



HIGHER EDUCATION EXCHANGE



2013

Editors	David W. Brown
	Deborah Witte
Copy Editor	Joey Easton O'Donnell
Art Director/Production	Long's Graphic Design, Inc.
Cover Design, Illustrations, and Formatting	Long's Graphic Design, Inc.

The Kettering Foundation is a nonprofit operating foundation, chartered in 1927, that does not make grants but welcomes partnerships with other institutions (or groups of institutions) and individuals who are actively working on problems of communities, governing, politics, and education. The interpretations and conclusions contained in the *Higher Education Exchange*, unless expressly stated to the contrary, represent the views of the author or authors and not necessarily those of the foundation, its trustees, or officers.

Copyright © 2013 by the Kettering Foundation

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.

CONTENTS

Deborah Witte	Foreword	1
Thomas Bender	Reconstructing America's Public Life: An Interview	5
Harry C. Boyte	Reinventing Citizenship As Public Work: Civic Learning for the Working World	14
Thomas Ehrlich and Ernestine Fu	<i>Civic Work, Civic Lessons: Two Generations Reflect on Public Service: An Interview</i>	28
Martín Carcasson	Rethinking Civic Engagement on Campus: The Overarching Potential of Deliberative Practice	37
Nicholas V. Longo	Deliberative Pedagogy and the Community: Making the Connection	49
Edith Manosevitch	The Medium Is the Message: An Israeli Experience with Deliberative Pedagogy	60
Sean Creighton	Today's Civic Mission for Community Colleges	69
Alex Lovit	<i>Real Social Science: Applied Phronesis</i> Edited Bent Flyvbjerg, Todd Landman, and Sanford Schram	78
David Mathews	Engaging the Work of Democracy	83

ENGAGING THE WORK OF DEMOCRACY

By David Mathews

All of the Kettering Foundation's research is done from the perspective of citizens, so the foundation asked the *Higher Education Exchange* to bring that perspective to each issue. For example, the research on the mission of higher education, which I mentioned in last year's issue, requires starting with people's concerns—and then finding out what, if anything, they expect colleges and universities to do about them. Research is already underway that moves in the opposite direction by starting with the mission of higher education. In the near future, I hope we will begin a companion study that puts the public's concerns in the forefront. It should tell us a great deal about the public's perspective.

The public's point of view is crucial because it has implications for the considerable effort that colleges and universities are putting into engagement projects and service learning. Those efforts are helpful, yet a democratic public isn't a constituency to be served; it's a producer of *public goods*, things that benefit society or a community as a whole. Those range from goods that benefit a community, like *building* a playground for children, to products that benefit the entire country, like *organizing* mothers to stop drunk driving. The public is a working body, a dynamic force, and effective engagement has to engage the work itself. It isn't just the playground that's important; it's the building. It isn't just stopping drunk driving; it's the organizing that has to be engaged. I mean that the work that institutions of higher education do should reinforce the work citizens do in building and organizing. And that requires looking closely at how citizens do the work of producing public goods.

Much of the foundation's research has gone into trying to understand this work. The more we all know about it, the more effective engagement can be. So far, Kettering has been able to find six practices that are essential.

What the foundation has learned is that the work of citizens begins in identifying or naming problems that need to be solved. If people are to become invested in solving these problems, the

names have to capture the things people hold dear, the things that affect them personally or the well being of their families. In past issues of *HEX*, I used safety, freedom, and being treated fairly as examples of these common imperatives. Unfortunately, academic names of problems, while accurate, aren't enough to engage citizens.

Of course, naming a problem doesn't solve it. Usually people put forward a number of options for action. And the options reflect the things people hold dear. The question is, what is the *right* thing to do? When all of the options are on the table, it creates a framework for decision making. The nature of that framework is also crucial. The options have to be presented with full recognition of the tensions that grow out of the advantages and disadvantages in every course of action. People have to make difficult trade-offs.

When making decisions, people tend to respond with first impressions and reach hasty conclusions. To move to more shared and considered judgment, the decision making has to be deliberative; that is, all options have to be weighed carefully against the many things people hold dear. This is real work; in fact, some call deliberative decision making *choice work*.

Action requires people and resources, and finding them is another part of the work of citizens. Often useful assets go untapped because they aren't the most obvious ones, like money, facilities, or equipment. Citizens have other resources that need to be used—such as people's capacity for caring for one another, the strength in the networks they can form, and their personal skills and experiences.

Decisions aren't self-implementing, and civic actions can be so diverse or even competitive that little is accomplished. Institutions organize their actions through planning and bureaucratic coordination. Citizens, on the other hand, have a capacity for self-organizing; we see examples just after natural disasters when volunteers organize their own relief efforts. They have a shared purpose—survival. Self-organizing can also occur at other times if deliberative decision making has been able to identify enough common purposes so diverse civic actions can reinforce one another. Creating the deliberative habits that make complementary action possible is also part of the work of citizens.

The most important practice in the work of citizens is learning how to fail successfully. Failing successfully is learning

from mistakes. This learning has to be collective; it isn't like the individual learning that goes on in classrooms. Collective learning is key to keeping up the momentum necessary to combat persistent problems that every community faces. The work of citizens is full of ups and downs; success can be elusive. Learning from failures is key to moving ahead. And every practice in the work of citizens creates an opportunity to learn.

Not only are the ways citizens do their work distinctive, but also are their goals and the results their efforts produce. Research done with the foundation shows that getting people to work together is, itself, an important objective of citizen politics. As one of the people cited in the research reasoned, "If all the people in the city are banded together to make it a better place to live, then it will be a better place to live."

The objectives of the work citizens do may seem quite modest, but they are also quite practical. When it comes to realizing our dreams for our country, grand visions and all-encompassing reforms don't seem as credible as small projects where citizens take responsibility, decide on what should be done, and do much of the work themselves, according to findings in Richard Harwood's book *The Work of Hope* (Kettering Foundation Press 2012). Homegrown change is appealing because it is authentic. Unsure that they can trust large institutions, people look to their fellow citizens to fix what is out of whack through joint efforts that build confidence. For example, neighbors who decide to paint a school together may not do it just because the school building will be more attractive; their real purpose may be to demonstrate what can be accomplished when citizens join forces.

This research also found a connection between local issues and national resilience. As Harwood wrote, "The people we met believe the country faces enormous challenges that require significant action. The purpose of starting small and starting local, and . . . meeting one achievable goal after another, is to rebuild the confidence and sense of common purpose in the nation." But what about global problems? Those who believe in starting small say that, without a sense of efficacy and shared purpose, people won't be able to tackle larger problems. And they point out that local efforts can and do grow into larger movements.

The foundation has not only learned a great deal about the tasks that make up the work of citizens (naming, framing, etc.), but also learned about the character of the work. For instance, the foundation calls the ways citizens go about their work *practices* in order to distinguish them from techniques. Practices have an intrinsic value; they do more than accomplish an immediate task at hand. Hammering a nail is a technique; few go out to hammer nails just for the fun of it. Playing a piano, on the other hand, has a value beyond striking keys on a keyboard. It creates music that can stir the soul. Similarly, a practice like deliberating to make a decision promotes values like fairness and civility.

Kettering also sees the practices citizens use in doing their work as *democratic* when these practices give citizens a stronger hand in shaping their future. To name problems in terms that resonate with the things people hold dear creates ownership. To employ resources that citizens can draw on from ordinary life empowers them. These are democratic practices.

In addition, we are seeing that the democratic practices used in the work of citizens are interrelated. They are part of a whole, the way a golfer's swing is one fluid motion that integrates the backswing with the striking of the ball and the follow-through.

The foundation is eager to compare what it is learning about how citizens do their work with others who are observing and analyzing that work. And, as I wrote earlier, we think what can be learned from this work has significant implications for college and university engagement. Most of this engagement is done by providing valuable resources that these institutions have in abundance, like expert information, professional advice, technical assistance, and other forms of service, some of which come from student volunteers. All of that is useful, and sometimes it's critical. It can augment the work of citizens. However, from the public's perspective, this kind of assistance is not all they care about. People want more power in their own hands to shape a future that seems increasingly dangerous and unpredictable. So the relationship they would like to have with colleges and universities has to be more than one that provides services, however valuable and appreciated those are. It has to be a relationship that is more than one that's responsive to their needs, even if people get to define those needs. Democratic citizens want

a relationship that puts more levers of control in their hands. They don't want to be empowered as much as they want to empower themselves.

What I have just written about the work of citizens reflects the foundation's best guesses to date. These guesses are based on more than 30 years of observing scores of communities where citizens have tried to join forces to solve a wide variety of problems. For more details, see the forthcoming book *The Ecology of Democracy* (Kettering Foundation Press 2014), which includes a composite case study of one community, Suggsville, and one university's efforts to reinforce what citizens were doing. But we realize that what we have found to date is incomplete and, in some cases, probably in error. So Kettering is looking for cases where colleges or universities are trying to align their work more closely and constructively with the work of citizens. We would appreciate hearing from any of you who are trying this.

CONTRIBUTORS

Thomas Bender is University Professor of the Humanities and professor of history at New York University. He identifies himself as an intellectual and cultural historian, and his writings range over the history of intellectuals and city culture, the academic disciplines and academic culture, and most recently, the relation of cities and nations to global history. In all of these topics the definition and role of community and public culture play an important role.

Harry C. Boyte is director of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at Augsburg College, a Senior Fellow at the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs, and visiting professor at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in South Africa. In 2012, he served as national coordinator of the American Commonwealth Partnership, a network of higher education groups and institutions created by invitation of the White House Office of Public Engagement, which worked with the Department of Education to develop strategies to strengthen higher education as a public good.

David W. Brown is coeditor of the *Higher Education Exchange* and coedited two recent Kettering publications, *Agent of Democracy* and *A Different Kind of Politics*. He taught at Yale's School of Management and New School's Milano Graduate School. He is the author of *When Strangers Cooperate* (Free Press, 1995), *Organization Smarts* (Amacom, 2002), and *The Real Change-Makers: Why Government Is Not the Problem or the Solution* (Praeger, 2012), and *America's Culture of Professionalism: Past, Present, and Prospects* (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming in 2014).

Martín Carcasson is an associate professor in the Communication Studies department of Colorado State University, and the founder and director of the CSU Center for Public Deliberation (CPD). His research focuses on utilizing deliberative engagement to improve community problem solving and local democracy.

Sean Creighton is the executive director of the Southwest Ohio Council for Higher Education (SOCHE), a regional consortium helping universities transform their communities and economies. He has published and presented extensively on the impact of higher education, collaboration, and civic engagement. Sean earned his PhD from Antioch University, and is an elected member of the board of education in Yellow Springs, Ohio, where he lives with his wife, Leslee, and five children, Liam, Maya, Quinn, Audrey, and Juliette.

Thomas Ehrlich worked in the administrations of five presidents starting with President Kennedy, reporting directly to President Carter on foreign-aid policy. He has also served as president of Indiana University, provost of the University of Pennsylvania, and dean of Stanford Law School. He is the author, coauthor, or editor of fourteen books, holds five honorary degrees, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. He is currently on the faculty of the Stanford School of Education.

Ernestine Fu founded a nonprofit organization that brings music to seniors, disabled people, and homeless families. She has also helped State Farm Insurance fund youth-led service projects, and is now on the committee charged with shaping a new leadership and service center at the Presidio in San Francisco. She completed her bachelors and masters degrees at Stanford University, and is currently working towards a PhD in engineering.

Nicholas V. Longo is director of Global Studies and associate professor of Public and Community Service Studies at Providence College. He is the author of a number of books, articles, and reports on issues of youth civic engagement, community-based leadership, global citizenship, and service learning, including *Why Community Matters: Connecting Education with Civic Life* (SUNY Press) and a coedited volume (with Cynthia Gibson) entitled *From Command to Community: A New Approach to Leadership Education in Colleges and Universities* (Tufts University Press).

Alex Lovit is a visiting scholar at the Kettering Foundation. His research interests focus on the history of American political and civic practices, and he coordinates the Foundation's research project that takes stock of the civic renewal movement. He also works with the Foundation and external partners to develop issue guides used in deliberative forums about historical decisions. Alex holds a BA in English from Amherst College, and a PhD in history from the University of Michigan.

Edith Manosevitch is a lecturer in the School of Communication at Netanya Academic College in Netanya, Israel. She holds a PhD in communication from the University of Washington in Seattle, and has served as a research associate at the Kettering Foundation. Her research focuses on deliberation theory and practice, in particular as it relates to online deliberation and deliberative pedagogy. She serves as a board member of the *Journal of Public Deliberation*. Her writings have been published in the *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* and *New Media & Society*.

David Mathews, president of the Kettering Foundation, was secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare in the Ford administration and, before that, president of the University of Alabama. Mathews has written extensively on Southern history, public policy, education, and international problem solving. His books include *Politics for People: Finding a Responsible Public Voice*, *Reclaiming Public Education by Reclaiming Our Democracy*, and the forthcoming *The Ecology of Democracy: Finding Ways to Have a Stronger Hand in Shaping Our Future*.

Deborah Witte is a program officer for the Kettering Foundation and coeditor of the *Higher Education Exchange*. She has earned her PhD from Antioch University and serves on the board of the Southwest Ohio Council for Higher Education (SOCHE).

Kettering Foundation

200 Commons Road, Dayton, Ohio 45459-2799 (937) 434-7300; (800) 221-3657
444 North Capitol Street, N. W., Washington, D.C. 20001 (202) 393-4478
6 East 39th Street, New York, New York 10016 (212) 686-7016
www.kettering.org

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Bloomington, IN
Permit No. 26