

## Chapter Six

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# Reinventing Teacher Education: The Role of Deliberative Pedagogy in the K-6 Classroom

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*Discussions about how best to prepare teachers for our nation's diverse classrooms, particularly those with language-minority and other minority students, usually revolve around the standards and best practices for addressing students' linguistic and academic development. Whereas this focus is important, an equally critical focus is education for civic engagement and decision-making citizens. This essay argues for using a deliberative pedagogy in teacher education and professional development. It examines two concerns: whether such a pedagogy, incorporating deliberative forums and the deliberative technique of issue framing, can be the basis of a curriculum methods course for K-6 teachers; and whether such a course can lead its teacher interns to create classroom curricula with a strong focus on deliberative pedagogy.*

After eight years of teaching a traditional history and social science methods course to pre-service teachers in California grade-school classrooms, I decided to “reinvent” what I was doing.

I had been frustrated by the course's narrow approach to teacher education. For the most part, it focused on implementing California state standards with a basically “one-size-fits-all” curriculum, which in no way recognized the mixed linguistic, cultural, sociopolitical, and economic conditions of the students. Further, much of what I did involved standards-based curriculum, classroom management, record keeping, tracking, and testing. In effect, I was training technicians for classrooms presumably filled with students all cut from the same mold—in California!

This single-focused approach to teacher education is not just peculiar to California. As careful education analysts have shown (Nieto 2002 and 2003 and Troyna and Rivzi 1998, among them), this approach can be seen in the methods courses, field experiences, and textbooks that college and university teacher education programs use throughout the United States.

That this traditional approach lacks awareness of the increasing diversity of the American classroom is obvious. Less often noted is the failure to consider the need for civic education in grade-school classrooms and for an education that explains the role of the citizen in a democracy. In California, for example, neither the California Standards for the Teaching Profession (the basis for education programs to prepare grade-school teacher candidates) nor the standards of the National Board of Certification (the basis for higher levels of teacher accreditation) say anything about developing a curriculum that focuses on democratic principles and civic engagement.

California is the most diverse state in the United States and one of the most diverse places on Earth. People from the entire planet continuously arrive, especially from Latin America and the Pacific Rim, bringing many cultures and languages to schools, businesses, and communities. For me, as a teacher of teachers, the educational task of responding to this diverse population was of a piece with readying it to engage actively in our democratic life. More specifically, it seemed clear to me that a revised K-6 grade history and social studies curriculum could have a profound impact on preparing students to become decision-making citizens, people ready to participate thoughtfully in the work of democracy.

My view of the democratic task of education comes in part from Dewey (1957), one of the first to advocate for educational renewal utilizing the experience of students—in other words, a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach.

Education has to be embedded in the real life experience of the learner.... It has to connect with the past of the individual as well as propel him or her into the future.... Experience is

the product of the interaction of the individual with his or her environment.

Both Dewey and, more recently, Nel Noddings (1999) have recognized the need to empower young people as decision makers and have recognized as well that elementary classrooms offer excellent contexts for the practice of decision making. For Dewey, decision making should come through individual deliberation, which he saw as a process whereby individuals separately played out a series of choices in their imagination. This “dramatic rehearsal” would allow a student to make decisions about the consequences of a possible option without actually enacting it.

In “Renewing Democracy in Schools,” Noddings identifies two elements of “political education” that are necessary for equipping students to be participants in democracy: choice and discussion. Thus, Noddings takes Dewey’s ideas about an individual act of choosing and places it in a group context. Instead of weighing options alone, members of a group weigh options together, informed by the sharing of beliefs, experiences, values, and opinions. This effort to reach a collective understanding lends itself to collective choice.

Paulo Freire’s (1985, 114) concept of “conscientization” has also influenced my thinking. In explaining this concept, Freire writes:

If the type of consciousness that recognizes existing knowledge could not keep searching for new knowledge, there would be no way to explicate today’s knowledge.

I take this to mean that educators must keep searching for different ways to teach students from diverse backgrounds. Freire challenges educators to raise their level of consciousness to go beyond commonly accepted existing knowledge as the center of the school curriculum and to supplant it with “multiple centers,” based on considerations like class, gender, language, and race. This multidimensional perspective—an important aspect of conscientization—is the necessary first step in creating a new curriculum.

I was drawn to the work of Dewey and Freire in particular because these authors spoke so directly to my experience. I had

come from a minority community, and in school my voice was never heard, invited, or valued by the members of the majority community who taught me. Further, in higher education, especially graduate school, as I was being trained in the social sciences and in education, I became committed to a positivistic mode of inquiry, believing that critiques of society that were based on just one individual experience would contaminate “objectivity.” As I put it now, I was immersed in the traditional method of teaching the social sciences, which treats the society around us as if we were not participants in it. It was the work of Dewey and Freire that, in essence, brought me to myself; that injected me with a healthy dose of self-criticism, skepticism, and an attitude of challenging the business-as-usual conditions of society; and that ultimately led me to the deliberative pedagogy I propose in this paper for teaching the social sciences to school-age children.

Another factor in deciding to change my approach to teacher education has been the process of reflecting on my 30 years of teaching experience, as a pre-service teacher, classroom teacher, school administrator, curriculum writer, and now a teacher educator. As I looked back on and analyzed my growth, I came to understand that before pre-service teachers could provide an “education for life” for others—an education, that is, that included sociopolitical knowledge, ethical commitment, courage, solidarity, and dedication to democracy—they needed to develop a sense of themselves as individuals and teachers in a democratic society. This is perhaps especially true when teachers face a diverse population consisting largely of minority students.

In all, I strongly believe that schools of education are responsible for preparing teachers with processes and goals that promote academic, social, ethical, *and* civic learning—and to do this, as Dewey writes, through the “real life experience of the learner.” To achieve this goal requires both the ability and the sincere commitment to facilitating dialogue and reflection that elicits the voices, ideas, and dispositions of the students. When this is done, all individuals are heard and all lived experiences are respected.

## A Deliberative Pedagogy for Teachers

To recast my methods course in history and social science for pre-service K-6 teachers, I developed a course that is shaped by a deliberative pedagogy. My aim was to challenge prospective and practicing teachers to develop for themselves a deliberative pedagogy that they could take with them to their K-6 classrooms.

The deliberative process of teaching and learning, as I see it, introduces students to a diversity of perspectives in explaining and understanding events and experiences. Thus, it develops in students the habits of listening and carefully weighing the trade-offs that accompany every choice, the discipline to keep an open mind, the willingness to stand in someone else's shoes, the capacity to change, and the ability to work with others to make decisions for the common good. The deliberative pedagogy process acknowledges but does not accentuate differences and creates bridges between opposing positions. It also meets the four major learning goals of civic education identified by Thomas Ehrlich (1999). Ehrlich describes their basic components as follows:

1. *Academic learning*—introduces students to terms, concepts, theories, and practices.
2. *Social learning*—entails developing interpersonal skills and personal traits such as careful listening, empathy, and the ability to lead and compromise.
3. *Moral learning*—depends on students thinking about themselves and their beliefs in relation to others; begins to take place when students start to ask questions like, what is my community and what are my obligations to that community?
4. *Civic learning*—involves the students coming to understand the democratic processes of community, its diversity, the problems it faces, the need for individual commitment, and the importance of working collaboratively.

In structuring my course, I was strongly influenced by my involvement with the Kettering Foundation and its Public Scholars Program, where for the first time I had direct and extensive experience with deliberative forums, and by my participation in

deliberations of the National Issues Forums (NIF). The primary features of my course are deliberative forums and issue framing, whereby people learn to present the different ways an issue is seen. Framing assumes there are legitimate different ways to see an issue and that they rarely fall into an either/or, this-or-that duality.

Along with teaching and modeling the aspects of critical literacy and concepts of social justice and democracy, I teach the theory and practice of deliberation and the process of framing an issue. One issue my students framed was the Latino academic achievement gap, important not only in California but to the country as a whole. First, we worked through several NIF issue books that dealt with education and race and ethnic issues. Next, we went through the process of identifying and framing the most salient approaches to closing this gap. We identified four such approaches,<sup>1</sup> which included actions to implement them and the trade-offs associated with each.

In identifying the approaches to closing the Latino achievement gap, I explicitly and deliberately drew on the experiences and opinions of my quite diverse teacher candidates. In school curriculums that deal with social problems—indeed, in much public discussion about social problems—entire realms of pertinent experience and many relevant perspectives often remain unacknowledged. In calling on the voices of my students, I aimed to correct that imbalance. In some instances, this was quite simple to do. When talking about immigration, for example, I had students from immigrant families share their experiences. In this and other

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<sup>1</sup> The four approaches are: balancing standardized assessments (which usually are used to determine the adequacy of the teaching that students receive) with alternative assessments (which focus on the learning taking place among students); using “biliteracy” to teach—that is, teaching in the primary language along with meaningful opportunities to learn and use English; coordinating every stage of education with programs that make higher education both accessible and desirable to Latino students; and using a culturally relevant pedagogy.

ways, I regularly model the teaching I advocate, which includes students as participants in their own learning.

Another important component in my approach is what I call community building, by which I mean building a communal experience within my classroom. Everyone must feel safe to voice their opinions and know that they will be respected and valued. Thus, I initiate my course by engaging students in team-building activities to develop a new way of learning together.

For example, I ask the teacher candidates to look at their “world vision” first as individuals and then as a community of learners. I ask each teacher to write his or her name on an 8x10-inch card and in the four corners of the card respond to the following questions:

1. What brought you to teaching?
2. What are your personal and professional goals?
3. What is your level of engagement with the political world?
4. How do you want to influence the world you live in?

The teachers then assemble the cards into a quilt. At a glance, then, they can see their individual visions and the collective vision of the whole group. Then, we map out the work they need to do to accomplish their personal goals and the course objectives.

I always infuse an openly political flavor to these community-building activities. One aim is to bring out the surface similarities in the attitudes and views of the students, similarities that mask important distinctions that make the continual rebuilding of a sense of community essential. For example, my class has a large percentage of Latino students, in the activities I ask them to engage in highlighting the similarities in their Latino upbringings. At the same time, because my students include Cubans, Colombians, Mexicans, and Panamanians, as well as other Latinos, the activities are quick to show clear differences in the students’ traditions, beliefs, values, and dialects.

By its very nature, a deliberative pedagogy is constructivist in the sense that it makes learning a student-centered process and thus is something that the students help construct. Students learn

not by receiving information from an authority at the head of a class but through critical dialogue and self-reflection. I regularly ask my students to analyze their activities, their thinking, and their thinking about their thinking. For example, I ask, “How did you feel about voicing your opinion during our class deliberation?” One student wrote the following in her reflective journal:

Because I am not accustomed to voicing my opinions, I became extremely nervous and had to hold back my tears during our class deliberation.... I can only imagine how my 4th graders feel when they are put on the spot.... Due to this experience, I see it is my responsibility to develop my own sense of voice to become an example for my students. I have come to understand the urgency of providing my students with the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure that by the time they get to the next grade level, and ultimately college, they will develop their own sense of voice, as it relates to other people’s voices, and feel comfortable with the deliberation process.

Thus, instead of technically and mechanically following the designated history and social science grade-level textbook, I have teachers engage in the creation of a relevant and purposeful curriculum. This curriculum goes beyond (presumably) neutral knowledge. Rather, it presents points that are the result of complex dialogues, power relations, and struggles among different classes, races, genders, and religions.

## **A Space for Democracy**

Before I could move forward to redesign my methods course, however, I first needed to determine whether the approach I had in mind was in accord with what the California History and Social Science Framework identifies as the “goals and strands” of the curriculum. Because these goals and strands determine the existing conditions and possibilities for K-6 education, I needed to know whether they allowed the kind of bottom-up, civic-oriented learning that I sought to develop, when learners and their activities, rather than fixed lesson plans, are the center of the process. In a word,



they did. I found that while the section on grade-level standards does not explicitly address the democratic aspects of the curriculum, the goals and strands that are set out in the introduction to the History and Social Science Framework—the “prescriptions” that are meant to drive the content of the curriculum—are in fact perfectly aligned with the deliberative pedagogy and democratic education I intended.

Traditionally, teachers are trained to focus on the grade-level standards identified in a “prepackaged” curriculum. In most cases, however, the curriculum does not address the prescribed goals and strands, which are far from advocating a one-size-fits-all approach. Indeed, the goals and strands of the framework maintain that elementary school students should understand current conditions in their community, state, country, and the world. Further, they should comprehend the ideas central to liberty, responsible citizenship, and representative government and how these ideas have evolved into institutions and practices, which will be the students’ responsibility to sustain as future voters and leaders. The California Framework for K-6 specifically lists the following goals and curriculum strands:

- Historical Literacy
- Ethical Literacy
- Participatory Literacy
- Cultural Literacy
- Geographical Literacy
- Economic Literacy
- Sociopolitical Literacy
- National Identity
- Constitutional Heritage
- Civic Values, Rights, and Responsibility
- Basic Skills Literacy

Given these goals and strands, I was able to receive the support of my department in reinventing my course around a deliberative

pedagogy and was able later to assure my teacher candidates that such a course would meet teaching credential guidelines.

I then set about reinventing the curriculum for my two-semester methods course. I had three concerns. First, in introducing my students to the practice of deliberation, could I provide them with enough knowledge and experience to implement a deliberative pedagogy in their classrooms? Second, in their efforts to implement a deliberative pedagogy, what would be their major challenges and successes? Finally, would they be able to sustain the use of deliberation?

These concerns were built into the expectations I set out for my students in the class syllabus. By the end of my two-semester methods course, I expected them to be able to do the following:

- articulate the theory of deliberative pedagogy
- participate in deliberation in class
- reflect on their own deliberative experience in the class
- frame alternative approaches to the issue of teaching language-minority and other minority student groups
- analyze the state's curriculum standards, particularly for the grades they taught, and align the standards with a deliberative pedagogy, to allow for recasting their social studies curriculum in a deliberative framework
- develop and implement issue framing and deliberation in their classrooms
- reflect on their classroom implementation of deliberation, both the challenges and successes
- organize and participate in a countywide forum, which included community members, on closing the Latino achievement gap

Twenty-five teacher interns enrolled in the course. The teachers had diverse ethnic backgrounds (a majority were of Latino descent), and 70 percent came from low-income backgrounds. They all taught ethnolinguistically diverse students in urban settings with large, immigrant, non-English-speaking communities.

The first exposure to deliberative pedagogy for these teacher candidates came in a presentation I offered on deliberation and

the need for them to pursue a practice of civic engagement by becoming what the educator James Banks (Banks and Banks 1998) calls “citizen actors.” We examined the theory and practice of deliberation and the differences between belief and action and between intellectual and experiential knowledge. Next, to put these new perspectives into practice, we devised four alternative views of how people could work together to build a democratic society. View One was to start with society as it is now and to identify the changes we wanted to bring out. View Two was to analyze the forces that shape society and to identify the obstacles that limit the ability to bring about change. View Three was to focus on the particular aspects of society we want to change. View Four was to concentrate on deliberative pedagogy as a pathway to bringing about change. Finally, I introduced the class to the work of NIF, as an important tool for teachers in addressing the challenge of strengthening the citizen’s role in a democratic society and helping to build a bridge that would link the concerns and values of citizens with the sphere of policymaking.

The teacher interns then analyzed, first in small groups and later as a whole class, the importance of democratic theory, the role of citizens, and the willingness of teachers to work towards civic engagement. They also examined California’s K-6 class standards and the overall goals and strands for the history and social science curriculum, and quickly grasped the hand-and-glove relationship between deliberative pedagogy and both civic engagement and the state’s history and social science curriculum goals and strands.

Next, the students engaged in deliberations in which I served as moderator, always modeling and explaining the purpose of my role as moderator and explaining their roles as deliberators. The issue books we used as the basis for the deliberations dealt with public education, racial and ethnic tensions, and immigration. These deliberations were by far the most rewarding part of the course for the students, and the one that aroused the most enthusiasm, for they were provided the opportunity to engage in a process that treated students as intelligent decision-making citizens and created a space where their voices were heard and respected.

After each deliberation, the students engaged in a debriefing that focused on what they had learned about themselves as deliberators and decision makers. Every debriefing session ended with a discussion of how the deliberative process could be implemented in their particular K-6 classrooms. With each such discussion, the teacher candidates increasingly saw the real possibility of creating and implementing a deliberative pedagogy curriculum in their classrooms.

With this experience, the students went on to organize a community forum on the topic of the Latino achievement gap. The planning began in the first semester, and the forum was held during the second semester. The attendance was modest—about 30 community members. But the students felt that they had passed a hurdle.

By the middle of the first semester, the students were ready to develop forums that would be appropriate for their respective grade levels—and to gain support from their supervisors and “cooperating teachers” (credentialed teachers who support teacher candidates in the classroom), to implement the dramatic, deliberative change in their classrooms.

The first step was to select topics that could serve as the basis for issue books appropriate to the particular grade levels they taught. Working in groups of four or five, according to grade levels, they researched the sociopolitical, economic, and racial/ethnic conditions in their community and then used the history and social science grade-level standards to determine appropriate topics for their respective grades.<sup>2</sup> The framework goals and curriculum strands they drew on in developing their deliberations were geographic literacy, historical literacy, sociopolitical literacy, and national identity.

Working in groups according to grade levels, they prepared one issue book per grade level. They then prepared lesson plans to fit

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<sup>2</sup> The full state list of appropriate subjects for K-6 is as follows: kindergarten—My Community and Me; first grade—A Child’s Place in Space and Time; second grade—People Who Make a Difference; third grade—Continuity and Change; fourth grade—California: A Changing State; fifth grade—United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation; sixth grade—World History and Geography: Ancient Civilization.

the level of their particular student population, listing activities that were appropriate to the age of the students and that also aligned with the state's requirements.

For example, in kindergarten, where *My Community and Me* was the grade-level standard, the interns took their cue from the framework goals and strands of geographic literacy and cultural literacy. Students went through the process of identifying where the immigrant populations in their community came from and the cultural and linguistic values and struggles they encountered in getting used to the American way of living, thinking, and speaking. Teachers reported that an overriding concern for these kindergarten students was speaking English as a second language. The children felt a little afraid of encountering people who spoke only English and not being able to communicate with them effectively. While the students needed to develop their English-speaking skills so that they could participate comfortably in U.S. society, with the guidance of the teacher they also were able to continue to appreciate and maintain their native language and cultural values.

Another example: In the fifth grade, the grade standard was “United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation;” the teachers focused on the goals and strands of national identity and sociopolitical literacy and developed a deliberation on the issue of gangs in the community. Interestingly, these gangs were multiethnic. Typically, gangs are composed of single ethnic groups. But in this instance, gang members came from different backgrounds and had different national identities. What brought them together was the desire to belong to something, the desire for a feeling of connectedness, which was one of the themes of the deliberation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The full grade-level topics chosen by the teachers were as follows: kindergarten—Community of Immigrants: Where Do We Come From?; first grade—A Child's Place: Doing What You Can on Your Own—Becoming Your Own Advocate! second grade—Making a Difference in Our World; third grade—Working to Make Change at Your School; fourth grade—How to Prepare for Entry to California Universities; fifth grade—National Identity: Choosing What We Want to Belong to and Why; sixth grade—Learning to Read the World and the Word—Creating the Road to Higher Education.

All the teachers planned to take their students through the process of framing the issues and choices for the chosen deliberation topic and identifying trade-offs for each choice. Through this process, teachers sought always to reaffirm that life comes down to making decisions for the greater good, that in order to choose there has to be a chooser, in order to act there has to be a citizen actor, and in order to deliberate you must be open to multiple points of view.

With this structure in hand, the 25 teacher interns were ready to meet with their principals and their cooperating teachers to explain how the new approach would satisfy the grade-level standards and goals and strands of the curriculum framework. At this point, as a model for seeking permission to implement a deliberative pedagogy in the classroom, I shared the process I went through with my supervisors. After some difficulty—more on this in the next section—all the interns received the support of both principals and cooperating teachers and were allowed to develop and implement in their classrooms a deliberative pedagogy for the history and social science content area.

Obviously, it was much easier to implement a full deliberative process in the upper grades. In some upper grades, teachers were even able to use NIF books to conduct their forums. In the lower grades, teachers focused more on the process of teaching children to examine their reality (for example, guiding them to examine their living surroundings and how the surroundings compared with the conditions of the community and the world-at-large), to give voice to their opinions, and to begin to listen to the points of view of others in order to make the best choices. Children in kindergarten deliberated at a very basic level about issues that were meaningful to them—for example, their unequal access to playing sports, since the economic situation of many students prevented them from participating. In many cases, the problem extended to not having the necessary recreational facilities in their immediate community. The children discussed how their access might be increased. The process taught the students the value of weighing options and trade-offs to make decisions, an experience that conceivably planted a seed, which would further their development as citizen actors.

While implementing their deliberative programs, the teacher candidates regularly exchanged comments through written and oral reflections on the sometimes difficult challenges they faced in engaging their students. They found that the exchanges were most useful in addressing how to overcome the challenges. By helping them develop more clarity with respect to their vision and mission, the critical reflections, they explained, encouraged them to stay the course when they faced seemingly intractable problems.

One common struggle, found across all grade levels, was propelling students to develop their “voice”—providing the kind of space in which students felt comfortable talking about their experiences and giving their opinions. The teacher interns concluded that they had to bring about a paradigm shift in the standard power dynamics of classrooms, where students are normally treated as empty vessels to be filled by the teacher. Now, students had to be treated as contributors to their own learning. This meant the teacher needed to take on the role of a facilitator of teaching and learning and could no longer be the only person that imparts knowledge. This, indeed, is what happened.

At the end of the semester, the graduating teacher interns spoke to the incoming class of pre-service teachers, reporting on both their personal growth and their experiences in bringing a deliberative pedagogy to their classrooms.

### **Assessing Their Experiences**

During the second semester, before the interns received their teaching credentials, I interviewed them in focus groups about their ongoing experiences with deliberative pedagogy in their classrooms and communities. For me, this was the best way to learn about the impact of my course and to learn about the challenges and resistance the interns faced in their schools. They spoke about these issues in our focus groups and also in their reflective journals as well.

Many of the teacher interns spoke of their earlier frustration with the one-size-fits-all curriculum of the prescribed textbook.

But they had not known what to do about it. They reported that the activities of our methods course, particularly the discussions about deliberative pedagogy and the collaborative examination of the standard academic goals of the curriculum, prepared them to take action to change the traditional curriculum. The first steps in doing this consisted of strategizing on how to develop grade-appropriate deliberations and how to persuade administrators to allow them to use deliberations. How to take deliberative pedagogy into their respective classrooms proved to be the most serious challenge they faced because it involved a paradigm shift in the traditional methods of teaching elementary school students, with teachers taking on the role of facilitators, allowing the views and thoughts of the students to form the basis for discussions. It often took much preparation by the teacher interns and much convincing of their administrators and the cooperating teachers at their schools to receive permission to pursue the deliberative way of teaching and learning. The primary worry was the length of time that seemed to be needed to teach this approach. A second concern was that the history and social science grade-level standards would not be met. The teacher interns resolved these issues with fully detailed lesson plans outlining the standards and goals and strands of the curriculum. The resistance had one good effect: it induced the teacher interns to be clear about why they wanted to implement a deliberative pedagogy in their classrooms. This clarity sustained them during difficult times.

For most teachers, the benefits to students were notable. The teachers especially spoke of their students' gains in cognitive skills. For example, the teachers regularly reported that after several sessions of engaging in deliberation, students encountering a new problem or issue in other content areas would be able to go through the process of identifying and analyzing "best alternatives" on their own.

Relevant here is the work of James Banks (Banks and Banks 1998), a specialist in multicultural and social studies education, who has developed a highly regarded social science curriculum to teach



students how to make reflective and informed decisions as a basis for their becoming citizen actors. We discussed Banks' work in class. He maintains that many cognitive skills are involved in the higher-level thinking that is necessary for reflective and informed decisions: thinking strategies—problem solving, decision making, and conceptualizing; critical-thinking strategies—distinguishing between verifiable facts and value claims, recognizing logical inconsistencies in a line of reasoning, and identifying unstated assumptions; and microthinking strategies—reasoning, analysis (compare, contrast, and classify), and evaluation. Looking back on their experiences, a majority of the teachers believed that both they and their students came to develop and expand these higher-level thinking skills through their participation in deliberation.

In teacher education, conversations often revolve around strategies to develop critical-thinking skills as an end in itself. The comments of the methods class teacher candidates about themselves and about their students suggest that deliberative pedagogy is one pathway to developing the higher-level thinking skills that Banks argues are necessary to form critical-thinking citizen actors.

The following comments provide snapshots of the shifts in focus and the growth and insights that deliberative work brought to many of my teacher interns and (if their comments are accurate) their students.

Without deliberative pedagogy, my lens would have continued to only have one monocultural window. I am now able to teach beyond the prescribed text and standardized tests to focus on knowledge that will develop critical and even global thinkers and productive decision-making citizens.

My students will not have to wait until they attend college to learn about the benefits, techniques, and process of deliberation. This process has begun now, in my kindergarten classroom. My students are rising to the expectation of becoming smart decision makers. They love discussing the trade-offs to daily decisions we make as a class. I see the next United States President coming from this class.

When I started this course, I had no idea that it would be such a powerful tool for me both personally and professionally. Learning how to deliberate myself has been a catalyst for implementing the process of deliberation in my sixth-grade classroom. My students love it!

The process of deliberation helped me to move beyond my habits of thought, perception, and closedmindedness. Deliberative pedagogy is not about being taught but about waking up.

After engaging in and analyzing deliberative work through forums, I have been able to create curriculum units for my third-graders that have at their core the process of deliberative pedagogy. The cognitive operations my students utilize in this process directly develop “high level” thinking skills. This new way of viewing through “multiple windows,” as my students say, carries over to the literature they are reading during our “literacy” block. Whatever they read, they now always ask, “Whose perspective is included in this?”

I have become active in working with the parents of my community. In addition to implementing deliberation in my fourth-grade classroom, I am now working with parents to frame issues that concern them about their child’s education. It is an extremely satisfying experience to know that I can assist my community in this manner.

We can see from these comments and their between-the-lines implications that the process the teacher interns underwent in learning how to frame issues and deliberate was a strong force in propelling them to develop and implement an elementary school curriculum based on decision making and citizen action.

## **Concluding Observations**

When I set about reinventing the curriculum for my teacher education methods course, a major concern was, can teachers who learn how to deliberate about public issues develop the necessary

knowledge, skills, and confidence to implement a deliberative pedagogy in their classrooms? Pablo Picasso once said something like, “Anything new is hard to do the first time.” But as tall an order as this project seemed at the outset, the end result has made more than worthwhile all the effort, hard work, and determination, particularly of the teacher interns, who went off a cliff of sorts when they enrolled in my methods course. Despite all the difficulties, teacher interns enlisted the support of their administrators and succeeded in navigating their way toward a curriculum based on deliberative pedagogy. What is more, they have found in this pedagogy a new way of teaching and learning.

As I type these words, I am happy to report that of the 25 graduates of my course, 15 continue to practice deliberative pedagogy in their classrooms. Some of them have become leaders in their schools, and some have succeeded in introducing deliberation into their communities. In particular, four of the program graduates have continued to advance their civic engagement work beyond the classroom and are currently involved in leading community forums, including a forum on the Latino achievement gap. Further, these teachers have agreed to participate in an in-depth study to determine how teachers can continue to support deliberative pedagogy in elementary classrooms and withstand bureaucratic and sometimes political pressures.

Such pressures have been at work on a number of the course graduates. Several teachers have reported that the pressure they are under to produce high test scores has pulled them away from a deliberative pedagogy and the authentic and powerful way of teaching they found in it. For an advocate like myself, the issue might be put this way: what is more important—higher test scores or higher thinking levels? On some days, I am harsher. “What is more important,” I ask myself, “memory work or democratic work?”

One lesson here is that teachers need the support of their school districts, administrators, and teacher education institutions to implement deliberative pedagogy effectively and consistently. Based on conversations with these teachers, it is quite clear that

for this way of teaching to penetrate the state department of education, schools of education and school districts need to value it and support it.

Today, more than ever, teacher preparation and professional development should never be reduced to a traditional form of training. In some situations, it may be that we need to exercise courage to go beyond it. As Freire (1998a, 1998b) argues (writing, as he did, about situations of oppression), teachers must be equipped with the knowledge of what it means to teach with courage. But whatever the resistance, teacher preparation should go beyond the technical preparation of teachers and be rooted in the ethical formation of democratic education and civic engagement.

Our increasingly globalized and diverse society demands it. Today, this society is marked by sweeping and unprecedented changes. As of 2007, for example, 60 percent—*60 percent!*—of the students in Southern California are Latino and 1.5 million are English language learners. Additionally, recent state anti-immigrant laws have begun to spark the political awareness in the heretofore, sleeping giant of the Latino community. In my view, such changes are not fleeting but rather are a sign that we are entering a new society and age that, through population changes, will challenge many of our traditional values, assumptions, and behaviors, including our traditional ways of teaching. We must think freshly not just about the general goals of education but also about the methods of teaching and what we want to educate our children for.

I think it is fair to say that helping students become effective citizen actors in today's world is a tremendous challenge.

I want to close with an anecdote about an effect of the methods course that I never expected—an effect on my own work. At this writing, I am preparing a master's level course for practicing teachers called Foundations of Democratic Education. Many of the teachers enrolled in this graduate-level course are graduates of my reinvented methods course, which of course is gratifying. However, these teachers were looking to deepen their understanding of deliberation and were dismayed to discover that I would not in fact be

discussing how to develop a more advanced practice of deliberative pedagogy. Extremely disappointed, they insisted that I also reinvent this course, to which, finally, I agreed and, with their help, did. How could I say no to teachers who wanted to learn more about deliberation?

My effort to promote the use of a deliberative pedagogy in the classroom has now come full circle, as the teachers I have taught have taught me to expand the use of a deliberative pedagogy into graduate courses of education that I teach! I like to see this as a sign of the power of deliberation.

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## Chapter Seven

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# Learning about Deliberative Democracy in Public Affairs Programs

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Larkin S. Dudley and Ricardo S. Morse

*Public affairs practitioners are increasingly being asked to engage citizens in deliberative practices. Professional public affairs training needs to reflect this reality and teach the skills of deliberative democracy. This essay reports on a variety of efforts to teach deliberative democracy to graduate students through coursework and extracurricular experience. We describe how public affairs programs may include deliberative democracy in the curriculum through teaching basic participation models, the art of reasoned judgment, moderator skills, issue framing, and the crafting of research agendas from practice in real-world situations. Developing these democratic competencies will benefit students as future citizens and possible public officials.*

Today, the public nature of a career in public affairs requires that graduate students develop competencies to teach citizens how to engage in the democratic processes of resolving common concerns. There are more than 250 graduate programs in public affairs in the United States. These programs—in public administration, public affairs, public management, and public policy—prepare students for public service careers, provide continuing education and advancement opportunities for current practitioners, and prepare doctoral students for teaching and research in academia, think tanks, and other organizations. We maintain that these graduate programs can play a critical role in advancing civic engagement in our society.

It is no longer enough for public service practitioners to be effective managers or policy experts; the current environment of public service demands practitioners who work collaboratively with citizens for the public good. John Nalbandian has found that the “contemporary roles, responsibilities, and values of city managers” include being “community builders and enablers of democracy”

(1999, 187). This finding is consonant with the many calls within public administration for a more participatory (or deliberative) practice (see, for example, Box 1998; Cooper 1991; Denhardt and Denhardt 2003; King and Stivers 1998; Wamsley and Wolf 1996), and also with the remarkable consistency of the codes of professional public affairs organizations in stressing the need for skills in deliberative engagement.<sup>1</sup> These skills go well beyond the “civic” component of a liberal education (see, for example, Anderson 1993 and Colby et al. 2003). Whereas all students need to develop general skills in deliberative participation, public professionals need to be able to organize and lead deliberative processes and contribute to research to improve such practice. We focus here on developing such *professional* competencies for the promotion of deliberative democracy.

While there are a variety of interpretations of deliberative democracy, most share the same basic meaning of deliberation: “to weigh carefully both the consequences of various options for action and the views of others” (Mathews 1999, 111). We concur with Wayne Ross, who recently wrote that deliberation is the “heart not only of education for democratic citizenship, but also of democracy itself” (2004). Indeed, for many, deliberative listening and speaking is essential to any concept of democracy (Barber 1984; Fishkin 1995; Gastil 1993; Mathews 1999; Pateman 1970). A subset of the civic skills of deliberative democracy deals with civic engagement. Civic

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the first tenet of the Code of Ethics of the American Society for Public Administration is “serve the public interest,” and it speaks directly about involving citizens in decision-making policy ([http://www.aspanet.org/scriptcontent/index\\_codeofethics.cfm](http://www.aspanet.org/scriptcontent/index_codeofethics.cfm)). Similarly, the “Practices for Effective Local Government Management” of the International City/County Management Association includes elements like “policy facilitation” and “democratic advocacy and citizen participation” (<http://www.icma.org>). The Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct of the Institute of Certified Planners speaks of “the planner’s responsibility to the public” (<http://www.planning.org/ethics/conduct.html>).



engagement refers to how citizens become engaged in the public sphere and how public professionals contribute to this process.

This chapter explores a variety of ways to teach the knowledge and skills of deliberative democracy to engage citizens. We also report on the application of such knowledge and skills in the field and the research questions this field research prompted. The first section of this paper, the teaching section, briefly outlines the kinds of knowledge and skills involved in teaching deliberative democracy and the variety of contexts in which this teaching can occur. Of particular interest is the suggestive research on whether deliberation can take place on the Internet. We then move to application and report on our experiences in the classroom and beyond.

### **Knowledge of Deliberative Democracy Needed in the Public Affairs Curriculum**

Our argument begins with the conviction that civic education, the education that develops competencies for deliberative democracy, is a specific need of professional graduate education in public affairs. These competencies include the knowledge and skills needed for the effective organizing and facilitating of deliberative processes. This is a complex task, as a partial listing of the needed competencies indicates:

- **Understanding public participation and the principles of deliberative democracy**
  - Theories of participatory democracy and related conceptual components, such as social capital and civil society
  - Knowledge of different models/processes of deliberation and when to use them
  - Understanding of group processes and principles of conflict resolution
  - Reflection on the relationship between the role of the expert and the role of the citizen
- **Appreciating reasoned argument and diverse perspectives**
  - Understanding and appreciating diversity
  - Ability to cope with conflict

- **Gaining moderator/facilitator skills**
  - General facilitation skills, including techniques for different circumstances (for example, nominal group process and fish bowl)
  - Finding common ground among participants
- **Framing issues for discussion**
  - Identifying and convening stakeholders to learn their views
  - Relaying citizen/stakeholder concerns to appropriate outlets for action
- **Conducting research on deliberation and contributing scholarship**

Of course, this list can be expanded. The main point is that there is a wide range of knowledge and skills relative to deliberative democracy that current and future public servants need to be effective in engaging citizens and advancing deliberative democracy in society.

The question for public affairs education, then, is how to teach these competencies, the subject to which we turn next.

## **Building an Understanding of Deliberative Democracy and Public Participation in a Stand-Alone Course**

At present, very few Master of Public Affairs programs offer stand-alone courses in the area of citizen engagement and participation, and of those that do, most tend to focus on developing knowledge rather than skills (Schachter and Aliaga 2003). Virginia Tech and Iowa State University are exceptions. Iowa State has piloted an intensive one-week summer course, “Community Participation and Conflict Resolution,” which emphasizes both theory and practice. Virginia Tech also regularly offers an upper-division undergraduate course on “Community Involvement,” which is available as an elective for graduate students.

Here we draw on our experience in developing and teaching both courses. In assembling the literature for the courses, we found many useful “how-to” texts from which to choose, including *The Public*

*Participation Handbook: Making Better Decisions through Citizen Involvement* (Creighton 2005), *How to Make Collaboration Work* (Straus 2002), *Public Participation in Public Decisions* (Thomas 1995), and *The Collaborative Leadership Fieldbook* (Chrislip 2002). These nuts-and-bolts, toolbox-oriented texts can be supplemented by theoretical texts that express strong democratic perspectives; examples include *Government Is Us* (King and Stivers 1998), *The New Public Service* (Denhardt and Denhardt 2003), and *Citizen Governance* (Box 1998).

The recently published *Deliberative Democracy Handbook* (Gastil and Levine 2005), a mix of theory, case studies, and process descriptions, would make an excellent textbook for a stand-alone course. For more theoretical background, there are many excellent readers (see, for example, Bohman and Rehg 1997).

To deliberate is to deal with conflict. Here, one book stands out—the classic *Getting to Yes* by Fisher and Ury (1991), which provides foundational instruction on conflict management skills that students can connect with and quickly grasp. There are also a variety of useful books and articles about group processes and facilitation skills as well as helpful case studies.<sup>2</sup>

Among the many topics that were covered in both courses, a highlight was the incorporation of materials from the National Issues Forum Institute. In two iterations of the Iowa State course, students participated in a forum on immigration using a National Issues Forums (NIF) book and then discussed the techniques used

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<sup>2</sup> Rich material on group process and facilitator skills can be found in *The Skilled Facilitator* (Schwarz 2002), *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making* (Kaner 2007), and the excellent collection of articles in *The Consensus Building Handbook* (Susskind, McKearman, and Thomas-Larmer 1999). Helpful case studies are found in *Government Is Us* (King and Stivers 1998), *The Collaborative Leadership Fieldbook* (Chrislip 2002), and the *Deliberative Democracy Handbook* (Gastil and Levine 2005). The Electronic Hallway ([www.hallway.org](http://www.hallway.org)) is an excellent source of material case studies and role plays with many cases focusing explicitly on citizen participation. One very helpful (and free) resource that includes cases and role plays is *Turning Lemons into Lemonade*, a training packet developed by the Southern Rural Development Center (<http://srdc.msstate.edu/training/trainingcurricula.htm>).

by the moderator and recorder. The mixture of participating in a forum, discussing the forum skills and techniques, and exploring how they might be applied in practice was an excellent learning experience. In small groups, the students also framed an issue using an NIF guide (Kettering Foundation 2001), and afterwards stepped back and discussed how to apply the process to professional settings in which they might find themselves.

Other experiential exercises, such as observing participation events outside of class and writing reviews of the events, were also beneficial. Another useful teaching method is to have students select a specific participation method, such as nominal group technique or fish bowl, and teach it to the class. Afterward, the class can consider the merits of the method, how deliberative it was or was not, and in what conditions it would be appropriate.

Some of the assignments and in-class activities can focus specifically on developing deliberative skills. In one such assignment, students, using a guidebook developed by the Public Conversations Project (available at <http://www.publicconversations.org>), organized and facilitated a deliberative dialogue of their own. The students turned in a portfolio chronicling the experience, including an essay reflecting on what they learned. A good culminating assignment for such a course might be a “professional practice” essay, which encourages students to link the theory and practice they acquire over the semester with their future careers. Students must learn to think holistically about the interrelationships between their future professional lives and concepts like democracy, community, and deliberation. Other experiential, skills-developing activities include in-class simulations and role plays.

In summary, the stand-alone course attempts to focus equally on the development of both knowledge and skill through a mixture of readings and class discussion coupled with simulations, role plays, and case studies. The experiential elements of stand-alone courses engage the students and help them connect the theory of deliberative democracy to the practice of deliberative democracy. Our students frequently told us they appreciated the exercises,

which gave them experience and showed them the “practicality” of theory. In the end, the goal is to develop practitioners with both a deliberative sensibility and the relevant skills needed to express that sensibility in their professional roles.<sup>3</sup>

## Preparing Graduate Students to Use Deliberative Techniques in the Classroom and Online

We have also worked with graduate students in a variety of courses to develop the students’ capacity to mentor undergraduates in the methods of deliberation and the process of reaching public judgment in the course of weighing alternative compelling cases (Anderson 1990, 201). The two examples below respectively cover deliberation in a leadership course and an extension of deliberation to an online format.

### *Deliberation in a Leadership Course*

In this example, faculty and PhD students from the Center for Public Administration and Policy at Virginia Tech taught undergraduates in the school’s honors program to be forum facilitators for students in the Residential Leadership Community (RLC), an undergraduate program in which students live together and take common leadership courses. In effect, the RLC group serves as a stand-in for a group of citizens who are trained in deliberation to resolve a common problem.

The faculty and graduate students taught the honors students a variation of the forum approach pioneered by Kettering Foundation and the National Issues Forums Institute. To explain briefly, this approach features a nonpartisan overview of three or more ap-

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<sup>3</sup>Many other related topics make sense for such a stand-alone graduate course, including, to list only a few, theories of social capital, civic society, citizenship, diversity and cultural competence, and some of the classic writings on participation, such as Arnstein’s “A Ladder of Citizen Participation” (1969) and, more recently, King, Feltey, and Susel’s “The Questions of Participation” (1998).

proaches to an issue and identifies the arguments for and criticisms of each approach. The forums are different from adversarial debates because they encourage participants to analyze each response, the arguments for and against it, and the trade-offs, costs, and consequences for each. We found this deliberative model appealing because it encourages the teaching of a cluster of important skills, among them: understanding how values influence the framing of an issue; identifying the complexity of an issue in terms of costs and trade-offs; and the inclusion of the voices of people who are not in the room. We also valued this approach because it helped the graduate students who were training the undergraduate facilitators to apply and consider some of the theoretical issues of deliberative democracy in a real case.

According to observations of the RLC forums by multiple instructors over time, the deliberative format does indeed encourage students to see the several dimensions of a policy issue and to appreciate the values behind the approaches to resolving it. Closed-ended evaluation questions indicated that the RLC student participants gained considerable knowledge of the several approaches, some of them diametrically opposed to their own. Comments from students included: "Hearing about other's experiences added to my own perception of problems/lacks in our society." "Being able to talk about these issues in this kind of setting is a good way for people to realize and understand why other people believe what they believe." "Yes, it was definitely a positive experience and worth doing again. It's important for students to see all sides of a subject."

The faculty of the Residential Leadership Community involved in this project were unaccustomed to the NIF deliberative approach. The following comments typify their responses.

There is value in the forum process—how to dialogue—but there needs to be a better understanding of how we should facilitate. Perhaps have all the faculty and student moderators go through a forum together and see how we should facilitate.

We like the forum and would like to see it continue. I like the developmental idea of moving from debate to delibera-

tion—of seeing more than one or two perspectives. First-year students need this. We also found this experience to be a community-building activity for our class.

Among the facilitators, debate and dialogue broke out around a variety of issues: How would we know that deliberation had occurred? What techniques worked better to get students involved? Would this type of learning enhance otherwise traditional approaches? Graduate students and faculty began to examine the ways in which they were teaching deliberation and what facilitation means.

In all, these results were evidence to the faculty and graduate students that the forum technique could be taught to citizens and could be a useful tool in helping people with differing views resolve a problem of common concern. Needless to say, one forum will not produce major intellectual or behavioral change in a student or a citizen, as Daniel O’Connell (1997) has noted, but a forum can help students and citizens become more accepting of others’ viewpoints and move beyond their preconceived ideas on topics. For major intellectual or behavioral change, we would suspect that a more intensive and integrated approach to citizen participation and deliberative democracy would be needed.<sup>4</sup>

### *Conducting Research on Deliberative Forums: Face-to-Face Groups versus Online Forums*

Prompted by the increased interactions between government and citizens in virtual space, we worked with one of our PhD students, an instructor in political science, to extend the NIF model to an online format. This time the topic was campaign financing. We were able to design a research project to compare the outcomes of a traditional NIF presentation of campaign financing among undergraduates in a single, face-to-face forum of 40 students with the outcomes of online threaded discussions in a large class of 120 students over the course of several weeks. In threaded discussions,

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<sup>4</sup> See the discussion of McMillan and Harriger (2002) for an explanation of the need for a more intensive format to produce change.

online participants post their initial comments, which then serve as the basis for another round of comments. One set of comments is thus “threaded” onto another set. In both situations, we again wanted to see whether groups who had been taught deliberation could teach it to others who then could use it to address common concerns.

In the face-to-face forum, undergraduate students served as moderators just as they had in the RLC forums. For the online forum, the instructor randomly assigned every student to 1 of the 5 discussion groups of approximately 24 members each. Each group participated in an online threaded discussion (also referred to as a bulletin board) maintained on a class Web site, developed using CourseInfo software (now known as Blackboard) licensed to Virginia Tech.

The online discussions occurred during two sessions. After reading the issue book *Money and Politics* (National Issues Forums Institute 2000), students entered at least one comment to the campaign financing alternatives presented in the NIF publication. During the next week, a volunteer from each discussion group prepared and posted a summary paragraph, which tried to capture a preliminary consensus of the participants. During the third week, every group member made at least one further comment responding to the summary posted for his or her group. Thus, the only facilitation that occurred in the online forums was the review and summary prepared by a volunteer group member.

The members of the research project compared outcomes in two ways: from the pre- and postsurveys of students in both groups and through a content analysis of the transcripts of the face-to-face forums and the text of posted messages in threaded discussions. From the pre- and postsurveys, we found that discourse in both settings produced changes in students’ positions around the topic, most notably in acknowledging a deeper understanding of the questions surrounding campaign financing and a fuller appreciation of the multiple ways to view the issue. Again, students saw the value of teaching deliberation that others could use to discuss and understand difficult issues.



However, the transcriptions of face-to-face forums and messages posted to threaded discussions pointed to differences between the two formats and to the usefulness of the virtual format. Among deliberators, both personal risk taking, measured by the frequency of *I* statements, and identification with the group, measured by the frequency of *we* words, were greater in the threaded discussion. These results give support to the view that online media can be a valuable aid to deliberation and that a deliberative format can be part of an online approach for a larger class.

Because the two kinds of forums were organized somewhat differently in order to meet each instructor's needs, our findings are only suggestive. Even so, they are intriguing. We may be observing a generational development, with virtual deliberation being seen and accepted as an extension of all the forms of virtual communication to which those under 25 are accustomed. The experiment also prompted questions among faculty and graduate students. In what places and with what policy issues could online forums be valuable? How much difference in forum outcomes can be related to the medium? Thus, this comparison of traditional and online forums not only involved students in deliberation but also involved researchers in an experimental process, which led to further reflection on the role of technology in civic engagement.

### **“Real-World” Issues and New Research Agendas**

In this section, we discuss three community projects in which our students dealt with concerns that had “real-world” consequences, some quite serious. One notable aspect of these experiences is that they inspired our students to pose new issues for research. Another aspect is the tension between citizens and experts that frequently emerges in real-world issues and that were part of the three deliberative projects we describe. This can be a thorny problem, especially today, when the supporters of citizens and the supporters of experts often approach the work of government from very different perspectives.

A recent article by John Nalbandian (2005) argues that many local government officials find themselves in the middle of two opposing forces, the drive for administrative modernization and the drive for civic engagement. Modernization creates an administrative culture driven by efficiency and technique and encourages more and more players from the private sector and nonprofit organizations to become stakeholders in public decisions. Thus, one of the effects of a more complex network of specific stakeholders involved in public decisions is that citizens who lack expertise or vested interest in these decisions may well have less opportunity to be involved.

According to Nalbandian, the characteristics of local government modernization include a basic idea that citizens are customers to be served. The problem is that the idea of “customer” does not include an emphasis on citizens’ responsibility. When a citizen is a customer, then the government is seen as a provider of services. While citizens as individual consumers can vote with their feet or complain individually if they are unhappy, this perspective does not encourage citizens to engage issues actively, find common ground for action with other citizens, or take a sustained interest in governing.

The forces of civic engagement see citizens quite differently. According to Nalbandian (2005) and many others, some of the characteristics associated with civic engagement are: engaging citizens in administrative processes, acknowledging expression of direct democracy, enabling more transparency, ensuring two-way communication with citizens about policy and service delivery, and creating a social fabric through partnerships with other non-governmental sectors. Citizens can be respected as “experiential experts” in that they bring to the table the expertise of living in the situations others wish to fix.

Nalbandian points to the conflict between the forces of modernization, which homogenize our lives and erase community identity, and the need on the part of citizens for identity and for connection to civic culture and communities that create “anchors and resting points” (Nalbandian 2005, 313). Through most of the 20th century

and now into the 21st, we have seen the growing prominence of the expert in government as the one who advises and is the decision maker because of the person's access to a body of established and presumably value-free knowledge. What is more, this knowledge is often unavailable to citizens—for example, in the case of a very technical knowledge—even when experts would like to invite the citizens into decision making.

Thus, one of the most important tensions facing students aiming toward a profession in public affairs is the need to recognize the importance of contributions from both experts and citizens and the need to balance them. The efforts of many in public administration have shown that there is no one method to resolve this tension. This said, we have found that a deliberative democracy approach is, indeed, one way to integrate the expertise of knowledge with the right of citizens to express what they value and why. The following three projects provide examples.<sup>5</sup>

### *A Divided Highway*

The problem facing a nearby small town, Wytheville, Virginia, had the potential for major community disruption, including a significant loss of local revenue. The issue was whether to divide and relocate two major highways. A team from Virginia Tech was asked to manage what would be the lengthy community process of identifying the highway locations that the community preferred and to be the focal point for a community “visioning” effort to help the community develop a better sense of its future. In all, the project would take some three years. In describing the project, our

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<sup>5</sup> The research report here is based on the team efforts of many faculty and students now or formerly at Virginia Tech. We wish to recognize the contributions of our colleagues: James Armstrong, James Bohland, Kim Chiapeto, Mary Beth Dunkenberger, Muxian Fang, Joseph Freeman (Lynchburg College), Erin Hofberg, Jeff Janosko, Sally Johnson, Dong Won Kim, Soo Young Park, Ray Pethtel, James Phillips (VCU), Andy Sorrell, Max Stephenson, Bethany Stich, Ann Wolford, Kathryn Young, and Diane Zahm. Some of the material appears in an article by Morse et al. (2005).

prime emphasis will be on the lessons learned by the managing team of faculty and five graduate students, essentially a research team, which was led by a graduate student.

To serve as the basis for forums, the team needed to construct an issue book on the fundamental issue that the community had to decide: “What do we want our community to be in the future?” To determine the alternative views that would be the heart of the issue book, the team adopted the issue-framing technique developed by the Kettering Foundation (2001). Statements reflecting alternative responses were gathered from a variety of sources: through research on such pertinent factors as the effects of population growth and possible economic scenarios, from sessions with groups of stakeholders, and from interviews with townspeople.

The team involved the community in the process. Graduate students conducted 50 local interviews; developed a profile of the community’s demographic, economic, and educational trends to inform citizens of Wytheville’s relative position compared to other communities in Virginia; and assembled a stakeholder committee in preparation for issue-framing sessions. The team then facilitated four sessions of issue framing with the stakeholder group over a six-week time period. In the initial meeting, participants reviewed the profile of the community and the stakeholder interview data, then brainstormed issues and concerns related to the question of what the community’s vision for the future should be. In subsequent meetings, the group clustered concerns, developed themes, and eventually fleshed out four distinct approaches for a community vision. Between meetings, the graduate students typed up and clarified the knowledge being generated by the group. During meetings, the students facilitated the deliberative process and otherwise moved the issue framing along.

From this process, an issue book, titled *Shaping Our Community’s Future: Which Way Do We Go?* was developed. A local printer produced hundreds of copies at cost. Over the next several months, dozens of community forums were facilitated by the research team in churches, civic clubs, industrial plants, town hall, hospitals, and

the local community college. Town and county officials were also involved. After almost a year of community forums, the stakeholder group reconvened and, through a process of deliberation, synthesized the results into a community vision statement. The research team again facilitated the process.

The enthusiasm of the citizens enhanced the team's belief that deliberative democracy could make a difference in real-world settings. Incredible to watch in this setting was the evolution and broadening of the community's focus from a narrow immediate question of road relocation to a larger question of the future of the community. The research team also observed the value of the process of deliberation as a way of building civic infrastructure. An example from one forum is representative. A forum of approximately one dozen community members seemed to devolve into an "us versus them" discussion, emphasizing what "they" (local government) were or were not doing about perceived community needs. Midway through this conversation, one of the participants asked the group, in effect, "What are we doing?" At that point:

There was a noticeable shift in how an issue was framed from "what they can do for us" to "what can we do for ourselves?" The shift in the conversation allowed the group to open the door to new lines of thinking, including how they can develop leadership in a broad sense. This turned the discussion toward what could be done in the schools and how the community could create a climate of active citizenship (Morse 2004, 175).

Such examples of community learning (see Morse 2006a and 2006b) were evident throughout the process and illustrated for the research team how deliberative practice helps develop the sense of citizen responsibility (we) in contrast to the customer mentality that only considers what "they" can do for "me."

The three-year effort produced important community outcomes and, for the research team, many rich discoveries regarding civic engagement and deliberation. For the five graduate students, the experience served as valuable in-service education in deliberative engagement. The process of the community issue framing and the

deliberations that followed prompted the graduate students to dig deeper into the effects and value of forums. They asked such questions as: What relationships do forums have to the development of civic culture? Can a deliberative habit be formed across a diverse citizenry? How would it be institutionalized? What relationship does citizen deliberation have to the decision-making process of local officials?

The work became the basis of one dissertation (Morse 2004) and a critical source of real-world experience for several other graduate students (MPA and PhD) who worked with the community. Issue framing is a critical component of the deliberative process, and this experience proved especially rich in showing how citizens think about public issues and the value of a structured way of collectively framing them.

### *Planning for Virginia's Transportation Needs*

As the previous example shows, fieldwork with citizens and public agencies presents challenges of practice that can spark research agendas for graduate students. Another such field opportunity arose around the framing of issues and deliberations about the future of transportation in the state of Virginia. The issue framing necessarily involved officials—that is, experts—from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) and other transportation agencies.

The research team first analyzed comments from 12 earlier public hearings on the future of transportation. The team then conducted two issue-framing sessions, one with transportation agency professionals representing all transportation modes, such as highways, rails, and ports; and one with transportation stakeholders, such as local planning officials, those involved in transporting the handicapped, and associations of cyclists and environmentalists. In this process, the research team faced the challenge of convincing the transportation officials that issues could be stated in terms that would make sense to citizens. For example, many of the transportation officials said the technical information surrounding budget

allocations to the different transportation modes would be difficult for citizens to understand. However, when the officials actually sat in on citizen forums, what surprised them was that citizens were willing to discuss priorities in spending, considered different allocations of funding, and expressed a desire to see funding increased for transportation, even if it meant taxes were raised. Further, while many of the transportation officials had discussed the budget only in terms of allocation, citizens tended to relate the budget allocation questions to broader concerns, such as the need to understand the justification for some of the large-scale projects, the timeliness of project completion, and the need to balance environment, access, and the conflicts in local land-use laws and state transportation planning.

Through a presentation to, discussions with, and feedback from the several teams representing Virginia's transportation agencies, the themes that emerged from the issue-framing sessions were combined into three basic approaches to the future of transportation in Virginia: (1) build and maintain roads; (2) preserve and protect the cultural and natural environment; and (3) improve mobility and access for people and goods.

With the approaches in place and expressed in the form of a discussion book, forums were held around the state. In an effort to make sure that all voices were heard, students debated the virtues of random versus purposive sampling of stakeholders, regions, and citizens. Then, in the forums, citizens made it clear that they wanted to know what happened to their opinions after the forums—which meant that the research team needed to find ways to inform citizens of the effects of the deliberations. This was not a simple matter. First, the students and faculty involved had to explain how results were reported to the Department of Transportation. Then they had to learn whether the results were passed on to the state legislature or the governor's office, and if they were, in what form and with what effects. And all this had to be transmitted back to the forum participants! Which, to make a long story short, it was.

Important research questions arose from this project. First, a deeper reflection on the effects of forums came about when we moved away from simply asking whether people had changed their opinions to the realization that the most common scenario of change in the forums was one in which extreme views became modified, with forum participants generally moving away from “strongly agree” or “strongly disagree” toward the middle in their answers to various opinion questions (Park 2004). This indeed is an important effect of forums that requires further investigation.

Second, we pondered how to respect the holistic integrity of an individual regional forum and yet represent some of the areas of consensus across the state, a similar dilemma to representing views across the nation. While there seemed to be some statewide consensus as to the importance of planning and mobility, there also were differing issues of concern by locality.

A third question was how the insights from forums related to the mandates of agencies, in this case the Virginia Department of Transportation. In the law, VDOT is required to carry on citizen involvement that is “reasonable and meaningful” (Stich 2006). These mandates required that the process offer citizens the widest possible participation, be democratic in the search of disparate opinions, directly involve a cross-section of constituents, look for common ground, include quality-of-life issues, and help formulate policy direction. In terms of these requirements, how would forums compare to other forms of understanding citizens’ viewpoints? As a result of involvement in the project, Bethany Stich (2006), PhD student in Virginia Tech’s Center for Public Administration, explored comparisons among the forums, focus groups with city officials, and citizen surveys as part of her dissertation.

Fourth, the contrast between citizens and technical experts led us to raise the question of what happens to deliberative materials from ordinary citizens in the process of agency decision making. Much of the literature neglects to explain how public participation activities relate to actual state visions or whether community visions can be implemented under current state policies. What are the



relationships between the outcomes of citizen forum involvement and the political reality of solutions beyond the authority of the state agency sponsoring the forums? For example, in regard to transportation, the solution of better coordination between local land-use laws and state transportation planning would be beyond the reach of VDOT.

In analyzing the project within a larger framework of evaluation of state visioning, Stich (2006) traced the recommendations made by ordinary citizens, traditional interest groups, and other consultants to see how the citizen's ideas were or were not considered by the transportation agency. Although she found that Virginia's transportation vision overall was heavily influenced by the citizen participation activities, including the deliberation of the forums, the VDOT comprehensive plan does not tell the citizens how the transportation agencies intend to get there. This finding raises even more questions about the relationship of deliberation and institutional action. Stich (2006) found that many of the citizens' concerns go well beyond the responsibility of the transportation agencies involved in the long-range plan's creation. Instead, they would require intergovernmental cooperation at a much higher level than is traditional in Virginia, the action of the state legislature, and better measurement tools. Thus, the search to better understand deliberation and its relationship to public administration is not over. It will require further exploration into how the complexity of policy issues is complemented by the complexity of action in the political arena of federalism and separation of powers.

### *Developing Virginia's First Futures Forum*

A third real-world research experience for our graduate students was the issue framing and preparation of an issue book on human capital development for the inaugural session of the Virginia Futures Forum conducted before an audience of 150 of Virginia's top leaders in the state capital, including the outgoing and incoming governors. The theme for the first forum was "Competing in the 21st Century: Moving Virginia's Human Capital Meter." To frame the issue with

officials and citizens in Virginia, produce an issue book (Dudley and DeRosear 2005), and facilitate deliberative groups in the inaugural policy forum, graduate students and faculty from Virginia Tech had collaborated with the Council on Virginia's Future, the Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission, the Virginia Workforce Council, and the Office of the Governor (Dudley and Nutter 2006).

Prior to the forum at which participants broke into small groups to deliberate on Virginia's human capital development, the issue framing for the forum book brought together representatives from business, education, and government (Dudley 2006). Graduate students learned how to combine an extensive review of the research literature with the framing from participants and to listen for the nuances of the particular case of Virginia human capital concerns alongside the universal research findings. Thus, an important part of the learning was extending our understanding of how to explain and implement the construction of an issue book and forum summaries within the framework of more familiar research traditions of brainstorming, representative sampling, random sampling, and content analysis. Further, we uncovered a tension between framing the deliberation for a broader question and the desires of some involved to have findings that could lead to immediate legislative or agency action. These are questions that we continue to pursue at the state level as we work to experiment with different models of bringing citizens' voices to the table.

### *Can Experts and Citizens Work Together?*

In these projects, a dialogue regularly arose within the research team over the relationship between citizen participation and administrative expertise, the question with which we began this section of the paper. Throughout the project in Wytheville, the project with the Department of Transportation, and the first Virginia forum, we encountered the tension/complementarities of citizens/experts. Sometimes the interaction among our agency, citizens, and facilitators could best be described as the expression of a model that was

consistent with the deliberative democracy movement, which emphasizes a long-term dialogue among all participants about both governance and specific issues (see Box 1998; Denhardt and Denhardt 2003; and Stivers and King 1998). For example, the first Virginia forum opened up concerns about the need to create additional mechanisms for citizens to be heard. At other times, we found our actions and the results of our forums were more consistent with a model of expertise, which is basically a management model in which the emphasis is on receiving comments from citizens through traditional channels, such as town council meetings or transportation hearings, and using those comments to inform administrative decisions on an issue-by-issue basis (see Creighton 2005 and Thomas 1995). It is exciting that ideas for combining the two are being considered in Virginia in further development of the state forums.

A final note: Project meetings, though an outside-the-classroom experience, were nevertheless important teaching and learning opportunities. Thus, we find that extracurricular learning opportunities in the field, such as our project meetings, truly brought theory and practice together for both the students and the faculty. Cultivating opportunities for this kind of learning in the field can be an important consideration in the overall pedagogical planning of a public affairs program.

## Conclusion

In addition to the resounding recognition in the public affairs literature of a need for teaching competencies in deliberative democracy, there is a formal recognition of this need in the professional codes for public affairs. Thus, the theory-practice disconnect may not be as wide as assumed (Denhardt 2004). What is needed, however, is a professional curriculum that teaches competencies in deliberative democracy. While there are many different conceptual frameworks and methods to meet this need, all have advantages and disadvantages. Here, we have focused on one deliberative model of public participation and noted specific uses of the model

for teaching deliberative skills, issue framing, and increasing the awareness of the research agenda associated with democratic deliberation.

The efforts described in our paper leave us with several questions about curriculum. Do the Masters in Public Affairs and other professional programs equip students with the competencies to use and teach the method of democratic deliberation? If so, how? If not, what kind of curricular modifications may be necessary? We further note that public affairs programs can make a significant contribution toward developing needed deliberative competencies in undergraduates. To what extent are these contributions being made? Finally, are we encouraging our PhD students to participate in research in this area?

Some answers to these questions may be stimulated by the deliberative experiences we have discussed. For us, an evolution in learning, teaching, and conceptual questions arose in practicing democratic deliberation in the graduate classroom, in preparing undergraduate facilitators, in comparing virtual and face-to-face deliberation, and in conducting forums with citizens and practitioners in the field. We found that a synergetic combination of incorporating the concepts and skills of deliberation in the classroom with experience in the field is an exciting and useful way to develop these competencies in our students. As public affairs scholars and students engaged in action research around the problems of deliberative democracy, teaching and research agendas are fulfilled simultaneously; and perhaps more important, students graduating with professional degrees are better prepared to lead deliberative processes in their professional realms of responsibility.

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