DELIBERATION
& the Work of Higher Education

Innovations for the Classroom, the Campus, and the Community

Cristina Alfaro
David D. Cooper
Allison N. Crawford
Michael D'Innocenzo
Joni Doherty
Larkin S. Dudley and Ricardo S. Morse
Maria Farland
Katy J. Harriger and Jill J. McMillan
Lee Ingham
Dennis C. Roberts and Matthew R. Johnson
Douglas J. Walters

Edited by John R. Dedrick, Laura Grattan, and Harris Dienstfrey

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Chapter Ten

Contexts for Deliberation: Experimenting with Democracy in the Classroom, on Campus, and in the Community

Katy J. Harriger and Jill J. McMillan

This study explored the possible impact of providing college students with a civil way to "speak politics" through learning deliberation. The authors worked with a group of students, called "Democracy Fellows," throughout their four-year career at Wake Forest and compared them to a class cohort each year. The study reveals that context makes a difference in the effectiveness of deliberation as a tool of civic pedagogy. The classroom was a hospitable environment for acquiring knowledge, linking theory and practice, and honing deliberative skills that could be transferred to other environments. On the other hand, it is ill designed to be an authentic democratic site, to connect the academic and the "real world," and to move easily from talk to action. The campus venue offered wider exposure to and appreciation of the deliberative model, relative ease in planning and logistics, and a general increase in students' political efficacy. The disadvantages are the limited issues for student action, variable administrative interest and response, and the retention of a safe haven for political talk that fails to parallel political reality. The community context proved to be the most authentic deliberative environment by fostering appreciation of a serious local problem, providing an opportunity for community organizing, and bridging the town/gown divide. These assets were counterbalanced by difficulties with recruitment and diversity, issue selection, limited student efficacy, and role tensions for the professors/researchers. The authors conclude that the ideal civic education program would utilize all three contexts, being mindful of the strengths and weaknesses of each.

In response to the well-documented issues of political alienation among America's youth, many have argued that higher education should reconsider its commitment to civic education. Spurred by this concern, we have been engaged in a project that considers how teaching the process of deliberation and then practicing it by engaging in and conducting deliberative forums in increasingly "real-world" settings might contribute to students' interest in civic life and to their participation in it. To explore this, we worked with a group of students, gradually expanding their forum experiences over the four years of their college experience.

We framed our study using the notion of context, which in this case, meant the different settings that college students could develop the democratic skills of deliberative talk—the classroom, the campus, and the larger community. Our project was intentionally developmental. We wanted to know whether the deliberative skills of the students expanded as they moved from the classroom to the larger community. We also sought to take into account the maturing of the students, both educational and political.

To compare the benefits and limitations of each context, we drew on the work of John J. Patrick (2000), who offered a multitiered, developmental approach to understanding the goals of civic engagement work. Patrick maintained that colleges and universities who wanted to develop programs to nurture the citizenship of their students should consider four key components: *acquisition of knowledge* about the concepts, principles, and history of democracy and the role of citizens in a democracy; *development of the cognitive skills* of thinking critically and constructively about what this substantive knowledge means for the way democracy works and for the role of citizens; *development of the participatory skills* for civic involvement, which include interacting with others, deliberating about public policy, and influencing policy decisions; and *encouragement of dispositions of citizenship*, which include promoting the general welfare, recognizing the common humanity of each person, respecting and protecting rights, taking responsibility for one's participation,

and supporting democratic principles and practices. Patrick's categories enabled us to track whether students' views of citizenship deepened through increasingly real-world exposure to deliberation.

When we examined the benefits and limitations of each context, in large part through Patrick's components, we found, first, that the different contexts do make a difference in what students learn and, second, that each context contains particular benefits and limitations in teaching and preparing students to become active citizens.

The Democracy Fellows Project

In 2001, we began our longitudinal research project into deliberation and civic engagement, examining the experiences of a group of students as they made their way through four years of education at Wake Forest University, a private, liberal arts college in North Carolina where we teach. We were interested in exploring several interrelated questions. First, and most generally, we wanted to know how the college experience shapes students' attitudes and behavior toward civic engagement. Second, we wanted to know whether students who learn how to deliberate about public issues develop different attitudes and behaviors about civic engagement from their peers who have not had this experience. Finally, as we have said, we were interested in understanding the effects of context on the experience of deliberative forums. We pursued these questions by focusing on three sets of students.

The Participants

The first group consisted of 30 students who were recruited from the entering class in fall 2001 to participate in what we titled the Democracy Fellows program. We selected these students to reflect the general demographic makeup of the entering class, and over the students' four-year career they participated in various activities, which together provided them the opportunity to experiment with democratic decision making. During the first semester, we conducted entry interviews with each Democratic Fellow to establish a baseline

of the students' political views. In subsequent years, we interviewed the students in focus groups, to explore their ongoing experiences with deliberation and campus life. Finally, in the senior year, we conducted individual exit interviews. All of these sessions were audiotaped and transcribed.

We compared the Democratic Fellows to a different set of 25 students, who served as a control group and whom we randomly selected from a list of the 2001 entering class, minus the 30 Democracy Fellows. This control group, which we examined in focus groups each year, [1] was not exposed to the deliberative experiences provided the fellows. In the first year, we compared the baseline views of politics of both groups by using the focus groups of control students to ask them the same questions that we asked the Democracy Fellows in individual interviews. In subsequent years, while the Democracy Fellows and their class cohort were asked some of the same questions, only the Democracy Fellows were probed about their experiences with deliberative activities, because the class cohort did not engage in such activities.

During the second year of the study, we talked with a third group of students who were neither in the Democracy Fellows program nor part of the class cohort. Instead, they were 25 students from all classes who participated in a campuswide deliberative forum planned and hosted by the Democracy Fellows in October 2002. Put broadly, we wanted to see the effects of a single deliberative experience. In this report, the third group is identified as Deliberation Participants.

The Chronology

As we have noted, we exposed our Democracy Fellows to increasingly complex, increasingly real-world deliberative experiences. In year one, the fellows' initial exposure to deliberation

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[1]The original cohort served as the core each year but was supplemented, when necessary, to maintain a critical mass of nonfellow respondents from the class of 2001.

came through their first-year seminar, “Deliberative Democracy,” held during the fall of 2001. All first-year students at the university must enroll in a semester-long seminar that promotes critical thinking through experiences in group discussion and regular writing assignments. Subjects vary widely. Our seminar focused on the theory and practice of public deliberation. Each seminar is capped at 15 students, so the Democracy Fellows were divided into two sections, and we team-taught each one.

We began the seminar by exploring democratic theory about the citizen’s role in a democracy and about the importance of public talk. In the second part of the seminar, we taught the students how to deliberate by having them participate in three classroom deliberations in which we served as moderators. For these deliberations, we followed the National Issues Forums (NIF) choice-work approach, using three NIF issue books (produced by the Kettering Foundation), which focused respectively on public education, race and ethnic tensions, and the role of the university in promoting civic engagement. After each deliberation, we spent time “debriefing,” talking through what went well, what went less well, why problems developed, and how they might be overcome.

In the last third of the seminar, we taught the students how to frame an issue for public deliberation, using a campus issue of their own choice. The fellows first formed small groups to investigate current campus concerns that would lend themselves to deliberative discussion, then worked through the process of selecting an issue, and chose “Building Community at Wake Forest.” The next step was to frame the issue—which in this case consisted of identifying three approaches to building community (improving campus social life, building a stronger intellectual climate, engaging with the local community)—so that it could be the basis of an issue book, which they would write during the next semester.

To end the seminar, we asked the students to write an essay that examined their experience with deliberation, the extent to which it corresponded with the theoretical literature they had examined at the start of the seminar, and the prospects for deliberation as

a method of developing citizenship both on college campuses and in the larger society. Our assessment of the impact of the seminar is based in part on these essays, our own observations, and the comments offered about the seminar in subsequent interviews with the fellows.

In the second year of the project, the Democracy Fellows left the classroom for the larger campus. In the months prior to fall 2002, the fellows prepared for their campus deliberation on “Building Community at Wake Forest.” In addition to the extensive work they did researching, writing, editing, and publishing the issue book, approximately half the fellows engaged in a moderator training workshop, and others worked on publicity, recruitment, and logistical issues around the event itself. On October 8, 2002, the big night finally arrived. Some 120 people—from the 4 constituencies of students, faculty, administration, and townspeople—gathered in the Student Center for the deliberation. Following a plenary session in which three fellows introduced the issue, the large group broke up into smaller groups where each of the four constituencies was represented. Democracy Fellows moderated the groups.

We asked all the participants to fill out pre- and postdeliberation surveys assessing their attitudes about the issue of building the campus community and their preferences for the various choices that had been identified in the issue book as possible ways of building this community. Some time after the deliberation, we conducted 9 focus groups, 3 with Democracy Fellows, 3 with Deliberation Participants (the 25 students from all classes), and 3 with the class cohort. With the fellows and Deliberation Participants, we probed their experience with the campus deliberation itself, which had led to changes to the first-year orientation and to the creation of a new coffee house on campus (a response to improving campus social life).

In year three, the Democracy Fellows went beyond the campus into the local community. On October 2, 2003, the Democracy Fellows hosted a deliberation on the topic of urban sprawl in the Winston-Salem community. The event was held at a community

science museum, and was attended by approximately 50 people, a notable falling off from the 120 who attended the campus deliberation.

As with the campus deliberation, the community event was researched and planned by the Democracy Fellows during the spring semester preceding the fall deliberation. Students chose the topic of urban sprawl because it had become an issue in the Winston-Salem community and because they had received permission to adapt an existing NIF issue book on the topic to fit the local situation. Once again, Democracy Fellows formed subgroups to work on the issue book, recruitment, publicity, and logistics. Over the summer, the issue book was completed, edited, and published. In early fall, participants were recruited, and the issue book was distributed to them.

While we had access to the participants in the campus deliberation, this time we lacked access to the community participants, but we did conduct focus groups with the Democracy Fellows to probe their attitudes about the experience, and we similarly conducted focus groups with the class cohort of the fellows.

This community deliberation concluded the scheduled deliberative agenda for the Democracy Fellows. During their final year and a half, no deliberative activities were scheduled; however, a number of fellows participated in two other events—one on campus and one off—that made use of their deliberative skills and training and that came about by invitation. In the second semester of the senior year, we concluded our data gathering by conducting exit interviews with each of the fellows and three focus groups with a senior class cohort.

The Basic Findings

We engaged in this study, first and foremost, to learn whether sustained exposure to deliberation as an alternative method of public talk would encourage a disposition toward democratic engagement. On this issue, the findings are clear, and the following three outcomes are illustrative of the enhanced propensity toward engagement that the fellows exhibited.

At the outset, we found that students said they lacked the knowledge to engage in politics, a problem that abated with the fellows.

They reported that because of their first-year seminar on democracy and deliberation, they had a notion of citizenship and a rough understanding of democracy and how the American political process worked, information that most students in the control group (with the exception of the few who took political science courses) continued to lack.

A parallel finding has to do with the generalizability of political knowledge. Over time, the students in the control group continued to think that political knowledge was a specialized knowledge needed by students who wanted to major in politics. In contrast, Democracy Fellows, only a few of whom ended up being political science majors, all quickly came to think of citizenship and politics as part of their ongoing work. Citizenship and politics were simply part of who they were and part of what they did.

The last finding we note comes from a comparison of political efficiency among the Democracy Fellows and among the senior class as a whole. From the senior survey data, we found that the Democracy Fellows ended up with a much stronger sense of efficacy on campus than did the senior class. Put another way, their sense of having a voice on campus was substantially stronger than the sense the senior class had of its voice. The difference between the fellows and their classmates first emerged after the campus deliberation, an event that turned out to have real-world consequences. Further, even though the community deliberation in Winston-Salem was far less successful by almost any measure, the fellows' sense of efficacy was not lost. It appears that once one has a clear experience of efficacy, it can withstand at least some experiences of failure. If this is so, it seems a good lesson for those of us who are interested in fostering a sense of citizenship among our students.

For readers who want to explore these and other relevant findings about the differences between the Democracy Fellows and their fellow students, we refer them to our book documenting the project (Harriger and McMillan 2007). In the rest of the paper, however, we concentrate on the contexts of deliberation, to examine with more detail how students learn to become citizens through deliberation.

The Classroom Context

It may go without saying that the classroom is an obvious context for teaching college students deliberation. At most institutions, the classroom and the curriculum, representing the domain in which the faculty exercises primary control, offer the potential for accomplishing each of the four educational components of effective civic education that Patrick identifies. However, we found the classroom to be a stronger venue for teaching knowledge and critical thinking than for simulating an actual political environment or for appreciating the dispositions of citizenship that reveal themselves when discussants are directly affected by the issue-at-hand. We consider the positives of the classroom venue first.

Classroom Advantages

Acquiring knowledge.

As we noted above, we found in our early interviews with fellows and the class cohort that one of the significant and self-identified barriers to civic participation was a lack of knowledge about the political system, how it operates, and how to become involved in it—and a lack of confidence in the knowledge they did have. We found in later interviews that a strong predictor of student confidence in becoming engaged in politics, whether in the form of discussion with others, joining a campaign, or being part of a group working on some social issue, was the classroom experience of learning about the political system and how it operates. Both notions are consistent with Patrick's notion of the importance of political knowledge.

We also found that whether students had acquired that knowledge often depended on whether they deliberately sought it out in their course selection. Even with a broad, two-year liberal arts divisional curriculum, it was possible for students to avoid spending any time learning about politics. In all, students who were not in the Democracy

Fellows program were less likely to have had classroom exposure to discussions of democracy and citizenship, even after four years of college.

Democracy Fellows, who went on to have a variety of majors, most of which were not political science or communication (our individual fields), nonetheless all shared at least the exposure obtained in the first-year seminar. One fellow wrote in his final first-year essay, "I have found in this short time span of the Deliberative Democracy class … that I learned more about the history of basic ideas about democracy than I have in the rest of my life." The fellows' enhanced confidence in their role as active citizens and their ability to talk knowledgably and critically about deliberation, democracy, and citizenship were evident in each of the subsequent years of interviews following the first-year experience.

Linking theory and practice.

Classroom deliberation enables students to "enact" both the knowledge about political and deliberative theory they have learned and to practice it in ways that reinforce the cognitive skills and the political dispositions that Patrick recommends. Furthermore, the classroom offers a "safe" environment where the consequences of stumbling or erring are far less than they are in the real world. Practicing democratic skills, such as deliberation, in the classroom also allows students to become more analytical about the functions of public talk, for example by engaging in it themselves and then stepping back and assessing what they have just experienced. The debriefing exercises that followed each of our classroom deliberations, in which we asked the students to apply our theoretical discussions about the benefits and challenges of deliberation to the experience they had just had, were always the most insightful discussions of the class.

One debriefing session in particular stands out. Our deliberation on race and ethnic tensions had been a difficult and often painful two days, and the fellows showed little ability at the end to find common ground for agreement or for action. Our debriefing of that experience—Why was it so hard? What does that tell us about deliberation on difficult issues?—was one of the most powerful learning experiences of the class. Not only did the debriefing require keen and honest description, explanation, and evaluation of what had occurred, it brought students face to face with their own personal discomfort in discussions regarding race.

Democracy Fellows talked about this deliberation quite a bit in their final essays as they processed what that experience might mean for the usefulness of deliberation. For example, one student left the class somewhat skeptical about such utility: "In our class with race and ethnic tensions," she wrote, "we were not able to talk through the issue. If only fourteen people of limited diversity of perspectives cannot talk through an issue and find common judgment, then I am skeptical of the ability of a larger group of people to deliberate." She noted the dispositional flaw that she had witnessed: "instead of meeting together at a common point, we went away from each other."

When reflecting on their deliberative experience as a whole, many students talked more generally about how much they had learned from hearing the perspectives of others who were different from them. Discussing the way group knowledge emerged through the deliberation, one student wrote, "When I entered a deliberation, I possessed a personal knowledge of the issue, yet by temporarily putting aside my view and listening to others' stories, I gained a public knowledge about 'Race and Ethnic Tensions' and 'Public Education' that I would never have had alone."

Transferring skills to other settings.

While Patrick's four key components specifically refer to civic education, our students were eager to extend the influence of their deliberative training. The deliberative practice, critical thinking, and democratic dispositions learned through the seminar had particular staying power for the students once they left the seminar and encountered challenging discussions in other classes and in other settings.

In our senior exit interviews, for example, the fellows talked about how learning the deliberative model for talk and embracing the democratic theory ideals underlying it (equality of participants, considering the experiences and underlying values of others, looking for common ground, considering whose voices were missing and what the missing might say, taking seriously the benefits and trade-offs of each approach to a policy question) had influenced the way they developed as students and as campus citizens.

One student said, "I think the [skills of deliberation] will always be a consideration when I'm ever in a group.… I think that if I'm remotely in charge or have the ability to contribute to the manner in which … things are going, I would encourage [deliberation] because it's applicable to everything. Fraternity stuff, definitely. In the business world, yeah." This same student described his use of deliberative skills in leading his fraternity during the senior year. Another student talked about using these skills while serving as a resident advisor in the dormitory. Others even spoke about using them in their personal relationships with friends. Perhaps most significant in terms of the impact on how we talk about and practice politics, students identified their experience with deliberation as having a current and future impact on "speaking with and listening to others," being "open-minded," and "taking seriously the other's point of view." While we made no specific attempt to tie the foundational knowledge, practice, cognitive development, and

keener dispositions of the first-year seminar to their wider lives and practices, our students, almost to the last one, insisted on making that link, and they did so independently.

Classroom deliberation, then, yielded all of the civic education components emphasized by Patrick: knowledge of democratic theory and deliberation as a model of public talk, cognitive development in assessing the deliberation as it progresses and in evaluating its outcome, participatory skills that were beginning to be developed, and the perspective taking necessary for building political dispositions. However, as we show in the next section, we regard knowledge acquisition and cognitive development as the classroom's greatest victories. Participation and development of political dispositions gained traction in the more democratically authentic venues that the students would experience later on, when we were to see the fellows adapt and fine tune the skills they had learned.

Classroom Limitations

Despite the obvious learning advantages of the classroom setting, we found that while the classroom is essential to reaching students "where they are," it cannot simulate an authentic democratic environment and discussion. Thus, Patrick's components must of necessity be attenuated when: the classroom is more like a lab, not the real world; student "citizens" are not really in charge of their own destinies; and student deliberators have little power to move from talk to action. It is especially difficult to cultivate in student deliberators the political dispositions that come from deliberating alongside citizens personally affected by an issue.

The undemocratic characteristics of the classroom.

The classroom, with its teacher-student relationship, presents obvious challenges to the democratic ideals of deliberation. The reality is that the classroom context necessitates that students must be evaluated and graded, and the persons responsible for that assessment are the professors. Thus,

despite the effort to make the classroom as democratic as possible, in the end the power imbalance remains. Even if some educators believe that grades are counterproductive, most of us are not in settings in which we are at liberty to abandon them.

The conditions of the classroom bring a degree of artificiality to the exercise of practicing democracy, and it is very difficult to overcome. In our own case, with so much class time given over to discussion, deliberation, and other forms of participation, we did not feel free to eliminate from these practices some kind of evaluation. Admittedly, we gave students frequent feedback and encouragement in one-on-one encounters to make that evaluation as educationally valuable as possible, but in the end, they were all aware that for the purposes of the class we as instructors were not their "fellow citizens." Classrooms are great settings for exposure to and experimentation with democratic ideals, but in the end, they are not great models of democratic communities.

Further, the classroom is not immune from the recurring democratic problem of individual dominance, especially if grade-motivated students worry unduly about the assessment of their individual contributions. While we succeeded in moderating the problems of power and dominance—in the first-year seminar, for example, we did a workshop that focused on practicing in a very intentional way the skills of listening and of identifying the values underlying the policy positions of others—we did not succeed in eliminating these problems. Some students saw in the classroom experience the same unequal power dynamics at work that they saw in the larger political realm. One young woman noted that in the class this power dynamic "was fairly evident—at times only a few people talked, and while the others may have had comments to make, the floor was controlled by a select few."

There was a perception over time, however, that the group had improved. "Our third deliberation," wrote one young

man, “was marked by students engaging other students, and more participation by more people.” A rather quiet young woman became a believer in deliberation because, despite some ongoing power differential, she thought all voices had been valued and “everyone is allowed to participate.” She wrote, “We see that deliberation does more than tolerate differences; it uses them.”

Disconnect between the classroom and the real world.

The “nonworldly” character of the classroom also seemed to undercut the possibility of transferring deliberation out into the world. Despite the classroom opportunities to link theory and practice, which appeared to teach that democratic citizenship was important and that deliberation could work to reduce polarization and conflict by talking through difficult public issues, the students encountered substantial counterevidence in their interactions with the campus and the larger political community.

In their final freshman essays evaluating the deliberative model, the fellows talked with optimism about the potential of deliberation in some essentially educational settings but with pessimism about the barriers to making it work in the larger political world. They recognized that citizens would have to be trained, as they had been, to think about politics differently, and they wondered about the willingness and the ability of people to take the time to learn to deliberate. For some of the students, the necessity of learning to “do deliberation” was an obstacle to its success in the broader community.

In later years, their earlier optimism tempered somewhat, the Democracy Fellows even expressed skepticism about the prospects for a more democratic campus, pointing to the clash they identified between the ideals of democracy they had been exposed to in our class and the reality of what they encountered in other classrooms, in campus life,

and in the broader political world. In their senior interviews, they still held on to both the notions learned in the "Deliberative Democracy" seminar about what citizenship *could* be and the value of deliberative talk in their *own lives*, but they were also very much aware of the countercultural nature of the model and the challenges of implementing it in the real world. Clearly, the classroom setting cannot adequately simulate the challenges of implementing democratic practice in the world beyond it.

The difficulty of moving from talk to action.

Finally, the deliberative model we employed in this project has an end point in which the group participants seek to identify common ground for action. The moderator encourages them to think about when they have found common ground in their discussion and what concrete actions they might take as individuals and as a group to bring about change in the policy area they have been discussing. Students in the seminar found this to be the most difficult part of the classroom deliberations, largely because they felt they had no power to influence policy outcomes regarding the issues we discussed. They were occasionally able to identify individual actions they could take—tutor a child in the local schools, try to get to know someone of a different race or ethnic background—but they were unable to think of themselves in a collective sense as having power to influence education policy or race and ethnic tensions.

In sum, the classroom provides an excellent venue—and a familiar and comfortable one—to impart foundational knowledge; to provide an opportunity for supervised practice; and to allow students to experiment with interactive skills that have wide, even lifelong, utility. As a democratic archetype, however, the classroom has some limitations: a teacher is still "the boss," and institutional rules, such as grades and attendance, prevail, thereby straining the argument that students are involved in a real-world democratic

exercise in which they will be able to move their classroom talk to meaningful political action.

The Campus Context

When we use Patrick's civic education model to consider the effect on our students of moving their deliberative activities from the classroom to the campus, it seems clear that while students continued to advance in the civic knowledge that they had begun to gain in the classroom, the migration into the public arena put an increased focus on and tested various elements of their practical civic skills. On campus it would be necessary to grapple with and weigh the alternative ways of approaching a substantive issue, one, in this case, they had some power to affect; participate with their peers and with those in positions of authority above them to influence their collective culture; and hone their civic dispositions by considering, and even being persuaded by, the diverse perspectives of other campus citizens. In other words, the campus context not only posed a challenge that basically did not exist in the classroom, it also presented opportunities to fine tune learning and skills initiated in the safer environment of the classroom.

Campus Advantages

Wider exposure to and appreciation for the deliberative model.

As we reported earlier, the campus deliberation enabled the Democracy Fellows to tackle a relevant campus issue and to showcase a viable model for addressing it. Overall, it is clear that both the Democracy Fellows and the Deliberation Participants (who attended the campus deliberation but lacked the other deliberative experiences of the fellows) felt positively about the process they experienced. Deliberation Participants were particularly enthusiastic and identified in their enthusiasm many of the characteristics of deliberation that its supporters hold up as desirable democratic talk.

They recognized and appreciated the value of diverse voices being heard, the equality given the participants' voices despite their status differences on campus, the ground rules that encouraged listening and taking seriously the views of others rather than promoting polarized debate, and the structure and common knowledge provided by the issue book. Indeed, the Deliberation Participants had a kind of wide-eyed wonder about the potential for a process that was largely very new to them and that they enjoyed being part of.

The Democracy Fellows too were genuinely pleased and excited with their accomplishment in pulling off the event, but they cast a more critical eye on the deliberative process of which they were already aware. They were more willing to identify possible problems and were more cautious about what the outcomes might be and how and where the process would work on campus and in the community. It seems clear that their more extensive experience with and critical examination of deliberation and democratic theory was in play in their assessment of the deliberation's success.

Especially encouraging to the Democracy Fellows and to all of us who wondered about the utility of deliberation as a campuswide decision-making tool were the pre- and postdeliberation results, which showed that the deliberation did indeed alter the participants' attitudes, in some instances fairly substantially. As a result of the deliberation, agreement increased on each of the four formulations characterizing the lack of community on campus—the isolation of students from the larger community, the lack of school spirit, the separation of groups, and the lack of intellectual community. For example, the percent of respondents who were "very concerned" about students being isolated from the larger community had increased from 31 to 44 percent at the conclusion of the discussion. Concern about the lack of school spirit increased from 43 to 57 percent, and concern about the lack of an intellectual climate increased from 39 to 47 percent.

In answering open-ended questions, the majority of participants agreed that the deliberation had had an effect on their attitudes about the issue, and most said that there were things they would do about it. The kinds of likely actions that were identified included working to motivate others toward more campus involvement, building relationships with people and groups otherwise overlooked, and sponsoring activities that bring diverse groups together.

So, on balance, the students who attended the campus deliberation declared it a rousing success, both in their reported attitude change and later as they reflected upon the experience in their focus groups. Perhaps most important for this study, students explicitly articulated the potential for using deliberation at future campus decision-making junctures. They apparently reasoned that the political exercise that had energized and encouraged them—even changed their minds—could do the same for classmates and other campus citizens.

Relative ease in planning and implementation.

Though the planning and implementation of the campus deliberation stretched the fellows' time and resources, they moved rather effortlessly and confidently through that process. They personally knew many of the people—students, faculty, and administration—whom they were dealing with. Soliciting participation and help in implementation was relatively painless—an important point that should not be overlooked by educators who seek to use the deliberative process on campus. The ease of the process would sharply fail to hold for the community deliberation that was next on the fellows' schedule.

Political efficacy.

We noted the sense of efficacy that the Democracy Fellows developed, starting with the success of the campus deliberation, about which the fellows felt a strong sense of pride.

> The feeling of efficacy persisted, and perhaps grew stronger, as the campus came to recognize the deliberation as valuable and as other groups took up the issues raised there (Student Government, Division of Student Life, Board of Visitors, Board of Trustees). In the end, changes to the first-year orientation program and the development of more "public spaces" on campus (the new coffee shop) could be traced to the deliberation. One fellow said: "I loved our campus deliberation.… [Having] the opportunity to see where actually it went was actually very impressive." While we did not measure larger cultural shifts with regard to this event, it is possible that its success functioned to further "democratize the campus" (Morse 1992)—at least to improve the general climate of decision making on campus and the students' role in it.

Campus Limitations

Despite the positive benefits of the campus experience, there are limitations here too as to what such an experience can accomplish in developing engaged citizens. Some scholars (Allan 1997; Becker and Cuoto 1996) have noted that one of the drawbacks to teaching democracy on campus by modeling it institutionally is the limited power and influence that students are afforded. Our research suggests that this fact does not go unnoticed by students.

> **Limited issues for student action.**
>
> We were fortunate that the fellows selected as a subject of their campus deliberation one that students actually had some ability to impact. Some of the other topics that they considered—building a parking deck, converting a nearby upscale shopping center into a student hangout, replacing the current food service—offered little potential for student action.
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> Over the four years of our study, we repeatedly asked students what role the university should provide them for learning to engage in citizenship. Most echoed the opinion

of one Wake Forest student (not a fellow) who believes that students lack the maturity, experience, and commitment to participate in governance: “I don’t think students should be elevated to be making major administrative decisions when there are people who are there in those positions for a reason.” Another nonfellow opined that she feared, if given equal authority for their own governance, students might show up to deliberate “only if there were free food.”

This is not to say, however, that the scope of student involvement cannot be enlarged, as indeed it was in the campus deliberation. The challenge, as we have seen, is to find issues on which students have the possibility of creating action—that is, of actually contributing to an important outcome—lest the deliberation experience leave them further disillusioned about the promise of deliberative democracy.

Administrative interest and response.

Also consistent in the four years of the study is the unanimous sense of where power resides on campus. Repeatedly the students identified Reynolda Hall—the administrative building on campus—as the source of campus power. As with most top-down organizations, if administrators do not get on board with a student initiative, it is most likely doomed to fail. Fortunately, with the campus deliberation, key administrative figures attended the deliberation, and others were brought into the campuswide discourse after the fact. The issue book became the subject of more than one administrative retreat and, in addition, was used extensively to alter pre-school student orientation. While students could point to several past issues on campus when they felt disenfranchised (see McMillan 2004), the discussion on building the campus community was not one of them.

Maintaining the “bubble.”

Wake Forest students characterize their existence on a somewhat homogeneous and insulated campus as living

> inside a bubble. The campus context basically reinforced this impression, and reminded us as instructors that the campus deliberation, as successful as it was, was still at least one step removed from a true experience in democratic decision making.
>
> The fellows operated within their comfort zones as they made contacts, recruited, negotiated, and publicized. More important, the preponderance of the concerns deliberated that evening kept students firmly in the center of their own narrow, self-interested universe—a situation that was to change dramatically when they took their deliberative efforts out into the wider Winston-Salem community.

In sum, while the classroom venue introduced deliberative theory and skills, the campus forum allowed Democracy Fellows the chance to plan and execute an actual deliberation for a challenging outside audience of their professors, peers, and fellow campus and community citizens. By the measures presented here, the students succeeded in their goals; additionally they introduced a viable decision-making model and the potential for increased political power to those who would use it. From Patrick's perspective, they vastly increased their political knowledge about a campus issue; reinforced both their cognitive and participation skills; and strengthened political dispositions—at least local ones—as they heard the viewpoints of their fellow campus citizens. As a general exercise in democratic pedagogy, however, a campus deliberation can be hindered by the range of potential issues, administrative interest and sanctions, and the artificially "safe" political environment within the campus boundaries.

The Community Context

While the campus venue clearly raised the stakes for the Democracy Fellows' civic development, Patrick suggests that civic learning falls short if students do not ultimately test their knowledge and cognitive skills by participating and developing political dispositions in the real world with real issues experienced by real

people. If the campus deliberation allowed the fellows to stay inside their bubble, the community deliberation—on the topic of urban sprawl—clearly burst it, forcing them beyond the protection of their teachers and friends into the local community that surrounded them. Here they had to participate face to face with people often very unlike themselves, concerning issues whose complexity and intractability stretched the fellows' minds and imaginations. Bursting the bubble was clearly this venue's greatest effect, with ambiguous results, but students were able to identify other, more specific outcomes that were clearly positive.

Community Advantages

The issue book and appreciation of local issues.

In creating the issue book on local urban sprawl, students interviewed city leaders from all sectors: the mayor's office, neighborhood associations, the Chamber of Commerce, environmental groups, and real-estate interests. This research and the ultimate write-up taught them the unique problems that Winston-Salem faces and underscored the complexity of the issue for the average citizen. Thus, the more general political knowledge acquired in the classroom gave way to specific facts, figures, and opinions of Winston-Salem citizens as they encounter urban sprawl on a daily basis.

In terms of the deliberation itself, the fellows sensed that participants appreciated their efforts and demonstrated that appreciation by having read the issue book and being prepared to discuss it. For the students, this was a victory in and of itself. One student remarked:

> I think people that read the issue book were inspired by it because everyone that came, at least in my group, was very informed; you could tell that they had read the book. Every single one of them connected like every single point about every single issue, so like I was really impressed, and in general I think they were impressed with the book and very receptive to it.

While the fellows were initially somewhat disconnected from the subject of urban sprawl in their adopted city, the process of researching the topic and then, at the deliberation, engaging it with local citizens, broadened their awareness. One student noted, and others agreed, that "I learned a great deal from just hearing people from Winston-Salem who are not connected to Wake Forest … and just being able to get different people together and listen to them talk about an issue that the majority of them felt pretty passionate about" was worthwhile.

Exposure to community organizing.

While the process of planning and implementing the campus forum proceeded with relative ease, students found the process with the community forum daunting, dealing as they had to with people whom they did not know and whose particular constraints they were unable to appreciate. Most disappointing to the fellows was the response or lack of it from potential minority participants.

From our perspective as educators, however, we deemed the challenges of location, publicity, and transportation to be more realistic to actual civic engagement than were students' experiences in their own familiar environs. In fact, we regarded the obstacles as tacit education in Patrick's dispositions because the students were able to witness firsthand the practical difficulties of citizenship, such as coming out to a public meeting after a hard day's work or finding a babysitter. In retrospect, one Democracy Fellow suggested that the group might have taken "the wrong approach to the second deliberation. We kind of thought … since the first one went so well, it will be so easy, we don't have to worry about recruiting, it should be easier.…We didn't realize that it was going to be actually a lot harder." For students to truly learn about civic activism, the difficulty our students experienced in taking deliberation "on the road" may, in fact, have been a decided value.

Bridging the town/gown divide.

While the students were disappointed with the smaller and less diverse number of people who participated this time compared to the campus deliberation (50 participants rather than 120), they did feel that those who attended had a meaningful experience. One student said that the smaller-than-hoped-for turnout allowed for small deliberative groups, which he felt improved the quality of the discussion: "I don't think it would have been the same sort of dynamic within the group [if the group had been large] because the people who participated really enjoyed it.... I think we could see that afterwards, when people were actually talking and mingling and looking at sheets on the board [other groups' notes]."

In the same spirit, other students felt that participants left with more knowledge about the issue and about the views of people different from themselves. Some recounted anecdotes in which they observed a participant seeing things in a new light or acknowledging that someone they had disagreed with had a good idea. In other words, students not only felt their own dispositional ranges expanding, but witnessed that process happening with the community participants as well. In our debriefing, we all wondered whether the positive experience of participants might make them more appreciative of the college students in their midst and more sympathetic to the need to bridge the disconnect between the university and the community.

Community Limitations

There is little question that a considerable amount of civic learning took place in the community experience. But there were also challenges and limitations that, in retrospect, the group saw as being inherent in moving away from the campus and into the community. Overall, the fellows engaged in more negative talk about the experience of *organizing and conducting* the community deliberation than about the experience of *participating* in it.

Recruitment and diversity.

Clearly, the central criticism the Democracy Fellows had of their community deliberation experience was their lack of success in getting a large and representative sample of the community to participate in the deliberation. They had the least success in getting members of the minority community, as we have mentioned, but they also had little success in getting students from Wake Forest to attend. The people who did participate tended to be white, affluent, and highly educated.

While the fellows made some acknowledgement of their own inexperience at handling a sizeable event such as this, they primarily attributed the low turnout to external constraints. A number of fellows identified barriers that affect all kinds of political participation, at all levels of the electorate. One student noted, with considerable agreement from others, that "it was an uphill battle ... that we were losing from the very beginning because it's very difficult to get people … involved in civil and government type issues.… It's like people just … go home, they're tired and just want to watch TV, that's it." Another student acknowledged that the attendance "was partly our fault," but went on to say that "there was, like, no incentive for these people to come.… It is going to be hard to recruit people who just aren't interested and who don't have the time in their daily lives."

Issue selection.

Many of the Democracy Fellows talked about whether the issue itself contributed to low turnout. While there have been problems of urban sprawl in Winston-Salem and the region was recently identified in a national survey as one of the worst places for urban sprawl in the country, students felt that the issue may not have been sufficiently timely. Students also speculated that the public might simply feel that sprawl is an inevitable part of urban life and there was little to be done about it. Others mentioned

the complexity of the issue and the knowledge required to understand it as factors that might limit broad-based participation in such a discussion.

Students also pointed out that the complexity of the issue made the traditional action discussion at the conclusion of the forum more challenging. For example, one student said, "It's such a monumental issue, it's almost like, what can you do? Like, what can one voice really change?"

In addition, the presence of a city councilman who effectively "hijacked" one group convinced students that while citizens may be heard in one evening's deliberation, real systemic change was more likely to happen at the higher reaches of government. Clearly, if students were right about the flexing of power that they witnessed and the resultant feeling of helplessness, efficacy could be diminished rather than enhanced by a community deliberation such as ours.

Limited student efficacy.

Particularly troubling to the Democracy Fellows was their widespread perception that despite the success of and appreciation for the issue book, the larger community did not take them seriously, which affected everything from the students' ability to recruit, to their comfort in even *trying* to recruit, to their credibility as moderators of the event. One student said, "I don't think people at Wake [the school] feel any connection to the town, and I think a lot of people feel that the town doesn't like them, you know, that we're kind of, like, a burden to the town." Another student said, "Especially maybe at Wake Forest, it is kind of hard to be taken seriously by the greater Winston-Salem community, maybe because most of us aren't from here, and we aren't really all that acclimated."

The community under a microscope.

The most serious philosophical challenge to our students and to us as teachers and researchers was the tension between

the value of the community deliberation as a pedagogical exercise for the students and its civic value to the citizens and community of Winston-Salem (Harriger and McMillan 2005).

In our traditional faculty roles, we felt the obligation to make certain that our students came away from the experience having learned more about deliberation and about how it might work in a large, diverse, political community. Consequently, we felt it was important for them to be responsible for organizing the event, recruiting the participants, and preparing the materials to be used. Our role tension came into sharp relief, however, when we watched the students underestimate the timing and complexity of advertising and recruiting for this event. On the one hand, our teaching and research interests told us that if they did not do an effective job in these tasks, it was best to let them "fail," given our belief that most learning comes from trial and error, and often, failure. On the other hand, as citizens of the community, we felt an ethical obligation not to treat our neighbors as "subjects" to be experimented with for our pedagogical and research purposes.

We also believed it was important for the students to see that "detachment" on our part was inappropriate and civically irresponsible. It would be wrong to invite community members into a public dialogue about making Winston-Salem a better place to live without doing our best to make sure that the experience was a positive one, at least in its execution if not in its outcomes. In short, we came face to face with what it means when the community itself becomes the learning environment.

The community experience provided an appropriate capstone for the four years of deliberation training, because in many ways it was the most difficult and yet the most authentic venue. The event extended the pursuit of political knowledge to a critical local issue; exposed students to what it

means to activate not just friends but total strangers to political discussion and responsibility; and afforded them the opportunity to reach out beyond the campus gates to address an interest and a need within our community. Those same advantages also carried the seeds of dissatisfaction, even failure: students bemoaned that they were unable to recruit broadly and well; that the issue may have seemed intractable; and that they themselves may have ultimately lacked the credibility to pull off a fully successful community event. We as instructors worried about potential role conflict as we guided the event. Ultimately, however, we believe that the community deliberation, despite being somewhat bittersweet, took each of Patrick's criteria of civic education to a new level: knowledge acquisition became up close and personal; cognitive skill building happened ad hoc and onsite; participation required every skill that had been learned in the classroom and on campus—and then some; and dispositional challenges and learning came at the students from all directions.

Conclusion

There is little question that the college experience itself is a powerful force in shaping students' propensities toward civic engagement or detachment. Many important things that shape students' development as citizens happen personally, educationally, and politically. After four years of experimenting with teaching deliberative skills in different settings, we feel confident in saying that this can be a powerful way of educating students about their role as citizens. The Democracy Fellows did develop differently from their class cohort as a result of their deliberative experiences. Each of the settings we experimented with provided a layer of understanding and experience that helped our students grow into more thoughtful, critical thinkers who appear committed to being engaged citizens in their future communities. Most important, the combination of this experience—the learning plus the practical

involvement—appears to have provided them with an alternative way of understanding what politics might be and with a skill set that they are using in their own encounters with others in group problem solving. We also learned, however, that no single setting provides adequate education for the learning model Patrick proposes for effective civic education: knowledge acquisition, cognitive skill building, participatory skill building, and the creation of democratic dispositions. The limitations of each setting are best corrected by the benefits that derive from other settings. The ideal university program for building civic engagement in its students would include exposure to democratic ideals and decision-making processes in the classroom, the campus, and the larger community.

Katy J. Harriger *is professor of political science at Wake Forest University, where she teaches courses on American politics, constitutional law, and, of course, civic engagement. She first became involved with the Kettering Foundation in the 1980s as part of the Public Leadership Education project.*

Jill J. McMillan *is professor emerita of communication at Wake Forest. She studies organizational and institutional rhetoric and, in particular, how individuals and groups are denied or unwittingly relinquish their voices.*

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