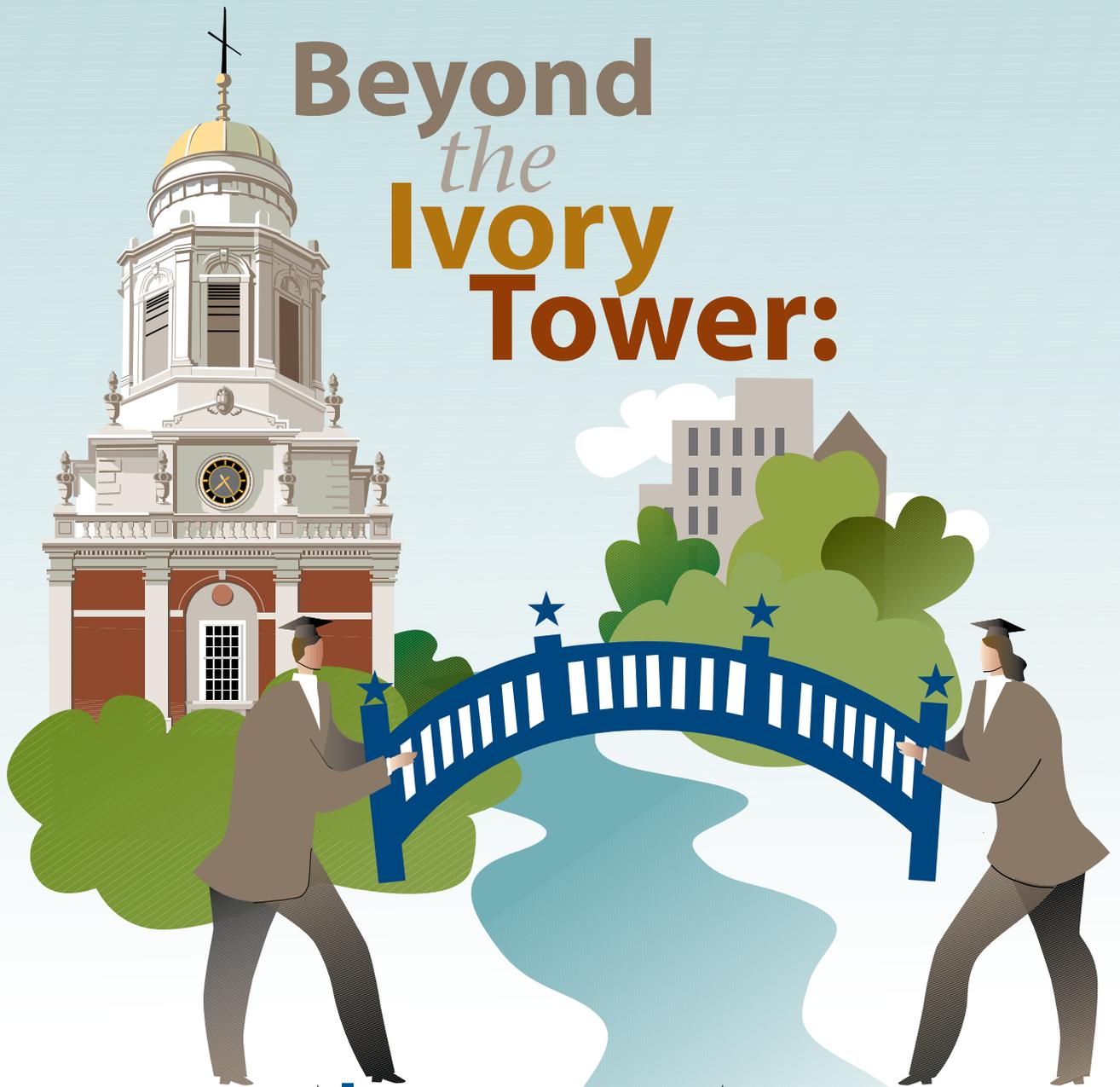
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Beyond *the* Ivory Tower:



The Civic Aspirations of Faculty

Claire Snyder-Hall

In a strong democracy, higher education serves a civic mission, not only preparing students for public deliberation and active participation, but also partnering with communities to do public work. If higher education is to achieve this mission, the faculty, who do the core work of teaching and scholarship, may be the most critical sector. Indeed, throughout Kettering's research on higher education, many of the most powerful stories have come from faculty members who are trying to strengthen the connection between higher education and democracy and to reacquaint colleges and

universities with their historical civic mission. I am currently part of a group that has been meeting at the foundation to study these efforts. As our inquiry has developed, we are finding a common theme: an aspiration to bring together the professional lives of faculty with the underlying civic aspirations that drew many of them to higher education in the first place.

Faculty members engaged in public work are going against the grain of the current norms of academe. Faculty today are experiencing numerous pressures to prioritize their professional lives over their civic aspirations. Administrators at

Beyond the Ivory Tower

colleges and universities increasingly view higher education as a business and as an individual rather than a public good. They seek to raise institutional status by requiring faculty to prioritize publishing over teaching and service. At the same time, the disciplines have continued to embrace models of expert knowledge that encourage detachment from public life in favor of research on narrow questions with measurable results, published in journals with audiences limited to a few peers. Consequently, faculty efforts to explicitly prepare students for citizenship, to engage in public scholarship, or to partner with communities to solve shared problems are seen as marginal, if not antithetical to, the way colleges and universities understand their mission.

What motivates faculty to engage in public work, despite institutional incentive structures and academic cultural norms that undermine their efforts? Some seem to be motivated, at least in part, by a sense of unhappiness with current norms. As Harry Boyte discovered in *Going Public*, his Kettering Foundation study of academia and public life, many faculty members are unhappy with “the erosion of the spirit of community, connection, and public culture in their departments and in the university as a whole” that has occurred over the last few decades. Second, as KerryAnn O’Meara discovered in her Kettering Foundation working paper “Because I Can,” a study of faculty and their “civic agency,” many faculty members turn to public work as an antidote to the sense of isolation they often feel at universities, where each faculty member works individually on his or her own scholarship, which often has little connection to important public problems. According to Ellen Schrecker in *The Lost Soul of Higher Education*, this sense of isolation is particularly acute for contingent, non-tenure-line faculty, who now comprise 70 percent of the professoriate. Finally, some faculty members probably share Peggy Shaffer’s sense, revealed in the 2008 issue of the *Higher Education Exchange*, that higher education is not doing enough to help create the kind of world they want their children to inherit. As she puts it,

I have joked with colleagues that I am in the midst of an academic midlife crisis—questioning every

aspect of life in academe. In thinking about my future in the university, I have wondered whether my time will be well spent researching and writing a scholarly monograph that might well get me promoted, but that will be read by only a handful of like-minded scholars with similar intellectual interests. I have questioned the time I devote to teaching critical thinking skills to students who are socialized, both inside and outside the university, to care more about their final grades and potential career options than the knowledge they can share and the collective future they will create. As a parent of two young children, I look out to the world and worry about what their futures will be. . . . I wonder if my work in the academy is paving the way for a culture I want my children to inherit. On very bad days, I think not.

For Shaffer, this angst spurred her to make greater efforts to connect her professional and public lives.

An ongoing series of research conversations at the Kettering Foundation is asking whether focusing on the concepts of *public happiness* and *civic agency* might help us understand how higher education might be moved toward a stronger understanding of its democratic mission. But what does it mean to talk about faculty public happiness? This may be what faculty mean when they talk about wanting their scholarship to make a difference or have relevance to public issues. However, this is not simply a personal feeling. Rather, we are suggesting Hannah Arendt’s notion of public happiness as the sense of pleasure derived from participation in “the discussions, the deliberations, and the making of decisions” required by democratic self-government. I do not think anyone familiar with public deliberation or other forms of civic participation would dispute Arendt’s claim. Engaging with others in public work can be quite enjoyable and deeply satisfying. Yet for this work to be meaningful, a critical question is whether it can be done in separation from faculty’s professional lives or whether their civic aspirations can somehow be inte-

grated into the core notions of expertise and scholarship that guide their work.

This research on public happiness and civic agency coincidentally occurs at a time when academic scholars have been developing a new area of research called “happiness studies.” Contrary to what one might think at first glance, the happiness studies literature actually has relevance for this research, in that it confirms that political and community engagement are directly connected to happiness, as Arendt argues. As Derek Bok puts it in *The Politics of Happiness*: “The most important sources of happiness seem to include having close relationships with family and friends,

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helping others, and being active in community, charitable, and political activities.” Thus, a major implication of the happiness studies research is that it provides empirical evidence for Arendt’s discussion of public happiness—a concept based on Aristotle’s ancient claim that human beings are “political animals,” meaning that the most fulfilling human activities are done in common with others. And it is precisely Aristotle’s claim that seems to be at the root of the most powerful examples of civic engagement work in higher education.

If human beings really do find fulfillment through common work, then it makes sense that faculty members operating within an academic culture that isolates them in the ivory tower of autono-



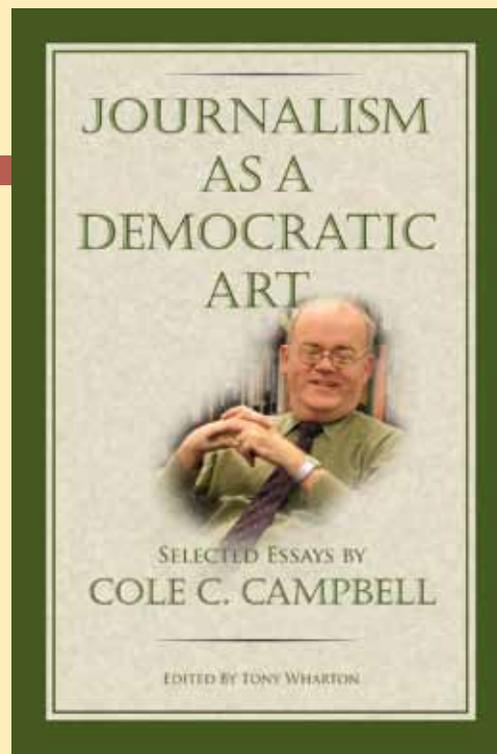
NEW from Kettering

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

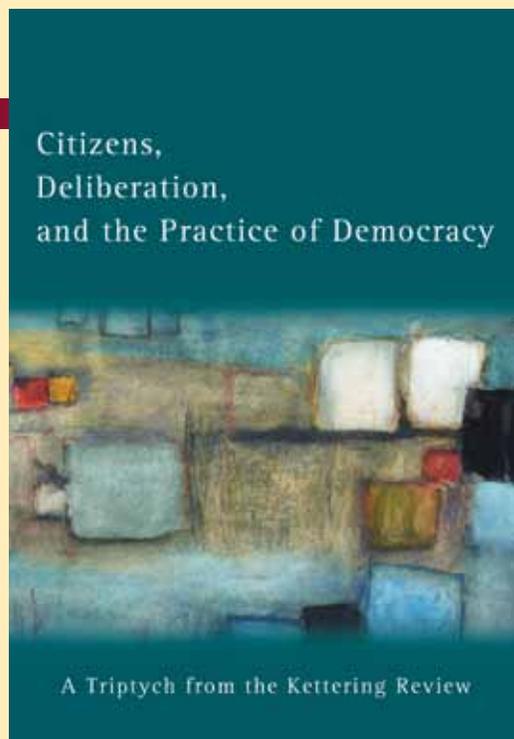
Edited by Tony Wharton

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.



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\$15.95 • 196 pages • ISBN 978-0-923993-40-5



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.

Kettering Foundation Press | 2012
\$15.95 • 236 pages • ISBN 978-0-923993-44-3

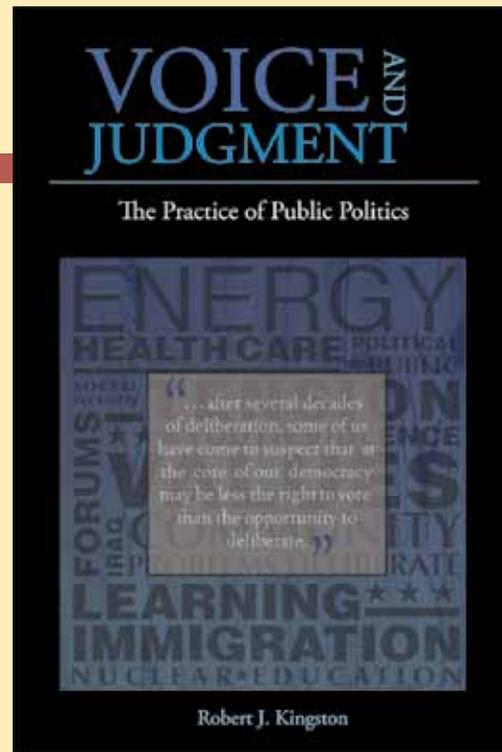
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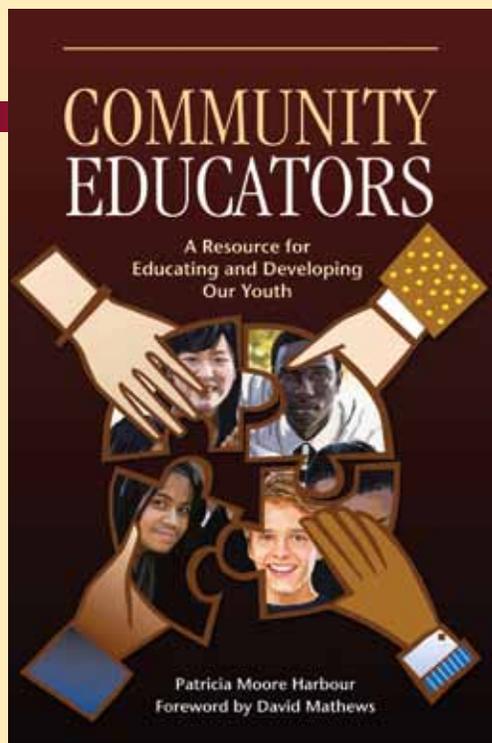
Voice and Judgment: The Practice of Public Politics

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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\$15.95 • 272 pages • ISBN 978-0-923993-42-9



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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