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Introduction

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Our theme for this issue is the erosion and renewal of democratic life. As Rachelle Darabi has articulated in her essay, we are all feeling a sense of erosion, and we struggle to understand what renewal looks like. All of our efforts at the *eJournal of Public Affairs* aim to bring you a variety of forms and perspectives about the intersection of public life and higher education. This time our work comes at a moment of particular urgency. We are closing in on a national election that feels more consequential than anything most of us can remember. In some U.S. states, the process of voting by mail has already begun.

Even in the context of such a momentous election, however, we want to remind all citizens that serving in public office – or voting for those who do – is just one way to make a difference in public life on the issues that matter most to you. Other avenues exist to leverage individual and group resources for the greater good. Some citizens create businesses or not-for-profit organizations to aim at specific areas that affect us all, like energy, or advocacy, or the development of products to improve public deliberation, for example. Institutions of civil society have public purpose as well, like our churches and schools. In this issue we highlight a range of efforts for civic engagement. Like every issue of *EJOPA*, this issue brings you scholarship, reviews, commentary and stories to expand the understanding and narrative of public affairs.

Along with scholarly insights and educational materials we include expressions of practice. In *Tell Your Story*, we share two Missouri State University initiatives for voter engagement. Emphasizing solutions, we invite other universities, institutions, and communities to share their ideas and projects for engaging students, faculty, and citizens/community members. We are also excited about our *Student Voices* section, and we encourage scholarship and reflective commentary from students. Finally, we provide recommendations and resource links to guide or assist informed engagement during this election season, and for the work that must always follow participation at the ballot box. The work of democratic renewal goes on.

Darrell Hamlin, Managing Editor
Andrew P. Lokie, Editor

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Erosion and Renewal In Democratic Life

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Erosion and Renewal in Democratic Life

(Introductory Essay: *eJournal of Public Affairs*, Volume 9, Issue 2)

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Most of us feel that our democratic lives have eroded. We are less civil to one another than at any other time in our history, perhaps short of the Civil War—certainly any period in my lifetime. At the 2020 Democratic National Convention, former President Barack Obama

described the nation's current situation in this way: "Our worst impulses unleashed, our proud reputation around the world badly diminished, and our democratic institutions threatened like never before." Speakers at both parties' conventions claimed that the 2020 election is a struggle for the soul of the United States.

The erosion is real. It is evident on our cities' streets as we confront systemic racism and police brutality. It is evident in our hospitals as we combat the COVID-19 pandemic, the worst health crisis in 100 years. It is evident at our post offices, where budget cuts have threatened the upcoming election as millions of voters look to mail-in ballots to avoid contracting COVID-19 at their polling places. It is evident as we consider external threats to our democratic life, such as Russian interference in the 2016 election.

With such low levels of confidence in our institutions of governance, how can the upcoming election provide any kind of renewal? Even the President of the United States—a candidate for reelection—claims that this will be the most crooked election of all time. He warns that we will not know the outcome on election night, perhaps for months, perhaps never. Worse, should he lose the election, the current occupant of the White House, the executor of federal legal authority and commander in chief of the military, has refused to ensure a peaceful transition of power because he believes there will be enormous voter fraud. 2020 is the centennial of women securing a constitutional right to vote in the United States. Are we to commemorate this milestone anniversary with only strife?

How do we keep the promise of democratic renewal in the current environment? That question is the theme of this issue of the *eJournal of Public Affairs*. The peer-reviewed and invited content in this issue opens up a space for reporting and reflection during these last weeks before what may be the most consequential election in our lifetimes, if not the most critical in the history of our country. For me, it is a moment of professional and personal reflection as well.

2020 was to be a year of celebration for me as I anticipated my retirement in June. Due to COVID-19, however, I extended my time at Missouri State University by several months to help ensure that all of the planning for the new fall semester was complete. I have had the great honor of spending 32 years in higher education, working for two outstanding institutions. I have closed my career at Missouri State, an institution which stands on three pillars: ethical leadership, community engagement, and cultural competence as part of its public affairs mission. Never before have I seen a greater need for institutions like Missouri State to continue their leadership within their communities, particularly in promoting these pillars. As I see greater recognition across the country of systemic racism, I feel hopeful. Perhaps 2020 can bring a renewal of our commitment to justice and equality.

When I arrived at Missouri State, as the associate provost for student development and public affairs, I had the awesome responsibility of promoting and supporting the university's public affairs mission. I wanted to have an opportunity to share, beyond our campus, the outstanding public affairs work going on at Missouri State and to give faculty and staff across the country an outlet for public discourse around public affairs. With the help of the American Democracy Project, Andrew Lokie (the journal's editor), and the late Dr. Marc Cooper (the managing editor) we put together a scholarly journal that has covered topics like cultural competence,

sustainability, social entrepreneurship, global teaching, first-generation college students, and more. Our board and guest editors have been affiliated with institutions from across the country, and our authors have spanned the world. I am particularly proud of this issue, “Erosion and Renewal in Democratic Life,” since it comes at such a critical juncture in our history. I am also grateful to Kris Sutliff and Darrell Hamlin, who stepped in as managing editor after our tragic loss of Marc Cooper, and to Charlie Whitaker, our associate editor. The *eJournal of Public Affairs* started as a dream and has become a solid reminder of why higher education is central to our democracy.

When I first started writing this introductory essay, I felt disheartened. Yet, as I reflect further on the importance of the *eJournal* and the power of higher education to shape the future of democracy by preparing students for civic life in a civil society, I feel renewed. We can create citizen scholars within our institutions, and we can build a better path forward. We can renew our relationships around the world and still be a beacon for democratic life. It will be an uphill battle, but we must stay on the path. I have enough optimism about the future that I bought a t-shirt that says, “Voting is my Superpower,” with a picture of a woman superhero. I wear it as a tribute to the women who struggled so that I could vote. I turned 18 in a presidential election year, and I have retired in another; these two elections have been great bookends to my long relationship with higher education. During that time, I have never doubted the awesome power we yield when we step into the voting booth or vote by mail.

I hope you enjoy this and subsequent issues of the *eJournal*. Best wishes, and never give up the fight for a better future.

Author



Rachelle Darabi is an emeritus faculty member from Missouri State University (MSU). She held the position of Associate Provost for Student Development and Public Affairs at MSU from 2008-2020. Dr. Darabi came to Missouri State University from Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW-now Purdue Fort Wayne) where she worked for nearly 20 years. Dr. Darabi holds a doctorate in Rhetoric and Composition with a cognate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). She ran the English-as-a Second Language Program at IPFW before taking on increasingly responsible administrative positions. Her final position at IPFW was Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Success.

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Recognition for Dr. Rachelle Darabi

Andrew Lokie
Missouri State University

Kris Sutliff
Missouri State University

Michael Frizell
Missouri State University

Andrew Lokie, Editor of eJournal of Public Affairs, Missouri State University



FIGURE 1: MARC COOPER, RACHELLE DARABI, ANDREW LOKIE

As we progress down our career paths, we eventually approach a time to consider retirement, or should I say blissful retirement. My dear colleague Dr. Marc Cooper, who continued his work with the *eJournal of Public Affairs* as he celebrated his abbreviated retirement, would share our observations for how Dr. Rachelle Darabi was one of the best administrators/faculty members/and friend that we had the privilege to work with. It is important to realize her exceptional work, contributions, and the caring relationships and work environment that she facilitated in her capacity. As of the beginning of August 2020, Dr. Darabi officially retired from Missouri State University. To say that she is missed is an

understatement. Fortunately, she has agreed to continue her service on *EJOPA*'s Editorial Board.

This recognition includes a statement from one of Rachelle's colleagues and good friend, Dr. Kris Sutliff, who also worked with *EJOPA*. And a contribution from Michael Frizell, who was one of my colleagues working in the Student Development and Public Affairs department. The many directors who reported to her all have stories about their experience, leadership and her sincere passion for her work and convictions. For an idea for the scope of her work, the areas that she was responsible for were moved under four different reporting lines.

Along with the insights from Kris and Michael, perhaps the best way to exemplify what she's done can best be expressed by sharing her departing letter to the SDPA staff, her recent biography, and invite you to read her invited essay found in the editorials. It's difficult to adequately describe the significance of her approach and contributions. Having worked at four different higher-ed universities has provided me with the opportunity to witness the distinctions and commonalities across various institutions. In this, I have grown to better understand the impact between good and poor leadership. I will conclude by saying how much I have appreciated and enjoyed my work under the direction of Dr. Rachelle Darabi.

Dear SDPA,

As the saying goes, time flies. I can hardly believe it, but the days are few until I enter retirement after 32 years in higher-ed. The last 12 years here at MSU have been wonderful. I have so enjoyed working with all of you. We have so many things to be proud of like the creation of the Bear CLAW, Jump Start, Bear Breaks Immersion Program, Peace Corp Prep Program, the Bear Pantry, the Bachelor of General Studies, FCTL Bootcamps, First Gen initiatives, and the Center for Academic Success and Transition. In addition to these new initiatives, your work in SDPA has greatly enhanced Academic Advising, the Master Advisor Program, Transfer Advising, student retention initiatives, Service-Learning, faculty development, faculty curriculum grant

offerings, diversity training for faculty, and all aspects of the Public Affairs mission through the conference, convocation, the Naturalization Ceremony, and more. Forgive me if I have missed some of the unit's accomplishments. They are so vast that it's hard to capture everything, but most important is the impact of your work. All of you have made Missouri State a stronger and better institution which has profound impact on our students. Because of all of you, tens of thousands of students have accomplished their goals. I have had the great honor of being a part of your amazing work, and I greatly appreciate my time with you at MSU. My only disappointment is that SDPA will no longer exist. However, under the new organizational structure, I know you all will excel and continue to collaborate with each other. Best wishes for a bright future to all of you.

Rachelle

Dr. Kris Sutliff, Professor Emeritus, Missouri State University



When Dr. Rachelle Darabi arrived on campus in late September of 2008, the new Associate Provost for Student Development and Public Affairs brought a fresh vision for solidifying MSU's Public Affairs Mission. Many on campus could name the pillars of the mission—ethical leadership, cultural competence, and community engagement—but were not sure what all that meant, and many didn't really care. Today, thanks in large part to her leadership, the mission is in many ways fully integrated into the fabric of the institution. Though she would be quick to say she didn't make those changes without help, perhaps her leadership in integrating the mission is the most significant of her accomplishments at MSU.

Specific changes/additions Dr. Darabi deserves credit for spearheading include transforming the Academic Development Center to the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning (and hiring instructional designers to support it) and the Writing Center into the Bear CLAW (Center for Learning and Writing) with a much larger mission, including subject-area tutoring and peer mentors as well as workshops to improve student success. She broadened the scope of the Academic Advisement Center, now the Academic Advising and Transfer Center (emphasizing more help for transfer students) and First-Year Programs, now The Center for Academic Success and Transition (adding support for first-generation students). Dr. Darabi also helped create the Jump START Program ("Summer Transition and Academic Readiness Training," working with students at risk to grow their retention rate from about 25% to 75 and even 80%), the Peace Corps Prep Program (to prepare students for international fieldwork and Peace Corps service), and the Bear Pantry (a food bank for hungry students).

Missouri State's *Journal of Public Affairs* had lain dormant for years, and Dr. Darabi recognized its potential as a voice for our mission. She researched its history and resurrected it with significant changes: as an electronic publication with themed issues and contributions from writers outside Missouri State University. She sought and received a partnership with the American Democracy Project, thereby getting help with establishing a first-class editorial board. Under her leadership as Executive Editor, the *eJournal of Public Affairs* has flourished.

These are a few of Dr. Rachelle Darabi's accomplishments at Missouri State, but no tribute would be complete without mentioning what a joy it has been to work with her. She has led us gently and by example, and always with a dose of fun. Having served as Interim Associate Provost while we searched for the right person to fill the job, I was privileged to work closely with Rachelle for the first several months she was on campus, and again after I retired as I filled in as managing editor for the *eJournal*. It was easy to work with her—and it always seemed like I was working *with* her, not *for* her—for at all times she was in the trenches working as hard as any of us. I was impressed with her vision for MSU's mission and the fresh ideas she brought for putting it into practice. But even more I was impressed with her attitude and approach, with her ability to make the load seem light. Her eyes literally sparkle, letting her personality shine through. It doesn't hurt that she also likes barbeque and fun field trips as much as I do. Her retirement is MSU's loss, but I hope now I can spend more time with my friend. For us retirees, every day is a snow day, and I know Rachelle will continue to fill her days with fun and exciting adventures. Thanks for all you've done for Missouri State University—and happy trails, Rachelle!

Michael Frizell, Director of Student Learning Services, Missouri State University

When I heard I was going to have a new supervisor, and I was skeptical.



Four years earlier, I moved from a faculty line in the now-defunct Collegiate Reading and Learning Program to a staff position as director of the Writing Center during a time of change at Missouri State University. We dropped the “Southwest” from our name, enhanced our admission requirements, and dissolved the University College. I reported to a vice president – I don't remember what he was VP of, to be honest. He was jovial enough, but his handshakes were a crush designed to show dominance. His advice?

“Don't go over budget, okay?”

The bulk of my interactions were with student workers, clients of the Center, and the faculty advisory board I created to inform our work. If this autonomy sounds perfect to you, realize I was holding the Center together through sheer force of will.

Dr. Rachelle Darabi filled the new position of Associate Provost for Student Development and Public Affairs, a conglomeration of former University College departments and offices designed to fulfill MSU's public affairs mission.

Our first meeting was in my office, a former galley kitchen used by the Hospitality department. They left the 70s era cabinets. We exchanged pleasantries about our children and how she was settling in. She leaned back.

"You used to teach study skills. Did you enjoy that?"

"I'd like to get back to it."

"Good. How would you like to direct a Supplemental Instruction program?"

"Never heard of it."

Dr. Darabi explained that it was an academic support service created by the University of Missouri – Kansas City to help students succeed in high-enrollment courses. She added that she had ten faculty on board for the spring. I agreed. She told me to hire ten student workers without knowing anything about their roles, go to supervisor training in January (it was October), and then train them the following week. She trusted me to figure out the logistics.

Her enthusiasm was infectious. And trust? After speaking with my colleagues, I discovered she wasn't reinventing the wheel. She was helping the wheel roll better.

Inspired, I interviewed potential employees, telling them, "I don't know what SI is, but you'll love it! Are you in?" I mimicked her ardent enthusiasm, and it worked. Within a year, the SI supported 40 courses and served thousands of students.

Dr. Darabi leveraged this success to form a committee that expanded my center and created the Bear CLAW (Center for Learning and Writing). This modern learning commons included STEM tutoring, course mentoring, learning enhancement coaches, and more.

And that was only her first year of a twelve-year stint.

The dean who hired me 20 years ago told me, "Make yourself indispensable. Find ways to get in front of the right people." And I tried, my voice often the only voice in a room full of decision-makers who regarded student support services as a drain on funds. Now? I didn't need to conspire to sell my ideas. I had Dr. Darabi. She was in the rooms with the right people, armed with boundless energy, and she had plans. She saw the vacuum in student support and the potential to create something new. Something better.

And she did it with a smile.

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Justice and the Lens of History

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Justice and the Lens of History

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Justice and the Lens of History

One of my happiest moments was when a former student told me that I had ruined her life.

In the early days of retirement, every college professor reflects and wants to believe they made a difference for the students who came through their classrooms during their career. Sometimes the students take the time to tell us. One of my students told me—joyfully—that I ruined things for her because she now sees herself in a way that makes it impossible to have the same conversations with family and friends that she used to have before she took my class. Something changed in her forever. What changed? She now sees herself in history, and she cannot un-see herself in this way.

In the spring of 2004, the Kansas Health Foundation gave me the opportunity to hear Bill Grace, the founder of the Center for Ethical Leadership. That day, in Wichita, Kansas, Bill Grace asked the question that would shape the rest of my teaching career and my purpose in life.

Where are you in history?

Until then, my career had been largely theoretical, teaching concepts from textbooks. Bill Grace's question helped me frame the study of leadership as a way for my students to see their places in the world and in history. Specifically, I began to use examples of protest and civil unrest to challenge students to see that history provides a perspective on current struggles for justice.

I became a Professor of Being on the Right Side of History.

Every current struggle for justice has a context. Issues of injustice are not unique to a moment, born completely from immediate circumstance. There is always historical context for any injustice, and there are always historical patterns indicating where the struggle will lead. Yet, I did not simply connect the dots to that past for my students. My approach was to personalize current events as history 30 years from now.

What will history say about where you stood on particular issues of justice as you lived through them? What answer will you give your grandchildren when they ask you about it?

My students were brought to understand that admiring Martin Luther King, Jr. today is easy. By contrast, a student sitting in Albertson Hall in 1965 most likely despised him, holding the majority view that he was a Communist. A lawbreaker. An outside agitator who often seemed connected to pickets and strikes, riots and property damage. We can see a tragic response to King's moment in the jeering, screaming faces of local resistance to the protests of the day. The angry people in the background (the majority) turned out to be on the wrong side of history.

Be careful where you stand.

More recently, I told my students that someday there would be statues of Colin Kaepernick throughout the United States. When the laughter in the room died down, we began to explore the

story of John Carlos and Tommie Smith at the 1968 Olympics. The image of their silent Black Power protest on the medalist podium is iconic today. I showed my students the 22-foot sculpture on the campus of San Jose State University. It is also a statue for Peter Norman, the White Australian silver medalist who stood in solidarity with Carlos and Smith, even loaning them his black gloves to wear in their salutes. Norman declined depiction in the sculpture, leaving his historic place on the stand empty, so others can stand today and photograph themselves in solidarity more than 50 years later. The protest is easy to support now, but it was an incredibly unpopular position for all three of the athletes in 1968. Thus, I cautioned students that if you are with the majority in an unpopular question of justice, it should make you nervous. Thirty years from now, you will be accountable.

“Curt, keep the faith, John Lewis.”

I retired from teaching in 2019. Like millions, I watched the massive street protests in cities across the country when the 8 minute, 46 second death of George Floyd became a viral moment that launched a racial reckoning in the United States earlier this year. Like millions, I watched the funeral and public commemoration of Congressman John Lewis when he passed away this summer. In this moment of deep, sometimes violent division in our public life over the future of our country, I found inspiration and hope. Last year, another former student passed a personal note to me from Congressman Lewis which read, “Curt, keep the faith, John Lewis.” Sir, I have, and I will.

In retirement, however, I am also aware that I am really no longer part of the story of higher education and justice. I no longer have the opportunity for students to come into my classroom each year. So, I find myself thinking about what I want to tell higher education professionals about my hopes for the opportunities they still have.

Our democracy and the classroom.

I hope teachers, administrators, program coordinators, and even governing boards will think about their own place in history. Thirty years from now, what will be the story of your own commitments during this time and times to come? Will you teach only for professional certification and to secure employment? We should teach students to embrace the accountability of their own commitments and their own places in history. Higher education has a role in the progress of social life and the dismantling of oppressive structures. Higher education will be accountable 30, 50, 100 years from now. As our society reckons with so many issues of injustice, perhaps even the ongoing commitment to the values and institutions of democracy itself, crucial work remains for higher education. It is the work of teaching, researching, and programming toward justice. When students come for an education, the institution must stand in ways that stand the test of history.

What side of history will you be on?

Author



Dr. Curt Brungardt, is Professor Emeritus of Leadership Studies at Fort Hays State University (FHSU) in Hays, KS. His 33-year career in higher education included various administrative roles and as a faculty member teaching both political science and leadership studies. Most recently, Dr. Brungardt was the Omer G. Voss Distinguished Professor of Leadership Studies and the Director of the Center for Civic Leadership. In addition to being the creator of the FHSU Department of Leadership Studies, and the co-founder of the Center for Civic Leadership, he specialized in the academic work of political leadership, social justice, and community organizing. Curt has authored and co-authored several books and numerous articles in the field of leadership development and civic engagement. He is recognized nationally for his work in the area of Social Change Leadership Theory.

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Toward the World We Long For: Churches and the Hope of Democratic Life

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Toward the World We Long For: Churches and the Hope of Democratic Life

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Abstract

This article draws on 8 years of research involving over 50 church members, clergy, and lay leaders in the United States. The effort began by asking how churches engage in politics, broadly understood, and what might help churches better achieve their often-stated aims of improving conditions in the communities where they are located. Three primary outcomes emerged from the study. The first was a framework for understanding how churches engage in political work. The second was the finding that deliberative practices can enrich the ways churches engage in political work that simultaneously strengthens democracy and helps churches advance their efforts to improve their communities. Finally, the findings highlighted some of the resonances between democratic and religious life. Naming these resonances can help scholars better understand the challenges of democratic life and provide insights for practitioners working toward a healthier and safer world.

Toward the World We Long For: Churches and the Hope of Democratic Life

The work discussed in this article drew on 8 years of research with over 50 church members, clergy, and lay leaders in the United States. Specifically, I detail three primary outcomes that emerged from this study. First, I outline a framework for understanding how churches engage in political work. In part, this framework pushes back on the dominant narrative about the intersection of religion and politics in the United States which tends to focus on the role of the Christian right^[1] in electoral politics. I hope this framework provides scholars and practitioners a means of parsing the complex ways religion and politics intersect in this country. Second, I make the case that deliberative practices can enrich the ways religious organizations engage in political work that simultaneously strengthens democracy in general and helps churches advance their stated intentions of “improving things” in their communities. Finally, I highlight some of the resonances between democratic and religious life that arose during the 8 years of this research. I argue that recognizing these resonances helps scholars better understand the challenges of democratic life and offers insights for practitioners working toward a healthier and safer world.

Methodology

Since 2012, I have met regularly with a diverse group of religious leaders interested in the ways religious people and organizations can strengthen the ability of everyday people to improve conditions in the communities where they live.^[2] Many churches and faith-based organizations have a deep commitment to the well-being of the communities where they are located and wish for things to “be better” or to “help improve things.” Yet, despite their efforts, many church communities continue to struggle to make progress on pressing issues (Funciello, 1993; Horrell, 2019; Lichterman, 2005; Lupton, 2012; McKnight, 1989). My study used grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) to develop a framework for better understanding the kinds of political and public work that churches and their members do to address the challenges of shared life together (Bonhoeffer, 2009) in a profoundly troubled world.

The research participants have been at various stages of initiatives designed to engage their organizations in deeper democratic and community work. The bulk of my research has centered on Christian churches and communities—the focus of this study.^[3] Participants have included those from the United Methodist Church, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, the

Presbyterian Church (USA), the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Baptist tradition, Disciples of Christ (Christian Church), the Anglican Church, and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as individuals involved in nondenominational, ecumenical, and emergent church contexts.

In addition to in-person meetings, in which participants discussed their efforts and reflected together on what they were learning, research participants shared their work regularly via video conference and communicated about their work via email and written reflections. I have also made site visits to churches and organizations in Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Arkansas, Washington, DC, and Colorado that are working at the intersection of politics and religion. In addition to transcripts of meetings and interviews, this work has yielded thousands of pages of research notes from interviews, discussions, and site visits. These transcripts and notes, in conversation with the literature on this topic, form the basis of the conclusions discussed here.

Churches and Politics

In recent years, both in popular media and casual conversation, the role that conservative Christianity plays in national politics has comprised a significant portion of the public discussion at the intersection of religion and politics (e.g., Haberman, 2018; Hartman, 2015; Keller, 2017). It is, of course, a worthy task to develop a better understanding of the relationship between national electoral politics and religious identification. However, the hyper-focus on the role the Christian right plays in shaping national politics is often at the expense of a better understanding of the myriad ways that religiously committed people and religious institutions take part in political life in the United States. When the public narrative focuses on national electoral politics and the role that conservative Christianity plays in it, that narrative not only speaks to what is happening, but also shapes what is possible. It can constrain the religious and public imagination regarding the diverse possibilities for the ways everyday people can contribute to a more vibrant and robust democracy at the intersection of religion and politics. In an effort to expand the narrative about religion and politics in the United States, this study outlines a framework intended to help readers better understand and conceptualize the range of ways that religiously committed people and institutions take part in political life.

Religious identity, institutions, and commitments have played a prominent role in the trajectory and character of U.S. democracy since its inception. In *Democracy in America* (1945/1835), Tocqueville reflected on religion “as a political institution which powerfully contributes to the maintenance of a democratic republic among the Americans.” He noted, “On my arrival in the U.S. the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there, the more I perceived the great political consequences resulting from this new state of things” (p. 319). Further, as Raboteau (2004) pointed out in *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South*, from early in the history of the United States, religious communities often provided a taste of democratic life and self-rule when this was not yet possible in other parts of life. AME pastor Rev. Dr. Robert Turner (2015) noted in a conversation on this topic, “You might be the janitor at the school, but at church you are a deacon. Black people could vote in church long before they could vote in public elections.”^[4] Likewise, prior to the 1960s in particular, but in some cases still today, women’s activities as citizens and leaders have often been more acceptable and gained more traction in the context of

church activities than in other realms of public life (Braude, 2007; Griffith, 1997; Higginbotham, 1994; Hill Lindley, 1996).

Beyond worship services, churches also provide a space for those struggling to make sense of who they are called to be, individually and collectively. Churches can be places where beliefs are affirmed and strengthened, as well as a context in which dearly held convictions and practices are challenged and undone. In the case of the Black church, there is a long history of providing both respite and a safe space for those who have faced painful discrimination and abuse in a White supremacist culture (Raboteau, 2001). For the poor and the hungry, a church often offers a hot meal or a place to lay one's head for the night (Adkins et al., 2011; Wolfer & Sherr, 2003). People attend church to socialize and seek fellowship, as well as to learn, grow, and serve. It is where many celebrate sacraments and commemorate birth, marriage, and death. Churches have also been central to many political movements in the United States, notably temperance and prohibition (Coker, 2007; Morone, 2003; Quinn, 2002), the civil rights movement (Findlay, 1993; McDaniel, 2008), opposition to abortion (Von Hagel & Mansbach, 2016), and issues related to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender identity (Hartman, 2015; White, 2015). Despite a decline in church attendance in recent decades (Olson, 2008; Pew, 2015, 2019b;), the church still plays an important role in American life. Lichterman and Potts (2009) pointed out in the introduction to *The Civic Life of American Religion*, "Religious congregations and associations might be the most widespread and egalitarian sites of civic engagement in the U.S. Almost half of Americans' association memberships are church related. Half of Americans' volunteering take place in a religious context" (p. 4).

Often, a distinction is drawn between churches' religious and political activities. The tax code, of course, affirms this distinction, limiting the ways that churches engage in political activities in order to maintain their tax-exempt status (Internal Revenue Service, 2007). Sometimes, it is possible and productive to delineate religious identity, belief, and practices on one hand, and political identity, belief, and practices on the other. Yet, in many ways, the political and the religious are inextricable. Democratic theorists have highlighted the ways that political life stretches beyond formal or institutional politics with terms like *everyday politics* (Boyte, 2005) and *organic politics* (Mathews, 2014). Similarly, Bayat's (2012) *Life as Politics* offered important insights into an understanding of politics that takes seriously the way everyday actions by citizens meaningfully shape possibilities for shared existence.

Understood this way, citizens take part in political life not only when they vote, protest, or campaign, but also when they give money to people in need, care for children, discuss the value of human life at a bible study, post on social media, or respond to a complicated interpersonal situation at work. Politics is not simply who gets what, when, and how (Lasswell, 1936); it is about how we live together among each other, day in and day out. Citizens, churches, and communities are simultaneously and continuously co-creating political and religious belief, identity, and practices in everyday life.

The ways religious and political beliefs, identities, and practices cannot be fully separated are underlined by the popular refrain that emerged from second-wave feminist movements: "The personal is political." There is no known originator of the phrase, but Hanisch's 1970 essay, "The Personal is Political," was one of the earlier written engagements with the phrase, and it has been further developed in more recent feminist theory and theology (Cornwall Collective, 1980; Crenshaw, 1991). Initially, the phrase referred to the ways that certain actions often rendered personal (e.g., cleaning the house, taking care of children) had implications that necessarily

reached beyond individuals' lives and structured possibilities for shared existence. This refrain resonates today as many struggle to make sense of the implications our everyday actions and decisions have—not only for our own communities and neighbors, but also for people across the country and world whose lives are bound up with our own through systems of cultural, governance, and commerce. Given this, the work here treats the political work of churches broadly, beyond engagement in electoral politics, and includes the ways those within churches engage with each other, develop policies, and interact with the broader community.

Churches' Approaches to Public and Political Engagement

One of the central findings of this study was that the political and public work that churches engage in falls into four categories, each of which has its own strengths and challenges. The following section includes descriptions and a comparative analysis of these four approaches: social service provision, political mobilization, community organizing, and deliberative practices. Of course, it is possible to parse church political engagement in different ways (e.g., Beyerlein & Chaves, 2003, p. 235), and the approaches are not mutually exclusive. This is one framework that offers some helpful insights for both researchers and practitioners who are interested in how churches can be a part of building civic capacity, while acknowledging that this does not exhaust all productive frameworks for understanding churches' political engagement.

Social Services Provision

With few exceptions, churches provide some sort of service to communities where they are located, and many serve in other communities as well (Wuthnow, 2014). This can take a programmatic form such as job training, afterschool programs, support groups, or counseling. Yet, service also involves material help such as cash assistance or free food (Poppendieck, 1999). Typically, the stated intentions of such social services include a commitment to helping people become more self-sufficient (Corbett & Fikkert, 2014; Ellerman, 2006; Poppendieck, 1999).

The service work that churches take part in is rarely framed in terms of building community or strengthening civic capacity. Success stories of individuals who have overcome challenges such as poverty, addiction, or abuse abound. Likewise, there are many examples of service activities that have transformed individuals and the churches that provide those services. However, it is difficult to find accounts of communities where the social services provided by churches have formed a foundation for citizens to change the circumstances that led to the problems in the first place (Corbett & Fikkert, 2014; Lupton, 2012; McKnight, 1989, 2000; Poppendieck, 1999). As Rev. Mike Mather noted when discussing his church's food pantry, "Year after year we were still handing out food yet people were still hungry. We felt so good about it that I broke my arm patting myself on the back. But nothing really was actually better" (M. Mather, personal communication, May 2016). In arguing against church social service provision as a mode of strengthening communities and building democratic capacity, John McKnight (1989), director of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute, noted, "I have never seen service systems that brought people to well-being, delivered them to citizenship, or made them free" (p. 38).

According to De'Amon Harges, a full-time "roving listener" at a church that eschewed its social services efforts, "the church decided its call was to be good neighbors. And that we should listen

and see people as children of God” (King, 2015). This meant “retiring” the church’s social service programs and shifting to paying closer attention to hearing others, working in partnership and collaboration rather than through one-way service delivery, and letting go of the need for assurance about outcomes beforehand. I return to this theme later in the article, but this repeatedly came up in interviews and conversations: Close attention to improving metrics and outcomes did not bring about the deeper changes that communities wanted.

Even though there is little evidence that a social services approach transforms the ways that citizens and communities function, the strengths of this approach were made clear by the vast majority of research participants. One of the most obvious benefits of this approach is that it involves clear action that everyday people can take. This approach is often not taxing for volunteers and feels very rewarding, which means that significant numbers of people are able and willing to participate in such efforts. While there are Christian leaders and movements that suggest that living as a Christian should result in radical sacrifice (e.g., Claiborne, 2006), the reality is that most churches in the United States rely on those who have jobs, families, intensely busy schedules, and a disinclination toward more sacrificial modes of religiosity (Bowler, 2013). For many, service is an achievable and important way that people and churches put theo-political commitments into practice, and the services they provide meet urgent and real needs in communities.

At its best, service can be a steppingstone toward finding ways to imagine and bring into being the world as it should be. It is a way to get to know people who are different from oneself and to be helpful in a time of crisis. However, for churches wanting to address the fundamental and long-term challenges that communities face, important questions arise: How can service work be transformed such that it moves away from short-term, individualized crisis management toward collaborative problem solving and the expansion of democratic participation? How might a community transform so that formal social services provision is not so urgent because the community has found other ways for citizen and neighbors to support each other? How can social services be reframed as a community-building effort rather than as a self-sufficiency project? I return to these questions in the final section of the article which explores possibilities for promising paths forward.

Political Mobilization

A second way that churches take part in public life is through political mobilization around an issue, ideology, or set of candidates. Churches engaged in mobilization work are involved in campaigns, elections, policy, protest, and advocacy, and they mobilize with a clear end in mind such as making abortion illegal or helping to stop global climate disruption. The goal is to get as many people as possible to take action to promote a predetermined end. Mobilization has been used especially effectively in more conservative traditions, but it has also been utilized in a range of moderate and liberal contexts.^[5] This is the type of political engagement most often seen in the news and thought of when most individuals think about churches’ involvement in politics.

At the heart of mobilization efforts is the idea that those who try to mobilize others have a clear sense of what needs to be done and that other people need to act in order to get it done. There are, of course, many contexts in which churches’ mobilization efforts aimed at getting other people to act in a particular way are helpful, necessary, and reflective of pressing and urgent needs among citizens, communities, the nation, and the world. Such work is grounded in

important theological and political traditions of prophetic action, calling for people to act on pressing moral issues (McDaniel, 2008; Noll, 1990; Slessarev-Jamir, 2011; Wuthnow & Evans, 2002).

There is, however, the risk that mobilization becomes the primary locus of church political activity and is not preceded by deliberative practices that encourage mobilization to reflect the reasoned and prayerful convictions of church members and communities. It is easier to demand that others act in a particular way in relation to a public issue than to find ways to work with others through shared action to discover common ground across difference. It takes less time and energy to insist on a particular moral viewpoint and attendant set of actions than to negotiate questions of values with others and jointly determine action. When mobilization is not woven into other forms of public engagement, it risks trading immediate and easily observable political gains for the long-term benefits that come when faithful and diverse citizens struggle together to make sense of and act on complex theological and public problems.

Another challenge that the mobilization model faces is that social service efforts, community organizing frameworks, or deliberative norms are sometimes used as tools for political mobilization. Providing social services as a way to mobilize citizens around a particular issue or agenda has notably different theological and political resonances than undertaking such work as a way to serve those whom Jesus called “the least of these” (Matthew 25:40). Likewise, training in deliberative norms (Shields, 2007, p. 97) in order to encourage people to reach a particular foregone conclusion weakens the individual and collective learning that can emerge from these efforts. Churches and leaders interested in strengthening communities’ abilities to address their challenges should proceed with caution when using service, deliberative practices, or community organizing frameworks as strategies to encourage action toward already-determined ends which does not engage people themselves in assessing what makes sense. Such efforts can produce narrow, short-term gains but ultimately undermine trust and hamper the development of citizens’ and churches’ authentic engagement and collaboration.

Despite some of its challenges, one of the strengths of the mobilization approach is that the moral or theological decisions are already made. An example is a church’s position on global climate disruption: It is a problem, and others need to take swift action to reduce carbon dioxide emissions through highly restrictive legislation and sacrificial personal action. The questions at stake in mobilization efforts are typically questions of strategy rather than values: How do we get where we know we need to go? In a time when citizens are often beleaguered by the intensive pace of life in today’s global economy (Cain Miller, 2015; Schulte, 2014), clear steps, such as writing a letter to one’s congressperson about an issue or showing up to protest, are often more manageable than the difficult and time-consuming work of coming to public judgement on complicated and dynamic problems, often referred to as *wicked problems* (Carcasson, 2013; Rittel & Webber, 1973; Yankelovich, 1991, 2014).^[6]

In assessing how churches can strengthen citizens’ abilities to act together to build stronger, healthier, and more democratic communities, many churches are finding that it is important to take the long view of such work. Whereas meeting immediate goals for mobilizing church members and citizens around a particular issue often makes sense, it is important to ensure that this not only meets short-term goals, but also considers the skills, habits, and relationships that the mobilization fosters in the medium and long term. With particular attention to the work of strengthening deliberative capacity and problem-solving abilities, mobilization often makes the most sense when it grows out of other forms of political and religious engagement that take

seriously the complexity of the problems that diverse communities face, engaging a wide range of citizens in the process of arriving at mobilization goals and strategies. For churches interested in strengthening citizens' and communities' abilities to have a say in their lives and futures, they might consider how mobilization can be a part of their public engagement practices such that it increases citizen agency and collaboration.

Community Organizing

Community organizing is distinguished from political mobilization both in terms of scale and emphasis. Unlike mobilization, community organizing, at its best, does not begin with a fixed end in mind. Rather, community organizing in churches focuses on working *with* a community to take on and successfully address pressing issues (Bretherton, 2015; Defilippis et al., 2010; Jacobsen, 2001; Posadas, 2008; Warren & Wood, 2001; Wood, 2003). While churches involved in community organizing often have a sense of what the community might want or need, there is, at least in principle and often in practice, a commitment to fostering the community's ability to reflect on, articulate, and carry out efforts they have identified themselves. The questions at stake in community organizing require negotiating issues, strategies, and values before determining desired outcomes.

Regarding scale, the community organizing approach often has a more local focus.^[7] While there are nationwide networks of community organizations and issues that transcend local communities,^[8] community organizing typically focuses on local and regional issues that citizens would recognize as issues germane to their own community. Examples include improving community-police relationships, the prevention of a local school closure, or coalition work that improves a neighborhood's ability to react to proposed construction that would physically divide the community.

A focus on relationships is a particular strength of the community organizing approach. Getting to know one's neighbors and community through one-on-ones and house meetings is an essential part of this model (Bretherton, 2015, pp. 122–123; Jacobsen, 2001, pp. 59–64). People build relationships by listening to others, hearing their concerns, and finding resonances across difference. The relational emphasis of community organizing can help churches and members connect with the wider community and each other. In this way, building relationships is essential to problem solving, expanding democratic participation, and having more of a say in a community's present and future. It is very difficult to address problems and increase civic capacity when an individual does not know their neighbors—literal and proverbial.

Another strength of the community organizing approach is that it often explicitly acknowledges social and power structures that shape life and possibilities for citizens and communities. In the faith-based community-organizing context, these discussions are enriched by tying this analysis to examples in scripture. Such examples help church and community members identify rhetorical common ground with religious narratives that complicate present-day differences and polarizations. The ability to connect current community challenges to what has gone before is helpful in opening up space for communities to see the broader contexts and environments into which they are woven. Additionally, connections to scripture and a long history of religious communities struggling together for change often serve an important inspirational function in the difficult and protracted work of change and growth.

Although there are many benefits to community organizing, the division between the organizers and the organized has the potential to undermine the democratic aims of the work. While organizing creates structures for everyday citizens to reflect and work together around shared challenges, there is oftentimes an underlying assumption that everyday people need specially trained people (“organizers”) to help them reflect critically on their own circumstances and make decisions about how to best act. For example, in *Resurrecting Democracy*, a study of community organizing as it related to religious commitment across both the U.S. and British contexts, Bretherton (2015) noted the importance of experts in the community organizing model to strengthen the “interpretive capacity” of citizens, noting that “people are not always aware of the issues that affect them or able to identify what their real interests are” (p. 113).

Community organizing conducted through churches is a part of the history of important and positive progress toward a world in which citizens have more say in their present and future. Yet, the rhetorical and often practical divisions between those who are trained, or sufficiently educated and aware, and those who are presumed to not yet know what they need or how to get it done raises questions about citizens’ abilities to know and understand themselves and their own communities. It also raises practical questions about how change can happen on a broad scale if churches and citizens need trained organizers to help them interpret appropriately “the issues that affect them” and their “real interests.” For churches and communities interested in increasing democratic capacity and problem-solving skills, it is important to consider what can be learned from community organizing models and successes, while at the same time recognizing the challenges of models in which outside organizers are framed as essential to communities and citizens doing the work of democracy. Churches might ask themselves how they can create space for relationships, learning, and collaboration, while decentering any one institution or individual role as necessary for success.

Deliberative Practices

Fourth and finally, deliberation in some form is integral to the way churches engage in political and public life. While it can be woven into the other forms of political engagement outlined earlier, deliberation is distinct here for several reasons, namely because it is often unrecognized or unnamed as a political and religious practice in the context of church life. The literature on deliberation in churches is somewhat limited and rarely considers deliberation as, at once, a religious and political practice. Further, deliberation is distinct in that it provides a particularly promising and underutilized path toward the end of creating healthier, stronger, and more democratic communities. When coupled with other practices, it is well-positioned to strengthen community-building efforts.

Although not always self-named as public work, churches are a vital public space for people to share, process, and better understand the theological and public issues with which they grapple. Each week, thousands of bible studies groups, Sunday schools, and small groups meet in churches as citizens try to make sense of their world and how they should respond its challenges. In the wake of tragedies, churches are often places where people gather to reflect and understand what has happened both in public and theological terms. Churches are locations for community conversations and forums on pressing issues, where members and people from the community come together to try to better understand each other, often weighing options and identifying

common ground from which to act (Coffin, 2005; Djupe & Calfano, 2012; Djupe & Olson, 2013; Neiheisel et al., 2009; Schade, 2018).

Theorists and practitioners understand deliberation in various ways (Carcasson & Sprain, 2016; Chambers, 2003; Ercan, 2014; Habermas, 1998; Heierbacher, 2007; London, n.d.a; McAfee, 2004; Yankelovich, 2001). For the purposes here, deliberation is distinct from dialogue and civil conversation in that it includes, but goes beyond, respectful listening and increased understanding.^[9] It also involves weighing trade-offs, making choices, and identifying common ground for action (Carcasson & Sprain, 2016; Chambers, 2003; Ercan, 2014; London, n.d.b). An example of the deliberative work in the context of churches can be seen in the efforts of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA), which engages in deliberations about gender-based violence and same-sex marriage (Djupe & Olson, 2013; Kaufman, 2016, 2019; Stumme, 2005). In both instances, the deliberations not only are intended to create space for sharing, understanding, and reflection, but also are explicit about the hard work involved in weighing competing values and identifying common ground for action (Kaufman, 2016; National Issues Forum, 2016; Sande, 2004).

Many churches also offer opportunities to learn and practice deliberative skills generally, independent of a focus on a particular issue. For instance, the Wake Forest Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, hosted a series of adult education classes on deliberative dialogue, in which the benefits were framed both in terms of the way it allows individuals to “enhance our democratic capacities” and the benefits to the community, where it can “serve as a vehicle to tackling some of our greatest challenges and determining a path forward” (Wake Forest Baptist Church, 2017). As another example of these efforts, the Second Presbyterian Church in Richmond, Virginia, offered an adult education series titled “Faithful Discourse in an Age of Polarization: The Bible, Politics, and Rebuilding Community” (Second Presbyterian Church, 2016). Various speakers from the community discussed ways the church and its members might be better neighbors, with particular attention given to the role sacred scripture plays in guiding this process (Williamson, 2016).

Some churches use guides or frameworks for deliberation,^[10] but one of the strengths of deliberative habits and practices is that their success does not depend on professionals, experts, or guides. While experts play an important role in deliberative systems (Mansbridge et al., 2013, pp. 13–17), there is a shortage of public space in U.S. public life where everyday citizens are considered valuable and vital to naming, framing, and addressing public issues (Boyte, 2009; Friedman & Rinehart, 2017; Mathews, 2016). The 2006 *Citizens at the Center* report made note of this, pointing out the lack of “opportunities for ordinary citizens to come together, deliberate, and take action collectively to address public problems or issues that citizens themselves define as important and *in ways* that citizens themselves decide are appropriate and/or needed” (Gibson, 2006, p. 7). Deliberative spaces in churches provide a context in which many citizens are already gathering to discuss and negotiate what they hold valuable, where there are already pathways for action through the ministries in which churches and their members take part. As Lee and Mason-Imbody (2013) wrote,

Too often, deliberation is misunderstood as a specialized technique or method. By examining everyday speech acts, we can show that deliberation is a natural part of talk—a native plant, not some exotic flower. (p. 8)^[11]

In many conversations, church leaders or members have noted that this is “something we are already doing,” but identifying it as a meaningful political and religious practice opens up possibilities to be more intentional about the ways this can strengthen and catalyze the public work churches do. It helps expand the possibilities for what is “political” in a time when the public narrative often frames politics as a battle waged by elites and zealots, in which everyday people sit on the sidelines and hope to avoid stray bullets.

At their best, deliberative practices increase the democratic character of other approaches to political engagement by bringing to the fore the importance of ongoing learning with others, naming issues in terms that make sense to everyday people and framing challenges so that there are viable options that can be considered and acted on.^[12] Everyday people must be able to do these things in order to support the transformations that many churches, citizens, and communities long for. Such efforts are best understood as not only political but also religious practices for churches that are seeking to transform themselves and to be a part of transforming the communities and world into which they are woven (Schade, 2018).

Throughout this study, participants highlighted the extent to which they found resonances between deliberative practices and the practices of their faith communities (Dedrick, 2016). In both cases, there is an emphasis on slowing down and decentering the self. There is a shared sense that “we” do not have all the answers ourselves, and however encoded some answers are (in scripture or law), they remain incomplete. There is an acknowledgment that whatever we are doing has to relate to something that we already have: What we are doing cannot be completely disconnected from what has gone before. Finally, there is a sense that our work and efforts are proximate or open-ended. There is always already^[13] uncertainty, and the story is neither closed nor ever fully known. In considering the resonances between religious life and deliberative democratic efforts, there is a sense that humanity cannot thrive or be complete without community. Recognizing the ways such undertakings are mutually reinforcing can serve as helpful reminders about how our political and religious longings spring from similar places as we struggle to live well with and among each other. The following section highlights some of the insights that emerged from the efforts of the research participants as they sought to integrate more deliberative practices into their churches, communities, and ministries.

Steps in the Right Direction

There is no formula that churches can use to strengthen citizens’ abilities to act together to build stronger, healthier, and more democratic communities. It is imperative that communities, religious or secular, experiment with what works in their context and understand that failing and learning from failures are important parts of the process. That said, over the course of this study, some helpful insights emerged that offer good starting points for churches interested in strengthening citizens’ and communities’ abilities to act together toward the world they long for. While this study focused on churches, I suspect that these insights could help other religious groups as they seek new ways to engage with the communities where they are located.

Stop Creating “Good Programs”

In “The Organization-First approach,” Creighton and Harwood (2008) argued that the internal needs and logic of an organization often inadvertently become the focus of an organization’s

actions, at the expense of its mission or stated purpose. They found that many organizations take a project-development and implementation approach to their work: assessment of needs, education, planning, and then collaboration (in that order). In short, the “good programs” that organizations develop too often meet the needs of the organization but not the needs of the community (see also McKnight, 2000).

As many churches and ecclesial structures struggle to survive, they turn more and more inward—some might say they are circling the wagons. In a conversation about the ways churches might transition to more collaborative approaches to building community and civic capacity, the Rev. Dr. Dana Horrell, a United Methodist minister and nonprofit director, reflected that “denominations are talking more to themselves than they ever have” (Horrell, 2015). This fear and inward focus has led organizations to view collaboration and deliberation as an unpredictable risk. There are concerns that collaboration and deliberation can “go awry,” that people may not be happy, and that the organization will be blamed (Creighton & Harwood, 2008). Collaborative and deliberative efforts do not have predictable outcomes, cannot be easily controlled, and cannot be planned out in a way churches are apt to want to do.

The organization-first approach is familiar to many who struggle to try new and innovative ways to solve problems and address pressing moral and theological issues in communities. In churches, perhaps more so than secular organizations, there is a sense that the stakes are very high. In many churches, both leaders and members share a sense that the costs of failure are not only “the doors shutting” but also more serious eternal consequences. One result of this concern is often resistance to experimentation or risk-taking (Hearst, 2016; Kercheville, 2016).

This nexus of practical and theological concerns often moves churches toward predictable programs that produce results—food given out, warm places of rest provided, laws passed—that feel as though they are not likely to threaten the organization itself. Yet, replication of “best practices” and “good programs” often leaves out the creative learning that comes from everyday people working together to talk about, make sense of, and act together on their shared challenges (Frederickson, 2003). “Good programs” do not leave room for productive failure or struggle, which often stifles the learning and change that are essential for citizens to collaboratively address problems. In conversations among clergy about these challenges, many also noted that “good programs” can crowd out space for congregations, members, and the community to experience and connect both with God and with each other. It is clear that some churches get so invested in a safe “good programs” model that they lose sight of the risky and radical work of the church that has strong historical and theological roots in Christian tradition and scripture.

One way churches have found to counter this tendency toward an inward focus is through deliberative practices—through formal forums, bible studies, and informal gatherings—within the context of church life and also with other citizens and institutions. This requires considering others’ views, turning away from the self/institution and what is known, negotiating values, and weighing possible options for action (Hammond & Morrill, 2016; Horrell, 2019, pp.149–154; Schade, 2018; Turner, 2015). It is difficult for churches to give up the predictability of “good programs.” Yet, many are surprised to find how much energy is freed up by deemphasizing programs and instead putting that time and energy directly toward relational, democratic work with everyday people, unconstrained by the sometimes oppressive predictability that can come with even the best programmatic work.

Build in What is Already There

In discussing the problems associated with creating “good programs,” several ministers and community members cautioned against “throwing the baby out with the bathwater” (e.g., Horrell, 2015; Kaufman, 2016; Turner, 2015). While some churches have undertaken major changes and eliminated, for instance, all social service programs (King, 2015; Mather, 2016), for others it is important to create space for new ways of doing things without insisting on rushed change. Given the significant number of people already doing service, mobilization, community organizing, and programmatic work in churches, it often makes practical sense to build on the places where deliberative and democratic work is already happening within these contexts—sometimes just here or there, sometimes in the cracks and fissures, sometimes quietly and humbly in ways that are hard to discern.

Another way to build on strengths is to recognize the extent to which churches remain one of the institutions where citizens feel they belong, where they have strong ties, and where many people (about 35%) still have high levels of trust (Saad, 2012, 2015, 2018). In light of today’s historically low levels of trust and confidence in most institutions (Gallup, 2020; Pew, 2019a), churches provide a context in which people talk face to face, struggle with moral issues and values, and act together on those values. Communities, churches, and ecumenical and denominational organizations that want to build on these enduring connections and relationships can ask themselves:

- How can deliberation be named and/or introduced in the work we are already doing?
- How can we reframe our current work in a way that foregrounds community building and civic capacity?
- Where does “what is already happening” overlap with community-building and deliberative practices? How can we strengthen that work?
- How can the activities we are already engaged in—service, mobilization, deliberation, community organizing, spiritual reflection, and guidance—do more to reinforce the church as both a node in the community network and as a civic “gym” of sorts where people learn and strengthen democratic skills and habits?^[14]

Deemphasize Outcomes

Many churches have found that by focusing too closely on short-term observable outcomes, they lose sight of the longer term yet vitally important goals of their public work such as effectively solving problems and expanding democratic participation. One of the key findings of this study was that in order to make space for long-term improvements, the focus on measurable, observable outcomes, which have often come to define “effective programs” or “a successful ministry,” must be reduced. Too often, evaluations track and attempt to improve what can be easily measured (Muller, 2018). Yet, the ability to learn from failure, to take risks, to frame issues effectively, to listen and understand others, and to act on problems together is difficult to measure, particularly for organizations with limited or absent resources for in-depth evaluation (Dubnick & Frederickson, 2011, pp. 31–33; Muller, 2018). For instance, it is very difficult to measure the process of finding common ground when grappling with practical implications of bible verses in the regular Wednesday night bible study, or to measure the expansion of public space that a church creates when it helps organize a forum on pressing social issues in the

community. It is, of course, easy to measure how many meals are provided at a soup kitchen or to assess if a controversial law was blocked, but these measures do not speak to citizens' civic abilities or churches' progress in building community and civic capacity.

Some churches have found it helpful to frame the decreased emphasis on outcomes theologically, in terms of "trusting God." While this is understood in a wide range of ways across traditions, churches and community members have benefited from making the connection between the unknowability of the infinite and future, and the ability to let go of expectations about what the best or right outcomes should be. Perhaps counterintuitively, this letting go has helped churches move toward the sort of world they long for (often framed theologically as "the Kingdom of God"). This has strong theological roots in the Christian tradition and is also affirmed in the literature on what makes communities work well (Mathews, 2002). It seems that a less outcome-focused approach to the work of community building and democratic engagement allows churches to better enact their good intentions.

In conversations among lay and ordained church leaders, many have also found that the metaphor of an "ecology of democracy" is helpful in thinking about the risks and benefits of letting go of outcomes. Just as ecosystems change organically and develop in ways that experts cannot design or foresee, democratic ecosystems need the flexibility to change and grow organically without overly prescriptive control. Does this mean that the system cannot be supported and nurtured? No. Rather, it implies a trust in the organic logic of the ecosystem as a whole—that is, citizens coming together and learning through experience. AME Pastor Rev. Dr. Stanley Hearst pointed out that some religious institutions would rather die than change, and he emphasized that deliberative, democratic work that happens in, and grows out of, religious organizations will not "be for everyone." However, for those who already want to do this work or who are looking for a better approach than the one they have that is not working, it is important to continue disrupting and complicating expectations about what will "make things better."

Conclusion

Many citizens seem concerned with the state of the world and do not know what to do. The United States has faced repeated, horrific murders of African Americans; protests related to race and policing; an ongoing and serious pandemic; contentious and uniquely uncivil election cycles; harassment and targeted violence against religious, ethnic, racial and sexual minorities; targeted killings of police in several cities; mass shootings; extraordinary polarization; and increasing reports of terror attacks, refugee crises, and civil war abroad. Social media and public conversation often center on a sense of speechlessness and helplessness. Many turn to their churches for solace, for answers, and for hope that they might find a way forward that honors their religious commitments as well as their community, families, and the broader world.

In 1992, Vaclav Havel, political dissident and president of both the former Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, gave an address at Wroclaw University in which he spoke of the dissidents who,

despite the risks involved and the uncertainty of any real changes resulting, repeated over and over again that the emperor was wearing no clothes. This Sisyphian, almost quixotic stance originated mainly in the moral or existential field, in a heightened feeling of personal

responsibility for the world. That is, the political activity of the dissidents had, far more obviously than it might have in conditions of freedom, a spiritual or moral dimension. Their way of thinking and behaving, their values, the claims they made, their style of work, their standards of success and failure ... can rightly appear inappropriate, alien, impractical, and idealistic when transferred to real politics in democratic conditions.

As we face a world that many perceive to be chaotic and perhaps irrecoverable, where our best hopes can seem silly and wildly unrealistic, it is helpful to remember concrete examples in recent memory, alongside the many examples we can draw from religious tradition, that even in the most difficult times, there is the possibility that things might be otherwise. Although not sufficient for bringing about the world we long for, it is essential that there are people who continue work that can seem, in our current day and age, Sisyphean.

There is indeed an important “spiritual and moral dimension” to this belief in the possibility of a different world. The work of relationships, change, and growth is slow and often mundane, and it requires people to take a long, impractical view of shared life together (Bonhoeffer, 2009) that is unreasonably undeterred by election cycles and current events. The work is certainly long and hard, but the hope is that efforts such as those described in this article will add to the possibility that things might be otherwise and encourage those who share similar commitments to continue, even when things seem inappropriate, alien, impractical, and idealistic.

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1. The *Christian right* is an imprecise term, and there is little consensus—either scholarly or popular—about what it means (e.g., see Diamond, 1995, pp. 5–11 and Shields, 2009, pp. 10–17). See Pharr (2001, p. 39) and Wilcox and Robinson (2011, p. 39) for examples of definitions. I use the term in this article to refer to an influential set of organizations and leaders and a significant part of the U.S. citizenry that desires and/or works toward close alignment between U.S. laws/policy and a conservative Christian worldview. For more on a conservative Christian worldview, see Martin (1996); Pharr (2001); Williams (2010); and Wald and Calhoun-Brown's (2007) *Religion and Politics*, especially but not limited to Chapter 8. ↑

2. The Kettering Foundation has provided space and resources for those interested in this work to gather to share their experiences and insights several times a year since 2012. [↑](#)
3. Over the years, meetings have included religious leaders from a range of contexts, including Muslim, pagan, Jewish, Christian, ecumenical, and interfaith contexts. This study focused specifically on work in Christian contexts, although I look forward to additional research that attends to the particular contributions and challenges faced in other contexts. [↑](#)
4. Many attributions in this article are in the context of group conversations among participants in the Religious Organizations and Community Building research exchange that has met at The Kettering Foundation regularly since 2012. While ideas are, as often as possible, attributed to individuals, there are many instances of an insight coming about collectively, sometimes over the period of several days and multiple conversations. Thus, individual attributions should be understood in this collaborative context. [↑](#)
5. See especially “Mobilizing the Faithful” in Shields (2007, pp. 94–97); and “Mobilizing the Moral Majority” in Liebman and Wuthnow (1983, pp. 50–74). This type of mobilization is also discussed throughout Shields (2009). [↑](#)
6. See Bretherton’s (2015) helpful discussion of the importance of time and its relationship to democratic life: If we cannot “take the time to listen to and build relationships with each other, democratic politics cannot be sustained over time. . . . While democracy undoubtedly needs to be quickened on occasions by forms of agitation and demotic impatience with the status quo, it is for the most part a slow and time-consuming business of patient deliberation, relationship building, and arriving at rather than making decisions” (pp. 285–286). [↑](#)
7. See Defilippis et al. (2010) for a critique of this local focus. [↑](#)
8. For instance, PICO National Network (<https://www.piconetwork.org/about/history>), Gamaleil (<https://www.gamaliel.org>), and the Industrial Areas Foundation (<https://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/content/mission>). [↑](#)
9. I focus on deliberation because it is often preceded by or includes conversation, dialogue, and discussion, yet goes further in that it requires the weighing of values and options with a view toward action. This article focuses on strengthening citizens’ abilities to *act together* to build stronger, healthier, and more democratic communities; thus, I narrow my focus to deliberation because of its view toward action. [↑](#)
10. See for instance the materials provided by the National Issues Forums Institute (<https://www.nifi.org>) or Everyday Democracy (<https://www.everydaydemocracy.com>). [↑](#)
11. There is a significant literature that considers ideal conditions for deliberation (Bächtiger et al., 2010). These questions are important for considering what deliberation is and how it relates to democracy. For the purposes of this research, however, I assume that deliberation can, perhaps imperfectly, take place productively in a range of conditions that do not meet the ideals discussed throughout the literature. [↑](#)
12. Note that these practices are drawn from Chapter 10 of *The Ecology of Democracy*, “Democratic Practices” (Mathews, 2014, pp. 119–120). See also Mathews (2016). [↑](#)

13. See Ricoeur (2012, pp. 48, 57) for more on “already always” formulation. [↑](#)

14. For more on “civic muscle” that can be built in a “civic gym,” see Rourke (2020). [↑](#)

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Citizens of Heaven: Political Participation of Undocumented Americans

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Citizens of Heaven: Political Participation of Undocumented Americans

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Abstract

Everyday life for undocumented Americans often entails coping with the fear, stress, and anxiety of potential deportation (Fussell, 2011; Valenzuela & Erickson 2015). Yet, despite this troubling emotional state, undocumented Americans are increasingly taking to the streets, social media, and the halls of government demanding that their rights be upheld. This article contributes to understandings of how the political participation of undocumented Americans occurs in spite of the barriers this group faces. Through a comparative analysis of Catholic parishes in Los Angeles, California, and Albuquerque, New Mexico, the author found that a sense of belonging and expanded opportunities to participate in political and civic activities supported undocumented churchgoers as they set aside deportation fear to participate in local public life. This study builds on Verba et al.'s (1995) model of political participation which underscores the potential of churches to serve as political mobilizers. The author also argues that belonging and the provision of opportunities to participate both at and through the church should be incorporated into future models of political participation among undocumented Americans.

Citizens of Heaven: Political Participation of Undocumented Americans

In 1992, anthropologist Leo Chavez published *Shadowed Lives*, in which he told the story of undocumented Americans living in San Diego, California. While in many ways the titular imagery still applies to the majority of the United States' approximately 11 million undocumented residents, over the last decade, an increasing number have been participating in activities that publicly out themselves through advocacy for immigrant rights. This purposeful act of stepping out of the shadows and into the spotlight while simultaneously demanding rights and effecting political change is a phenomenon that just 20 years ago would have seemed impossible. In a country with declining rates of social capital and political participation (Putnam, 2001), and where diversity may lead to a further decline of trust and community engagement in the short term (Putnam, 2007; van der Meer & Tolsma, 2014), it is remarkable that many of the most marginalized in U.S. society are participating in these political movements in spite of the fear that frequently accompanies illegality and life in the shadows. While this phenomenon predates the Trump era, it holds important lessons around the political engagement of undocumented Americans in this time of heightened nationalism and violence.

Living in the United States as an undocumented immigrant entails coping with the everyday stress, anxiety, and restricted mobility related to fear of deportation and family separation (Valenzuela & Erickson, 2015) and fear of being the targets of violence (Fussell, 2011). The fear of deportation experienced by millions of people living and working in the United States is a fear not simply of having Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents show up at one's door, but of the removal from one's chosen home, family, economic investments, and employment histories. This may be compounded by fear of the economic, political, and violent situations in one's country of origin. In spite of this fear—which has been shown to suppress participation among other groups (Salamon & Van Evera, 1973)—undocumented Americans are engaging in political action in ways that directly challenge this fear (Pantoja & Segura, 2003).

To understand how undocumented Americans set aside deportation fear to engage actively in American politics, I build on and reframe Verba et al.'s (1995) institution-centered model for understanding political participation, arguing that a sense of belonging and a reimagining of religious sites makes the model useful for studying undocumented American political engagement. To support this claim, I review a comparative case study of two Catholic parishes in

the contexts of Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Los Angeles, California. The two churches were home to vastly different levels of political engagement among undocumented and immigrant members. I maintain that this was due to the capacity of each local church to foster belonging while dampening deportation fear and demonstrating a willingness to operate as both a religious site and a site of political activity.

Political Participation and Fear

For immigrant communities in the United States, participation within the American political system is a key benchmark in broader assimilation processes (e.g., see Bloemraad, 2006; Gordon, 1964). Yet, much of the political-participation and civic-engagement literature has neglected foreign-born Americans, and those studies that have focused on this population have often failed to include undocumented Americans in their analyses (Bloemraad, 2006; Jones-Correa & Leal, 2001; Jones-Correa & Tillery, 2005; Ocampo, 2015; Ramakrishnan & Bloemraad, 2008). When electoral participation is the benchmark of participation, undocumented Americans are set aside since this mode of participation is not open to them. The tendency to leave out immigrants, let alone undocumented immigrants, from discussions about politicization and participation while leaving political assimilation out of the immigration debate “implies seeing immigrants as only ‘the other’ not as potential members in a common polity” (Jones-Correa & Tillery, 2005, p. 77).

For undocumented Americans, the breadth of potential means of participation is limited because they do not have the right to vote. Without comprehensive immigration reform that includes amnesty for currently undocumented peoples, there is little hope for achieving full voting rights. Historically, machine politicians exchanged the granting of citizenship for votes (Jones-Correa & Tillery, 2005); however, parties now focus on mobilizing existing citizens rather than creating new ones (Anderson & Cohen, 2005). While executive action can provide temporary protections and grant rights, as seen in the recent fight over so-called DREAMers, these actions may be revoked with a change in presidential administration. Comprehensive reforms that codify policy changes into law have more legitimacy but have proven impossible to legislate in recent decades. Immigration is a useful wedge issue for politicians as it may increase voter turnout and fracture existing majorities (Jeong et al., 2011; Peterson & Fayyad, 2017) and therefore is unlikely to be meaningfully addressed in the near future.

Even without the right to vote, undocumented Americans are able to actively participate in other forms of engagement such as political speech, attending demonstrations and political meetings, and engaging with elected leaders. In order to be politically active through any of these avenues, one must have the means (e.g., skills, language, know-how), the motive (e.g., the desire, engagement with politics, and belief in change), and the opportunity (e.g., those who are politically active are likely to have been asked to do so).

Acquisition of these variables is influenced by traditional socioeconomic status indicators such as wealth, race, education, and gender, but also through institutional involvement (Verba et al., 1995). In Verba et al.’s (1995) model, one’s demographic characteristics and childhood experiences combine with institutional involvement in adulthood to predict the likelihood of political participation. Through adult exposure and involvement in institutions, the likelihood of participation can be increased beyond what socioeconomics may predict.

Through engagement within institutions, individuals can make up skill deficits (the means to participate politically), may acquire the motivation to participate through institutional ideologies

and practices, and be asked to participate (the opportunity). Institutional engagement (e.g., church attendance) can also foster political interest and civic skills, and provide opportunities for recruitment. Institutions are likely to be key for many immigrants' political participation as these institutions assist in compensating for low socioeconomic status and other disadvantages within the American social structure.

Religious institutions are historically and currently significant to American political participation. Churches and church attendance serve as a "locus of recruitment" and as an equalizer of skills and opportunity, providing the means, motive, and opportunity for participation (Verba et al., 1995). Immigrants are more likely to attend religious services than their native-born counterparts (40% and 36%, respectively). Nationally, nearly half of Latinos are Catholic (48%), another 29% identify as some form of Christian (in California and New Mexico, 28% and 34% of the population is Catholic, respectively; Pew Research, 2015).

For U.S. Latinos and Latino immigrants, the church takes on added significance as the primary associational affiliation and brings with it ties beyond the co-ethnic community (Heredia, 2011). Previous studies have found that among Latinos of any immigration status, regular church attendance is a significant predictor of political participation (Jones-Correa & Leal, 2001).

This relationship may have grown in significance as the Catholic Church became heavily invested in mobilizing its members for immigration reform in the mid-2000s (Heredia, 2011). This effort was led by individuals like the now-retired Cardinal Richard Mahone, of the Los Angeles Archdiocese, who became a public face for Catholic support of immigration reform (Pomfret, 2006). The Catholic Church continues to remain involved in the immigrant rights movement through the research and advocacy arm of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Migration Policy, direct service and advocacy by local and national chapters of Catholic Charities USA, and a constellation of parish- and diocesan-level services and advocacy for immigration reform. Mainstream Catholic teachings and core values align with the immigrant rights movement (Heredia, 2011), and while the Catholic Church is not alone in its advocacy for immigrants, it remains the largest religious institution that is both home to and supportive of Latino immigrants (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2008).

Although Hondagneu-Sotelo (2008), Heredia (2011), Jones-Correa and Leal (2001), and Pantejo and Segura (2003) provided insight into Latino and immigrant political engagement, they offered little discussion of undocumented Americans and no exploration of the potential dampening effect that deportation fear has on political participation.

Decades before Donald Trump assumed the presidency and championed draconian and nationalistic immigration policies, changes in migration trends, policy, and policing have created a livid reality for undocumented Americans. Not only are the chances of deportation greater as a result of increased policing, but the costs of deportation have also risen. As a result of an intensive push to secure the U.S. border dating back to the 1990s—which only intensified in the post 9/11 era—the United States has witnessed a fundamental change in migration patterns from Mexico, the primary immigrant sending country,^[1] and much of Central America (Massey et al., 2002; Nevins, 2001). Instead of discouraging migrations from Mexico, the border buildup has converted circular, seasonal migration patterns into one-directional migration with long-term settlement in the United States. Long-term settlement has changed the composition of immigration flows as family reunification drives up the rates of spouses and children joining in this one-directional migration flow (Massey et al., 2016).

The growth of deeper familial roots in the United States makes the rupture of deportation even more devastating. Individuals are no longer only deported from their country of employment; increasingly, deportation means separation from family members—spouses, children, and parents. A recent study of undocumented families in New Mexico found that even U.S. citizen children of undocumented parents can experience heightened levels of anxiety and fear related to deportation threats as they worry about having their parents forcibly removed from the country (Valenzuela & Erickson, 2015).^[2]

The growing risks and costs of deportation make fear a rational response to the specter of deportation, but beyond the outcome of being deported or not, the chronic exposure to the emotion of fear has serious consequences for this population in relation to individual health outcomes and political engagement. In a 2014 study in New York City, Geller et al. found that the implementation of stop-and-frisk policing resulted in elevated rates of anxiety and reduced levels of mental health for young people of color. The study found that being subjected to repeated stops increased the likelihood of experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder and anxiety. Chronic exposure to such anxiety can result in hypertrophy, leading to depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and other disorders (Debiec & LeDoux, 2004). While little has been done to explore the long-term impacts of fear and anxiety among undocumented Americans, evidence is emerging of negative health outcomes related to increased anxiety and stress linked directly to policing and policy decisions and what the popular press has dubbed the “Trump effect” on Latino health (Gemmill et al., 2019; Hoyt et al., 2018; Wan & Bever, 2019).

While more work is needed to address longitudinal impacts of depression, anxiety, and fear on civic and political engagement (Nelson et al., 2019), cross-sectional studies have demonstrated a link between depression and reduced political engagement (Ojeda, 2015).

Method

This article utilizes data from a comparative case study with a most-/least-likely case selection, comparing Catholic churches in Los Angeles and Albuquerque. Each church, or parish, was selected through analysis of publicly available data to identify neighborhoods in Los Angeles and Albuquerque that are home to (1) high levels of foreign-born populations, (2) high levels of Mexican- and Central American-origin populations, and (3) high levels of households below the poverty line. With these data mapped out across the cities of Los Angeles and Albuquerque, I identified two potential neighborhoods as locations likely to have both high levels of undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America and a Catholic parish that serves them. After attending services and reaching out to individuals at both the chosen site and the alternative, the two sites were selected: St. Catherine’s in Los Angeles and Sacred Heart in Albuquerque (both pseudonyms). Data for this project were collected in two ways, first through participant observation at parish masses, events, and group gatherings, and second through interviews with staff members and parishioners conducted over an 8-month period.

Research Sites

Saint Catherine’s Catholic Parish

Saint Catherine’s Catholic Parish is located in an immigrant-rich Los Angeles neighborhood with significant levels of Mexican and Central American families. St. Catherine’s has a large staff that reflects both the needs of the community and the popularity of the parish. It is home to 11,000 families who have registered with the parish, and staff estimate this is augmented by the number

of families who regularly attend the parish without registering. The church offers three daily masses Monday through Saturday and eight masses on Sunday. Of the eight Sunday masses, only one is offered in English, and this is the service with the lowest attendance. The remaining seven masses are celebrated in Spanish and generally fill the large church to capacity.

St. Catherine's is also home to a number of associations that fall under the parish umbrella. Thirty-one groups make announcements in the weekly newsletter, and a handful of others exist less formally under the umbrella of the parish. These organizations and groups range in motivation from religious and prayerful reflection to community building and social services. Reflecting the ethnic diversity of the parish are the numerous groups that organize around the patron saints of their home countries. For example, the Ministry of the Virgin of Guadalupe serves the Mexican American community of the parish, while the Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Assumption serves the Guatemalan American community. Other organizations focus on social services such as Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous and the Peace, Justice, and Life groups.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

Sacred Heart Catholic Church is located in Albuquerque's South Valley and is home to approximately 1,200 registered families. Sacred Heart is a quiet neighborhood church south of downtown Albuquerque. The neighborhood traces its roots back to Spanish land grants and is typical of the South Valley—a mix of modest and middle-class homes on large lots, elements of Southwestern architecture at many homes, and pockets of commercial activity catering to local Hispano and Latino residents.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church acts as a microcosm of culture and diversity within central New Mexico as it balances the histories and practices of Hispano residents (native-born New Mexicans who proudly and frequently trace their roots back to Spanish colonizers) with more recently arrived immigrant Latinos, predominantly from Mexico. The Spanish-language mass on Sundays brings these two groups together in worship but also highlights tension between old and new residents.

The parish has two full-time priests, two deacons, and nine part-time staff members who work in the parish offices as secretaries, program directors, and so forth. The parish is home to 17 affiliated groups or ministries and holds one Spanish-language mass on Sunday (there are no Spanish-language masses offered during the week). Parish groups range from Al-Anon to the Blue Army, a group of women who gather Monday mornings to pray the rosary in honor of Our Lady of Fatima.

Findings

Fear of deportation was an everyday experience for respondents in both Los Angeles and Albuquerque. Participating in political life required temporarily setting aside this fear. In the Los Angeles church, a number of individuals set aside their fear of deportation to participate in political actions; however, this was not the case in Albuquerque. Differences in the two levels of participation are explained in this section, with a focus on fostering a sense of belonging and creating opportunities at the church.

Belonging

Belonging is a complex, Janus-faced sentiment that is both felt by the individual or group and recognized by others. One feels that they belong to a community, and the community recognizes

and accepts that the individual belongs to the community. Among churchgoers at St. Catherine's in Los Angeles, belonging satisfied both sides of the equation; in Albuquerque neither side was satisfied. Churchgoers in Los Angeles expressed a sense of ownership and belonging at St. Catherine's, while at Holy Spirit in Albuquerque, undocumented and immigrant arrivals self-segregated to a greater level and avoided formal registration with the church.

Los Angeles churchgoers at St. Catherine's expressed their belonging in straightforward terms, often referring to the parish as "my church" or "our community." Their feelings of belonging were echoed in their involvement in and leadership of the parish and its numerous affiliated groups—from the social justice committee, to the lectors and Eucharistic ministers at Sunday masses, to the association of followers of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Registration and Integration

In Albuquerque's Holy Spirit Church, undocumented churchgoers were far less involved in parish ministries and groups. In fact, the parish staff and priests had a difficult time getting these individual and families to register with the parish. Registration with the parish—a process of giving one's name and address to the parish offices—is a technical requirement of Catholics in good standing but functions as a way for the church to document its membership, track donations to the church, and allow families to celebrate sacraments at a church (e.g., marriage and baptism).

In Albuquerque, church priests and leaders had difficulty encouraging undocumented individuals and others of tenuous legal status to register with the parish. Although the church would not turn over any information to legal authorities without a subpoena, and the church did not ask about legal status in registration forms, the fear of documenting their presence in the United States kept people from registering with the church. Church leaders at Holy Spirit referred repeatedly to the difficulty they faced in getting people to register with the church. One parish secretary explained that "the undocumented won't register with the church; they'll come to the church [for Mass and] come when they need help," but they won't register.

In Los Angeles, churchgoers used church registration as a way to document an otherwise undocumented life. When Central American undocumented immigrants sought to regularize their status under Temporary Protective Status, they requested letters from St. Catherine's to prove their residency and moral standing in the community. Church secretaries regularly wrote letters to ICE officers indicating the involvement of individuals and families in their parish.

Different levels of belonging were also seen in the participation at the two parishes. While undocumented and newly arrived immigrants participated in all aspects of the church in Los Angeles, in Albuquerque their participation was limited to attending the once weekly Spanish-language mass and a Friday evening prayer service. The Friday service is a combination of prayer, song, and personal testimony, and typically concludes with snacks and conversation. This was an event catering almost exclusively to the immigrant community of Holy Spirit and represented a way the two communities' self-segregation occurred within the church.

At Sacred Heart, the integration of immigrant groups and longer term members of the parish provides an example of the limits of belonging in the Albuquerque community. The one Spanish-language mass every week brought together Latino immigrants and residents of the community, many of whom identified as Hispano. While the two groups shared a language, tensions between the groups limited belonging among Latino immigrants.

One Hispano churchgoer who traced his roots to Spanish land grants explained to me the tensions under the surface of the Spanish-language mass through the example of Day of the Dead^[3] celebrations. He explained that when the parish modified events and traditions to cater to the growing immigrant population, the Hispano community felt a sense of loss and frustration, saying, “That is not how we do it, that is not our tradition.”

Outreach

Church leaders and organizations at St. Catherine’s in Los Angeles acknowledged and confirmed the sentiment that undocumented and immigrant churchgoers belonged at and to the parish. As such, services blended multiple communities in the same pews. Leaders at Albuquerque’s Holy Spirit Church tried to integrate the two communities, but a fairly strict segregation between Hispano and Latinos remained.

The church secretary at St. Catherine’s explained that for many undocumented churchgoers, their church feels like a second home, and the parish tries to support that sentiment:

[St. Catherine’s is] like a second home, like a second family for them. Of course, we [as a church] always try to have our arms open for them.... [Immigrants here at St. Catherine’s] feel protected, I think. They feel part of something ... they forget their [legal] situation somehow.

One priest at St. Catherine’s dedicated a sermon to the idea that, as Catholics, everyone, regardless of immigration status, were “brothers and sisters in Christ” and that they were “citizens of heaven.”

St. Catherine’s opens its arms to undocumented members of the community by providing social service aide to church members (regardless of immigration status) and incorporating foreign religious traditions into its celebrations. Members of the community and the church regularly bring their correspondences from immigration officials and other public agencies to the church office to have them translated and explained to them by church staff. During one interview with church staff, two women came into the office seeking assistance with a letter one had received from ICE officials. The letter, written in English, was about an application for asylum based on threat of physical violence in the woman’s native El Salvador. Church staff explained the letter’s contents, used the information to track the status of the application on the ICE website, and even coordinated a ride for the woman to her interview with ICE officials to be held in Orange County (a 1-hour drive from the church).

Additionally, the Los Angeles church incorporated religious practices and traditions from immigrant arrivals from across Mexico and Central America. Prior to my arrival at the research site, a priest from the church traveled to an Indigenous community in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca to visit the holy site dedicated to the Virgin of Juquila. The trip was designed to better serve the growing Oaxacan community attending services at St. Catherine’s in Los Angeles. The priest brought back a statue of the Virgin of Juquila, and the parish began holding annual celebrations in her honor.

At Sacred Heart in Albuquerque, such overt actions of welcoming and belonging were missing. The tensions in the region between Hispano and Latino immigrant communities played out in the parish offices and with the pastor himself, who made it clear that “he didn’t cross the border, the border crossed him”—a common refrain among Hispano or Spanish descendants in New Mexico that both celebrates their historical traditions while creating social distance from Latino immigrant communities.

Opportunities

Traditionally, opportunities to participate in political actions at church revolve around recruitment—political groups and movements use churches as loci of recruitment to draw people into their campaign (Verba et al., 1995). However, the case of St. Catherine’s in Los Angeles demonstrates that churches may not only function as recruitment centers but as sites of political action and opportunities to participate. St. Catherine’s many associated organizations provided opportunities to participate in state and local political issues *at* and *through* the church. By contrast, Albuquerque’s Holy Spirit Church provided no such opportunities, even at the height of the 2016 presidential election.

Opportunities for political participation at St. Catherine’s in Los Angeles took a variety of forms. While the parish offices engaged in some activities, so too did individual groups affiliated with the church—especially the Social Justice Ministry. The church had close ties to their local council district representative and his office. Through both the broader parish offices and the Social Justice Ministry, activities and events were co-coordinated with the councilman’s office. These events included neighborhood clean-ups, e-waste recycling events, and community block-captain trainings. These events were secular in nature, were open to the parish and local community, and linked elected officials with the community at St. Catherine’s by operating such events out of the church and using the church as a co-host. At all of these events, representatives of the councilman, or occasionally the councilman himself, would attend, providing opportunities to engage with political leaders on safe ground.

St. Catherine’s church and affiliated groups were also heavily involved in their local neighborhood council^[4]. St. Catherine’s had two parishioners serving on the local neighborhood council, and the parish gym was often used for council meetings. Occasionally, council meetings were designed to overlap with parish ministry meetings to increase exposure and engagement between the secular and religious groups. By hosting these events at the church and purposely interweaving church meetings with the council meetings, the barriers to entry for this form of political participation were significantly lower for all churchgoers, but especially the undocumented.

Opportunities to participate through the church were also common in Los Angeles. Church groups would coordinate participation in local political activities. For example, when a local advocacy group was holding information sessions on the fate of Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) in 2016, the church coordinated carpools and group attendance. Church leaders also organized groups to attend events at Los Angeles City Hall and sites across the city that linked parishioners to civic and political actions.

This type of organizing provides not only opportunities to participate, but also a sense of safety—or cover—as undocumented churchgoers engage with the Los Angeles political community. Participating in events through the church, under their name, provides a sense of institutional cover: Should something go wrong, individuals believe that the church will support them. By engaging at and through the church at non-church events, this sense of cover is carried with them as undocumented believers practice civic engagement across the city.

By contrast, none of the previously mentioned opportunities to engage in political actions at or through the church were witnessed in Albuquerque. Indeed, the line between church and state seemed quite rigid at the parish level. However, a new bishop in Santa Fe (who oversees all churches in Albuquerque) seemed to indicate a new direction. He had hosted a forum on

immigration, inviting members of the public, local officials, and church members to discuss how immigration policies were often at odds with church teachings, especially family separation.

Discussion and Conclusion

The differences in experiences between Albuquerque and Los Angeles churchgoers speak to the role of local contexts of reception, the mobilizing potential of immigrant-serving churches, and the hyper-local nature of political participation of undocumented Americans. This calls for a revised understanding of the role of churches in the political participation of undocumented Americans; they may not simply be sites of recruitment but sites for fostering a sense of belonging and providing opportunities to participate in political actions at and through the church.

An immigrant context of reception is traditionally composed of the governmental reception (either hostile, neutral, or supportive), the societal reception (again, either hostile, neutral, or supportive), and the relative strength of the immigrant group's co-ethnic community (see Portes & Zhou, 1993). However, these forces can vary greatly across states and municipalities (Varsanyi, 2010).

In a dramatic about-face, following the 1994 passage of Proposition 187, which, among other outcomes, would have denied public education to undocumented Californians, the State of California and the City of Los Angeles have been on the forefront of implementing supporting policies for immigrants of all legal status. In Los Angeles, where over one third of the population is foreign born, immigrants from Mesoamerica experience a local context of supportive local policy and large co-ethnic communities. In Albuquerque, immigrants from Mexico and Central America are a newer phenomenon, and attitudes toward them are complicated by New Mexico's history of colonization and annexation. Unlike its neighboring border states, New Mexico has been bypassed by new migrants as they search for stronger economies in nearby Arizona, Texas, and California. Although growing, New Mexico's foreign-born population (9.7%) lags behind its neighbors, where the immigrant population accounts for a quarter of the California population (27%) and 13% and 17% in Arizona and Texas populations, respectively (U.S. Census, 2019).

Tension between native-born people and immigrant newcomers is a common thread in American history. In New Mexico, this has taken on the unique form of *Hispanos* (those identifying as descendants of Spanish colonizers) actively distancing themselves from new arrivals. As Gómez (2007) explained, claims to pure Spanish identity are often the result of intense racism and discrimination, attempts to create social distance from racialized Mexican identities. While similar to the intergroup nativism fueled by immigrant replenishment identified by Jiménez (2008), in New Mexico this has resulted in the creation of an oppositional identity.

The Albuquerque church, set in a locality with less supportive contexts of reception, did not foster a sense of belonging and opportunity. The Los Angeles church, located in a highly supportive context of reception, encouraged belonging and engagement. The findings from this project indicate that, given certain conditions, undocumented Americans are able to set aside deportation fears and engage in local political and civic life. Catholic churches may support these efforts but are also supported or inhibited by a local context of reception. Nevertheless, religious institutions have the potential to serve as key sites of political incorporation for undocumented Americans as they both provide opportunities to participate and act as a bridge between the religious and the political.

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1. While countries of origin among the undocumented population are as diverse as the global population itself, Mexico remains the country of origin for the most undocumented Americans (Passel & Cohn, 2016). In 2014, 5,850,000 undocumented Americans in the United States were from Mexico alone; El Salvador was the second highest, with 700,000 in 2014 (Passel & Cohn, 2016). [↑](#)
2. For those individuals who are deported but wish to return to the United States, the costs of return have greatly increased with the increased investment in border policing. There are two primary costs associated with clandestine border crossings between the United States and Mexico—financial and physical. In 1993, the average fee paid to a smuggler to cross the border was \$980, but by 2013 this had surpassed \$3,000 (Cornelius & Lewis, 2007), an exorbitant figure for low-income families. More troubling than the rising financial cost is the physical toll of clandestine border crossings for individuals seeking to return to the United States following deportation. Death is a growing risk in crossings—in 1998, there were 263 border deaths, but in 2012 this number rose to 477 (Anderson, 2013). The rise in border deaths has been attributed to the increase in border enforcement (calculated by the border patrol budget; Massey et al., 2016). [↑](#)
3. What Catholics of European extraction celebrate as All Souls Day and All Saint's Day, Mesoamerican cultures celebrate as Day of the Dead, which blends Indigenous and Catholic beliefs. [↑](#)
4. In the city of Los Angeles, neighborhood councils are officially sanctioned and deputized groups of local stakeholders who review planning, public works, and other localized issues. These groups are elected by stakeholders (broadly defined as anyone who works, lives, recreates, or travels through the neighborhood regularly), and voting is open regardless of legal status.

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Discipline-Oriented Citizenship

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Abstract

The authors introduce a framework for considering the particularities of civic engagement in higher education. Colleges and universities make increasing reference to civic engagement in mission statements and other guiding documents; however, these documents often do not allow for distinctions between types of civic engagement activities that might occur in specific academic disciplines. This suggests a singular approach to civic engagement. The authors argue that actual pedagogies demonstrate variance and nuance in purposes of and approaches to civic engagement. Supporting faculty considerations of what content and skills are necessary for civic engagement in a particular academic discipline, the authors examine the notion of disciplinary literacy and adapt it to the college classroom.

Discipline-Oriented Citizenship

Universities occupy an essential and evolving space in the social landscape. Most universities demonstrate particular concern for the academic, professional, and personal development of their student body. Evidence from any number of mission and vision statements signals such a commitment. Formally, universities recognize their role in developing the whole person through the concept of *in loco parentis*, whereby the university writ large assumes the responsibilities of guardian and caregiver for the developing student.

Brubacher (2017) noted that universities focus on the whole student, with the goal of “each citizen ... fulfill[ing] [their] political, economic, and social aspirations”; yet, despite institutional efforts, “even the professionally oriented superior students seemed to find a wall ... between their academic preparations for success in a complex, technological civilization and the separate interests and goals of their private, purely personal life” (pp. 347–348). This struggle highlights the perennial tension created by what Parker (2010) described as the inherent selfishness of individuals who have not yet grown to understand how their own wellbeing is inherently tied to the wellbeing of others in their community—a learned approach to shared living required in a democracy.

Thus, inconsistencies can emerge between a university’s stated goal of providing broad academic grounding and a student’s understandable desire for knowledge and skills leading to gainful employment. Welch (2016) detailed such inconsistencies that existed among land-grant institutions that simultaneously offered forms of community service and outreach while promoting economic recovery and seeking to pay off various national debts through tuition revenue. Today, state-funded institutions, like our own regional comprehensive university, maintain a palpable tension among traditional liberal arts education, students’ professional development, and the need for tuition revenue. We worry that debates about these issues can overlook questions of civic development, perhaps subsuming the formation of active and engaged democratic citizenship to marketable skills like “critical thinking.”

Through this article, we invite faculty from across academic disciplines to consider how they might build on the content and skills necessary for competency in their respective fields. For instance, a philosophy professor might privilege close reading and advanced discussion strategies, while a geography professor might focus on discrete cartographic skills. These skills, necessary to each discipline, create opportunities for engagement in civic life. Our primary purpose in expanding the notion of disciplinary literacy stems from an interest in providing civic engagement opportunities within the curriculum.

Promoting Civic Engagement in Higher Education

When arguing for the importance of discrete and purposeful citizenship education, we find it useful to refer to the documents guiding institutional plans and aspirations. Reviewing mission and vision statements, for instance, we see regular reference to *citizenship development*, but as with many widely used terms, no consistent definition exists. Further challenging consistency within the academy, such references are often associated with calls for *civic engagement*, a broad term that has seen increased usage since the 1970s and that includes service-learning, community internships, social responsibility, and other forms of outreach (Welch, 2016).

Our institution claims that “our highest purpose is to empower our students with the knowledge, skills and core values that contribute to active citizenship, gainful employment and life-long learning in a democratic society and interdependent world” (Salisbury University, 2018). The mission statement aligns with the broader university-system mission, which references the goal of “preparing graduates with the knowledge, skills, and integrity necessary to be successful leaders and engaged citizens, while providing knowledge-based programs and services that are responsive to needs of the state and the nation” (University System of Maryland, 2018). In both statements, we see connections to broader movements such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement initiative and the American Democracy Project. However, we also perceive in both the inherent tensions, referenced earlier, between “the civic mission of schools” (Carnegie Corporation, 2003) and the more pragmatic, if not neoliberal, need for professional development and preparation for employment. Though we detail this tension later in the article, for now, consider the leverage these statements offer to faculty, students, and administrators interested in promoting various aspects of civic engagement and citizenship development.

When discussing civic engagement in presentations or during consultations with faculty at our institution, we highlight the multiple benefits of engagement opportunities. Rather than focus on citizenship development at the (perceived) expense of intellectual or professional development, we show how the development and application of a student’s civic understandings complements and adds to intellectual and professional development. We describe the potential of coursework that explicitly exposes students to meaningful engagement opportunities structured within and responsive to particular academic disciplines or tracks. We consider *meaningful engagement opportunities* as those that intentionally place students in reciprocal relationships with stakeholders outside the university, within the context of a credited academic experience, typically a course. We further explore the conditions for meaningful opportunities in later sections.

In our experience, academics are intrigued by the idea of helping students see the relevance of their discipline’s content in contexts outside academia. For those in the traditional liberal arts, application outside the academy highlights the value of faculty expertise to the world, and it provides another point of argument against technocratic, neoliberal approaches to higher education. For those in the sciences, civic engagement demonstrates how scientists contribute to understanding and acting on community issues. For those in professional programs, this approach to civic engagement aligns with existing notions of application in the field. At the same time, civic engagement provides opportunities to explore the soft skills of critical thinking, research, and writing.

Our focus on embedding meaningful civic engagement experiences in a wide range of (undergraduate) courses exposes a fundamental gap in the academy: Faculty often do not know how to do this work. There is a clear need for professional development opportunities that help faculty design and integrate meaningful, reciprocal community engagement. Faculty have a wealth of expertise and experience in their fields, but many are new to the communities in which their institutions reside. Many are affiliated with fields that may not recognize the scholarly value of civic engagement to tenure and promotion. Many also have limited experience with curriculum design.

To help address the need for useful faculty professional development at our own institution, we created an intensive, cross-disciplinary professional development program: Civic Engagement Across the Curriculum (CEAC). In describing CEAC, we outline the descriptive framework at the heart of our civic engagement approach.

Providing Support

Begun in 2015, CEAC has developed into a flagship initiative of the Institute for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement (PACE) at Salisbury University. Each fall semester, CEAC brings together up to 10 faculty to explore the purposes of and methods for integrating meaningful civic engagement experiences into their courses. CEAC deliberately draws participants from each academic school at the university, highlighting the benefits of interdisciplinary thinking at the core of good civic engagement (Surak & Pope, 2016). The model is not unique but does demonstrate the potential that professional development holds for universities wishing to meet their goals of helping students develop the habits of democratic citizens such as a concern for justice, an ability to work with and across difference, and an interest in promoting a collective good (Surak et al., 2017).

CEAC promotes three curricular guidelines developed by Welch (2016); organizing the program around Welch's best practices allows us some confidence of overlap with similar initiatives at other institutions (we have written about overlap with at least one other institution; Surak et al., 2017). First, the civic engagement experience must be academically and theoretically grounded. We believe firmly that civic engagement experiences enhance the intellectual development of students. Thus, democratic citizenship comes not at the expense of, but rather through, intellectual growth.

Second, the civic engagement experience must provide an outcome for a community partner. We help faculty consider and cultivate meaningful reciprocal relationships with one or more of the many community organizations around our institution. Engaged in real-time civic work, partners can provide opportunities for students and faculty to see the immediate application of the theoretical and academic knowledge associated with classroom learning.

Third, the outcomes of the civic engagement experience should be shared outside the classroom. We appreciate the value of self-reflection for student development, and we advocate for student writing. However, we also demand that community-centered experiences be oriented toward the community—that faculty and students change their focus from conversations within the classroom to conversations outside the classroom. Students must acknowledge the contributions of their community partners, broadcast their learning, and, ideally, advocate for others to join the efforts.

Welch's (2016) guidelines provide a basic rubric for assessing participating faculty's civic engagement plans. The guidelines also result in a largely administrative application, as PACE tags civically engaged courses in the campus registration system. To offer more explicit conceptual guidance for integrating civic engagement, we leverage other frameworks.

Framing Civic Engagement

We structure CEAC around three overlapping, sympathetic, and complementary frameworks. We use readings and iterative assignments to explore justice-oriented citizenship, social responsibility, and disciplinary literacy. Here, we introduce each framework and describe its utility for faculty civic engagement considerations.

The notion of justice-oriented citizenship emerged from the work of Westheimer and Kahne (2004). Their review of civic education programs identified three conventional approaches. Using the example of a canned food drive, the authors illustrated the distinctions among the approaches. A personally responsible citizen will contribute to a food drive. A participatory citizen will help arrange the food drive. A justice-oriented citizen may complete both of these actions but will also "explore why people are hungry and act to solve root causes" (p. 240) associated with hunger. Though the authors avoided presenting their typology as a hierarchy, discussions of their work have consistently evolved toward promoting a justice-oriented approach.

In the context of CEAC, justice-oriented citizenship helps faculty consider interactions between their academic disciplines and their communities. Exploring a wicked social issue like hunger requires considerable academic study. Students interested in the topic must consider economics, public policy, religion, history, and resource allocation, among other factors. Indeed, the task is too large for a single academic discipline to examine adequately, though the discipline can provide a lens for viewing the issue, helping students focus more narrowly on a particular piece of the puzzle. This is the heart of Welch's (2016) first guideline, that community partnerships should be theoretically and academically grounded.

Social responsibility describes a person's responsibility to their community (Youniss & Yates, 1997). In discussing civic engagement in the academy, we draw from the literature on social responsibility in higher education. For instance, Colby et al. (2003) applied concepts of social responsibility from K–12 education to the purposes of higher education. In addition, Jacoby (2009) explored the various ways institutions of higher education enact their responsibilities to their communities.

At PACE, we are particularly enamored with Musil's (2009) work on the "civic learning spiral," which describes six civic engagement braids that can highlight a student's development: self, communities and cultures, knowledge, values, skills, and public action. Each braid comprises various descriptions of outcomes associated with social responsibility. Thus, the civic learning spiral offers a way to think about both the discrete developmental elements of social responsibility and how social responsibility might express itself in ways that faculty can evaluate.

Conceptions of literacy have expanded in recent years. Once limited to creating and understanding written texts, the idea of literacy has expanded to include content-area literacy (McKenna & Robinson, 1990), media literacy (Livingstone & Van der Graaf, 2008), and literacies of the body (Jones, 2013). Scholars have drawn useful connections to civic literacy

(Lisman, 1998) as an approach to thinking about the knowledge and skills needed for democratic citizenship. In education, researchers have engaged literacies in specific academic disciplines to grapple with the particular skills and habits of mind necessary for fluency in those fields—hence, the growing body of research around disciplinary literacy, which describes an approach to embedding advanced literacy strategies within particular content areas (see Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

In CEAC, we utilize disciplinary literacy as a way to help faculty remain connected with their discipline’s particular ways of knowing and forms of expertise. This helps ground the work in tangible ways while helping to reinforce the academic component of civic engagement exercises in college courses.

Situating our work within the frameworks afforded by justice-oriented citizenship, social responsibility, and disciplinary literacy helps us challenge a singular approach to civic engagement efforts. Each course, with particular objectives, content, and ways of exploring the world, will necessarily have particular approaches to incorporating civic engagement. As we ask faculty to consider those approaches, we remind them of the three guidelines for civic engagement coursework introduced earlier. The outcome has consistently been the development of sincere and authentic course curricula that foster meaningful intellectual growth in the context of applied citizenship.

Evidence from Practice

Since 2015, the 10-week CEAC seminar has provided guidance and support for more than 50 faculty integrating civic engagement into their courses. For the purposes of this article, we center on how faculty come to see civic engagement as relevant to their academic discipline (we have reviewed positive outcomes of the program, including descriptions of course revisions, elsewhere; see Surak et al., 2017; Surak & Pope, 2016). We have long felt comfortable with and confident in the concepts at the foundation of the seminar. We believe the seminar is intimately tied to the broader mission of higher education generally and of our institution specifically. Yet, we explore the data here to offer more substantive arguments beyond our sense of proper purpose.

Idiocy and Puberty

Each seminar series opens with the same reading: Walter Parker’s (2010) chapter “Idiocy and Puberty.” Parker traces modern Western sensibilities about citizenship to the Greek terms *idios* and *polites*. According to the original, an idiot or *idios* is a person so selfish and inward-looking that they reject the shared nature of democratic living. By contrast, a member of the *polites*, or one who has experienced puberty, has come to understand and embrace their role as a member of the shared group. *Polites* recognize that their actions have consequences on others and that they are dependent on others in the same fashion.

A typical CEAC conversation shows how faculty apply the ideas to their students. An art faculty member observed, “Students are self-absorbed; they take selfies in class.” A sociology faculty member suggested that “they have empathy, but only as long as it’s for a pre-existing idea.” A political scientist countered that “in this economic environment, students need to be selfish. It leads to employment after college. What can we do that is not at the expense of that reasonable goal?” “But to be successful, you do need to be aware of the world,” claimed the artist. To which

the sociologist rejoined, “Students have a narrow sense of community. They see it differently than we do.”

These comments generalize anecdotal experiences across broad swaths of the undergraduate population, but they are nevertheless instructive vis-à-vis faculty concerns regarding their students’ civic development. The seminar exposes the tension between the university developing the whole person—including civic attitudes—and the university helping to prepare students for a productive foray into the job market. As one geography faculty member noted, “People outside my department are very slanted in that their ideas focus on the pragmatic and employment and things that can be measured. Civic engagement deals with more intangibles and only is measurable when it’s failing.” Some faculty have already considered the role of a traditional liberal arts education in their professional courses or the role of professional application to liberal arts courses—but the tension is always present and worth exploring.

Civic Engagement in a Discipline

Much of the CEAC seminar involves faculty defining what civic engagement means in and to their academic discipline. Early in the seminar, participants bring in a popular or scholarly piece representing what civic engagement means in their field. Frequently, their selections end up as assigned readings for the redesigned course.

One education faculty member brought a piece about a traveling Holocaust exhibit that incorporated survivor testimony. Eight weeks later, her redesigned Holocaust education course would lead students through planning and carrying out activities associated with the Holocaust Day of Remembrance. A philosophy faculty member shared news articles about efforts in Britain to integrate philosophy into K–12 education. Later that year, she introduced a new “philosophy in schools” program to the public school district around our institution.

In most cases, the task of finding civic engagement examples from an academic discipline’s literature helps distill the relevance of civic engagement to that discipline. This critical moment serves to crystallize ideas for civic engagement in the faculty member’s mind. As faculty explain the articles to their colleagues in the seminar, they must parse the relationship between their academic discipline and the broader discourse of civic engagement. Because their colleagues are educated but not experts in the field, the presenting faculty must distill their discipline to key elements and demonstrate the value that those elements can bring to the broader community.

Describing the ultimate value of the revised civic engagement assignment, one history faculty member commented that “the assignment will help [students] learn key skills in the discipline of history while being mindful of the social and moral responsibilities of writing about American Indian history and culture.” The faculty member anticipated that the assignment and restructured course would plant the seed of civic engagement in our students by showing them they can be political agents and problem solvers. The assignment invites them to be creative about cultural/public history educational efforts that can change perceptions and increase awareness of Indian history in the community.

This faculty member reflected on the core potential of an academic discipline to benefit the broader world—the heart of what CEAC enables. Rather than being caught up in the minutiae of historical facts, the revised assignment would allow students to use historians’ tools to better understand problems of the present, and to propose solutions for the future.

The Benefit of Expertise

Particular areas of expertise are perceived as requiring particular responsibilities. For example, the philosopher might describe a responsibility to promote reasoned public debate. By contrast, the geographer might describe a responsibility to provide accurate representations of spatial relationships in order to support an understanding of the community. Throughout the CEAC program, we are clear with faculty that their expertise remains central to their students' success in the course. We do not want to send students off into the community to find something that interests them. Meaningful civic engagement requires greater care.

Often, faculty settle on a balance, as did one history faculty member who decided, "I can let the students pick the specific issue, but I will provide broad themes for their selection." Faculty often moderate their interests, such as the economics faculty member who admitted,

I'd like students to understand the nuts and bolts of [food assistance] programs and how these programs operate. But some studies aren't feasible in a semester long study. Students would need to know research skills, and—in a perfect world—data analysis.

After consulting with his CEAC peers, this faculty member eschewed an idea to have students share their own (presumed) experiences with food assistance. Instead, the students would examine "government literacy and ... [conduct] surveys and [present] results at a forum showing gaps in literacy."

The economics faculty member was moving toward the key outcome for civic engagement in the university classroom: providing avenues for students to meld academic expertise with civic engagement and public action. The revised course opened opportunities for students to build a skillset valuable to economics as an academic discipline while simultaneously engaging with a pressing social issue identifiable in their immediate community. As that faculty member continued his revisions, colleagues in the seminar offered options for closer engagement between the students and the community. Ideas like "observing a school lunch," "working with Title 1 coordinators," or "suggesting some solutions in the kitchen as a group" all sought ways for the students to pair their academic study with demonstrable efforts to address the issue with community partners.

In the ultimate expression of this reciprocal partnership, students become viewed as legitimate sources of information, while the expertise and experience of community members already engaged with the topic are acknowledged and respected. Often, this comes through face-to-face interactions. Following a restructured course in environmental studies, one faculty member invited an experienced professional into class. Having been introduced to students' efforts to understand and improve recycling efforts on campus, the guest speaker remarked to the class, "I hope your fresh perspective might lend some insight to those who have been working on the problem [of recycling] for the last 20 years."

Discipline-Oriented Citizenship

Over our time building, facilitating, and revising the CEAC seminar, we have also revised our methods of explaining the conceptual mechanisms at play. Faculty participants read and discuss pieces related to justice-oriented citizenship and social responsibility; they hold thoughtful discussions exploring and explaining the forms of literacy privileged in their academic disciplines; and they continue to revise their courses to align with Welch's (2016) three guidelines. In facilitating this programming, we have identified another term that we now use

when conversing with faculty about the ethos of integrating civic engagement into their coursework: *discipline-oriented citizenship*.

We conceive of discipline-oriented citizenship as describing the purposes of civic engagement within a particular specialization or field of higher education. Using discipline-oriented citizenship as a lens allows for nuances and distinctions between the particular purposes for and types of civic engagement that may emerge in different courses. This concept melds two key concepts: disciplinary-oriented literacy and social responsibility.

Shanahan and Shanahan's (2012) distinction between disciplinary and content-area literacy is useful in this context. In describing the reading process in the secondary setting, they differentiated between how students and teachers engage particular forms of texts. Content-area literacy includes the skills and techniques needed to engage with particular texts within a discipline to gain the key knowledge of the discipline. Content-area literacy differs from disciplinary literacy, which places an "emphasis on the knowledge and abilities possessed by those who create, communicate, and use knowledge within the disciplines" (p. 9). We approach disciplinary literacy as an active application of gained knowledge within a particular field, such as what one would find in a civic engagement context.

Drawing upon the literature of the field, Shanahan and Shanahan (2012) identified the formation of disciplinary differences as the gatekeeping function of those within the discipline, differences in knowledge bases and in "a reflection of the activities in which the disciples themselves are engaged," including "struggles for power, alliances, theoretical shifts, the creation of new forms of knowledge, and so on" (Bazerman, 1998, as cited in Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012, p. 48). Adhering to this definition yields a conception of civic engagement that situates students as agents who are both learning and learned. Students experiencing civic engagement based on these concepts could expect opportunities to expand their knowledge, use that knowledge to address genuine problems, and reflect on what additional knowledge and effort are needed.

In applying discipline-oriented literacy through civic engagement, one must consider the relationship of the individual to their larger community. Civic engagement is often couched in terms of "civic participation," with participation coming from "citizens" or being allowed or required through one's "citizenship." Citizenship is a problematic term when associated primarily with legal status. We use citizenship in a broad sense "as a shared set of expectations about the citizen's role in politics" and "our relationship to others in the polity" (Dalton, 2009, pp. 23, 24). Our use of citizenship does not focus on particular values held or which values "should" be held by individuals, but rather comprises a shared sense of expectations as to how people engage in public life, specifically within the context of the theoretical and practical needs of a stable and functioning democratic society. This is an important counter to those who critique civic engagement as having a particular political or ideological slant, including faculty who associate civic engagement with a propensity for political extremism (Abrams, 2018).

Social responsibility must also recognize the power relations that exist within all public interactions. Faculty in the classroom must assist students in navigating the power asymmetries they may encounter. Not doing so can lead to the reproduction of inequitable and unjust power relations, creating conformity rather than critical action (Murray & Maynooth, 2013). Faculty must take special care to acknowledge that interactions within the classroom are not likely a good model for active civic participation; CEAC supports those efforts by exploring how

classroom interactions can prepare students for and help them make sense of community interactions.

Citizenship is a “learning process” produced and reproduced by experiences (Delanty, 2003). However, Delanty (2003) advised caution in using the term *discipline*. From a Foucaultian perspective, disciplining as a form of citizenship production is the creation of a specific type of state subject. Rather than signaling or practicing citizenship as the embodiment of a particular set of rules and codes, he advocated for the concept of “cultural citizenship,” (Gerard, 2003) which is reflexive and empowers and encourages agency of the subject through social learning, nodding toward the work of Luhmann (1989) and Habermas (1989). Citizenship must entail more than rights and group membership. Citizens—*polites*—must learn and practice participation in the political community, specifically “learning of the self and of the relationship of self and other” (Delanty, 2003 p. 602). We also share Delanty’s concerns about both the use of the term *discipline* as well as the neoliberal *disciplining* of the student as subject. Contextualizing discipline within the term *discipline-oriented* is meant to address specifically these important concerns of language, power, and practice.

Rationale and Implications

In our conversations with faculty and students about the role of civic engagement in the college classroom, we have found that discipline-oriented citizenship helps clarify purposes. Rather than reifying the perceived split between civic and intellectual development, discipline-oriented citizenship helps faculty and students consider the reciprocal relationship between academic study and social application. This allows for a more nuanced rendering of postsecondary civic engagement development. Instead of being perceived as activities that happen in addition to intellectual development, civic experiences occur *through* intellectual development and in conjunction with the application of learning.

The concept of discipline-oriented citizenship also challenges a general approach to skills development. We presume that all faculty are invested in developing their students’ critical-thinking skills, and we expect that most faculty would like to see improved interpersonal communication, including writing skills. Yet, we have also found that students want to develop these skills in concert with “real-world” experiences. Discipline-oriented citizenship offers an opportunity to consider how such skills benefit a student and a community in the real world, in more ways than initial employment.

By providing immediate opportunities for students to apply their developing knowledge and skill in the world, discipline-oriented citizenship can empower college students toward greater involvement. Empowering civic-engagement experiences in the classroom are known to promote civic agency, or “the exertion of influence and power in a given situation,” and civic efficacy, defined as “the belief that one can make a difference in the world, and the responsibility to do so” (Mitra & Serriere, 2012, p. 743). Discipline-oriented citizenship incorporates growing confidence in one’s intellectual abilities and their role in society.

Finally, discipline-oriented citizenship helps faculty consider intersections between civic engagement and the academic disciplines where engagement may not seem readily apparent. These efforts help make civic engagement, and the specific contributions of academic disciplines to society, visible in ways many find new and exciting. Such visibility at our institution has included a successful application for the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification and recent revisions to formally recognize civic engagement in tenure and promotion. Such

developments help explain the broad interest in CEAC from faculty across liberal arts, science, and professional programs. Most faculty have an inherent love for their academic disciplines and are excited at the prospect of new opportunities to help students find that same love.

Future Study

As a conceptual framework, discipline-oriented citizenship also offers opportunities for formal study. At PACE, we encourage faculty to consider the implications of the civic learning spiral (Musil, 2009) in an effort to develop assessments that address a broad range of student development. We hope that faculty will engage in interdisciplinary collaboration to explore wicked problems and have engaged efforts to examine such collaborations. The spiral provides useful points of inquiry for a wide range of civic engagement experiences and can fit usefully within introductory or capstone coursework.

Perhaps the most pressing questions are related to students' understanding of the concept as it applies to their time in a course or major. Working from a fundamental question can yield valuable insight into students' experiences with and understandings of civic engagement: What can [this discipline] do to improve your community?

CEAC faculty are integrating pre- and post-course surveys meant to explore shifting student conceptions of civic engagement related to their coursework around that question. Specific connections with the civic learning spiral are apparent through Musil's (2009) desired outcomes such as "ability to describe the main civic intellectual debates within one's major" and "development of a civic imagination." Investigating such outcomes will further our understanding of how universities can reach their laudable, and shifting, goals.

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Hosting a Civic Leadership Academy on Your Campus

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The opinions and views offered in this article are the author's and not necessarily those of Indiana University. The author would like to acknowledge the anonymous reviewers for the journal whose comments improved this article. The author would also like to acknowledge the support of the Research and Development Committee of Indiana University South Bend who supported summer work on this and other publications. Any errors remain the author's alone.

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Abstract

This article explains how to design and host a Civic Leadership Academy on a college campus. The author provides detailed advice regarding topics, speakers, and central talking points, while also guiding readers through a series of questions they should ask—and answer—before hosting their own leadership academy. The academy covers a wide range of topics appropriate for campus and off-campus audiences, ranging from novices to experienced civic activists. Topics include: critical thinking, fake news, contacting elected officials, the policymaking process, protesting, and community problem solving. The model can be adopted in whole or in part, and the author provides added value by incorporating hyperlinks to key resources, including actual footage of all six academy sessions described. This brief article provides everything one needs to know about hosting a successful Civic Leadership Academy on their campus.

Hosting a Civic Leadership Academy on Your Campus

Getting Started

One of the greatest joys of being a professor is the frequent opportunity to use scholarly expertise and teaching skills to engage both students and the broader community in learning experiences that foster civic knowledge, identity, and engagement. As noted in [Teaching Civic Engagement](#), published by the American Political Science Association, civic education takes place both inside and outside the classroom. Political science professors and other faculty are well positioned to facilitate civic learning. This brief article highlights a Civic Leadership Academy that I designed on my campus, Indiana University (IU) South Bend, to bring people together to gain valuable information and advice around promoting civic leadership. Many people have asked me how they can replicate this academy on their own campuses, and I offer this piece as a useful resource. This article summarizes the topics covered in IU South Bend's academy and provides a checklist of questions to answer before launching your own academy. Readers who wish to learn more about IU South Bend's spring 2017 Civic Leadership Academy can access a video recording of each event in the campus's [Civic Leadership Academy Video Archives](#).

Based on community requests, student interests, and media headlines, the [American Democracy Project at IU South Bend](#) determined that we would highlight the following topics during our spring 2018 Civic Leadership Academy:

- "Facts Matter: A Guide to Critical Thinking"
- "Real News vs. Fake News: Know the Difference"
- "Contacting Elected Officials: Influencing Decision Makers"
- "The Legislative Process: Influencing Local, State, and National Policy Debates"
- "Protest 101: Making Your Voice Heard"
- "Solving Community Problems: A Step-by-Step Guide"

These topics were the subject of numerous questions and discussions at past events and in courses, and they fit well with the model of civic leadership that former U.S. Senator Bob Graham laid out in [America, The Owner's Manual](#), a step-by-step approach to community problem solving that I teach in my classes.

We then determined the agenda of each academy session, including specific topics to cover. Once again, we drew upon questions that people were asking us, [Graham's book](#), and our observations about the critical skills needed in today's political world. We designed each session as a moderated panel discussion, followed by audience Q&A.

Session 1

The first session, "[Facts Matter: A Guide to Critical Thinking](#)," featured professors of psychology, philosophy, rhetoric, and communication studies. Topics related to:

- the difference between facts and opinions;
- the difference between claims and arguments;
- the importance of the scientific method;
- common rhetorical devices designed to mislead;
- how to recognize and avoid logical fallacies;
- the problems of confirmation bias and tribalism;
- key resources for fact checking political claims; and,
- how to talk to someone who disagrees with you.

Key lessons from this session included the difference between an unsupported assumption, opinion, or belief, and a clearly stated, testable, falsifiable claim. Panelists stressed the need to support claims with evidence in order to build a compelling argument. The speakers provided examples of common logical fallacies, including the straw man fallacy, appeal to ignorance, ad hominem attacks, and appeals to emotion—including fear. Panelists also provided examples of the red herring argument, questionable cause, hasty conclusion, and inconsistency. Finally, panelists warned against over-reliance on conventional wisdom or common practice as a way to justify beliefs or practices. They noted that everyone can fall prey to confirmation bias, a tendency to be less critical of arguments that match our own biases and beliefs. The speakers also stressed the importance of seeking multiple perspectives and sources of information, and avoiding an "us versus them" mentality. Additionally, the presenters stressed the need to fact check stories and memes before sharing them, to reach out to those with opposing views in ways that foster a search for common values, and to explore critically the root causes of significant differences of opinion and worldview.

Session 2

The second session, "[Real News vs. Fake News: Know the Difference](#)," featured a political columnist, multi-media journalist, editor, and public relations expert (the last two of whom teach in IU South Bend's mass communications program). Topics covered in this session included:

- what is and is not fake news;
- the danger of fake news;
- the political deployment of the "fake news" label;
- the role of the media in U.S. politics;
- how to spot fake news sites and stories;

- how to verify facts before spreading fake news;
- how to call out fake news and keep your friends; and,
- the difference between news and satire.

Key lessons from this session included the difference between a reputable media outlet or journalist that misstates a fact but then prints a retraction, versus those who share information they know to be false for personal, professional, economic, or political gain. Panelists noted that some politicians deploy the “fake news” label to silence or discredit critical stories or media outlets.

Panelists provided a variety of techniques that can be used to spot fake news sites and stories, stressing the technique advocated by Mike Caulfield, a Washington State University professor who heads the [American Democracy Project](#)’s national [Digital Polarization \(DigiPo\) Initiative](#). Caulfield advocates “[four moves](#)” when fact checking information. First, check for previous work; see if someone else (e.g., [Politifact](#), [Snopes](#), [factcheck.org](#), or even [Wikipedia](#)) has already fact checked the claim or provided a synthesis of research. Second, go “upstream” to the original source to understand the trustworthiness of the information. Third, “read laterally”; find out what other people say about the source (e.g., outlet, author, publisher, etc.). The truth is in the network. Fourth, circle back. When getting lost or hitting dead ends, start over using the information you have gained from the original search. A follow-up search will involve better search terms and new approaches that may prove fruitful.

The audience was particularly interested in how to point out fake news to friends and colleagues who have shared it without losing professional relationships or friendships. Panelists struggled to answer this question but suggested that kindly pointing to a fact-check site often helps with well-intentioned posters. A message that does not attack the intelligence of the poster can be helpful (e.g., “This author is a compelling writer, and I bet many people were fooled by his strongly worded article. Alas, this story is not actually true”—with a link to a reputable fact check). All panelists noted the fundamental importance of doing what we can to stop the spread of fake news, including being more diligent about not sharing such stories ourselves. Of course, our presenters also reminded attendees that some news is meant to be satire. The outraged comments found on any social media sharing of a story from [The Onion](#) or [The Borowitz Report](#) suggest that many people are not aware of this fact.

Session 3

The third session, “[Contacting Elected Officials: Influencing Decision Makers](#),” featured politicians with experience on the city council and county council, as mayor, and in the state legislature, as well as the district representative for our local congressperson. Topics included:

- how to identify your elected officials;
- how to identify decision makers;
- strategies for making your voice heard;
- dealing with social anxiety;
- phone calls, letters, emails, and petitions;
- lobbying and personal meetings;

- creative ways to share your message; and,
- what to do when you cannot get through.

Key takeaway lessons from this session included the usefulness of official government websites and local civic organizations (e.g., the League of Women Voters) in identifying elected officials; the fact that officials differ in their preferred communication mode; and the importance of doing your homework (about the official and the meeting topic) and being respectful when talking with public officials. Knowing an elected official's favorite breakfast spot, regularly scheduled flight to Washington, DC, favorite restaurants, or workout routine is also a way to get much-needed face time with officials who are not always receptive to meeting with constituents. Such approaches must be used very sparingly (i.e., one or two contacts per legislative season), the contact should be brief and cordial (whenever possible), and, of course, it should not evolve into a stalker-like scenario characterized by an invasion of privacy. An even better approach is to chat with officials during scheduled appointments or at public events where the officials are present in their official capacity.

Session 4

The fourth session, "[The Legislative Process: Influencing Local, State, and National Policy Debates](#)," featured a former state senator and current members of the city council and county council. I also provided information about the legislative process in the U.S. Congress. We discussed:

- how a bill becomes a law—U.S. Congress;
- how a bill becomes a law—Indiana General Assembly;
- how and when you can influence legislation;
- how to track legislation;
- how to read a bill for yourself;
- how to access public meetings, hearings, and floor debates;
- how to stay up-to-date on bills that matter to you;
- how to participate in city and county policy debates; and,
- how to write your own laws.

Some of the major takeaway lessons from this session included the fact that anybody can suggest an idea for new legislation but that a very small percentage of bills ever become laws, especially at the national level. We also discussed key differences between the state and national legislative processes, including the fact that Indiana's legislature is a part-time legislature, meeting only 30 to 61 days per year. Attendees learned the importance of the legislative calendar (requiring people to submit ideas for new state laws by Thanksgiving for consideration in January–April and limiting the introduction of bills requiring appropriations to every other year). Bills often take several years to advance through the Indiana General Assembly, while the city council can act very quickly, moving from idea to ordinance in a couple of weeks. Attendees also learned about how citizen opportunities to speak to a legislative body differ depending on the level of government. For example, while citizens cannot speak on the floor of the state legislature, they can speak, with time limits but no invitation, at South Bend City Council meetings. Finally,

participants learned how to track bills and watch the livestream (and recorded) sessions of local, state, and national legislatures online.

Session 5

The fifth session, “[Protest 101: Making Your Voice Heard](#),” was added in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement and the Women’s March as community members expressed a frustration with elected officials and a sense that their voices were not being heard. This session featured a history professor and a women’s and gender studies professor who both taught about and participated in political protests, along with activists representing local organizations that had recently hosted highly visible protests and rallies in our community. Topics of discussion included:

- when to organize a protest;
- how to organize a protest;
- how to attract participants;
- how to craft a message;
- how to gain media coverage;
- how to protest safely and legally;
- how to stay out of jail (*if that is your objective*);
- the principles of non-violence; and,
- how to make a difference if you cannot attend.

This far-reaching discussion included several key lessons, including the importance of recognizing the strengths and limitations of protest as a strategy. First, attendees were reminded that protest should not be the first tactic considered, especially if a group has not first tried talking directly with decision makers. Protesting in front of an elected official’s office to demand action before ever sitting down with the official to make the request is a surefire way to create an enemy rather than an ally or champion for a cause. Second, speakers reminded attendees that while a well-organized protest is good at generating media coverage and public attention, there must be a plan in place to capitalize on any public attention and legislative pressure resulting from the protest. Activists must supplement protests with long-term organizing and lobbying strategies to ensure new policies and solutions.

Building relationships with local media, using social media for direct advertising, working through existing networks to organize and spread the word, and crafting a message that is clear, concise, consistent, compelling, and connected to people’s real-world concerns were important tips shared during this session. Speakers also stressed the tradition of nonviolent civil disobedience going back to Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., and the importance of acting peacefully, knowing your legal rights, and accepting the consequences of your actions. Other lessons included: how to train protestors, how to control the message of a protest, how to securing proper permits and obey local laws, how to create a “human megaphone” to communicate with a large group, and how to create a human shield around the most vulnerable members of the group. Panelists also listed reasons a person may be unable to participate despite their belief in a cause and provided a list of ways such people can help make the protest a

success, including: advertising the event, conducting research on the issue, giving rides to the protest, making signs for others to carry, and more.

Session 6

The sixth and final session provided a model for community problem solving based on Bob Graham's book. This model can be used to address problems both big and small. The session, entitled "[Solving Community Problems: A Step-by-Step Guide to Civic Leadership](#)," featured four local community organizers representing different types of organizations and approaches to civic leadership. Topics included:

- defining the problem;
- identifying the decision maker;
- gauging public support;
- persuading the decision maker;
- building coalitions;
- using the calendar;
- engaging the media;
- funding your initiative; and,
- preserving victory and learning from defeat.

In this session, the moderator drew upon lessons from the previous five sessions while also allowing panelists to provide additional examples of successful approaches to community problem solving. Coalition building was a significant focus of this session, as was the central message that victory can slip away easily if a group fails to track a new policy through the implementation and enforcement phases. Another key takeaway was that it is critical to thank volunteers for their work. Whether or not a citizen initiative is successful, a simple "thank you" can make the difference between creating a citizen organizer who continues to be politically engaged and alienating a person who feels that their work was fruitless or unappreciated.

This series attracted a [large community audience](#), local [media promotions](#), and many favorable [media stories](#). It also expanded our network and led to new partnerships and additional series and events the following semester. We ended the series with a [networking reception](#). People who attended at least four events also received a Civic Leadership Academy Certificate. We were amazed by how many people attended every session because they wanted to earn that (non-credit, ADP-issued) certificate of participation. We snapped wonderful [pictures](#) of people [smiling from ear to ear](#) as they proudly held their certificates.

For us, this academy was a great success. The students who attended enjoyed it. They also enjoyed staffing the events and even moderating the session on protests. The community members who attended stayed connected with us via our email list and Facebook, and many attended the Civic Leadership Academy on "Asset-Based Community Development" as well as our candidate debate series the following fall. The IU South Bend campus recommends highly that other campuses consider hosting similar academies at locations across the United States (and beyond).

Before hosting your own Civic Leadership Academy, you should consider the following questions:

- Why do you want to host a Civic Leadership Academy?
- Who is your audience?
- How will you find out what they want to learn?
- What are some topics you think you might cover?
- What speakers would do a good job covering those topics?
- What media outlets might cover your events?
- Who might be good co-sponsors for your academy?
- Will you provide a certificate? Why or why not?
- Will you provide credit of some kind? Required, enrichment, career and technical education (CTE) credits?

In the case of IU South Bend, we hosted our first academy in response to citizen questions and requests for information, and to our own desire to act as a steward of place by providing useful civic education programming during a non-election year. Our audience was the campus and the community at large. The topics were based on attendee suggestions from past event surveys, emails and phone calls we received, our own observations about critical skills needed for a functioning representative democracy, and our director's background teaching a civic leadership course. [Our director](#) had long-term relationships with numerous public officials after more than 15 years of moderating local, state, and national political debates and six years of hosting a weekly public affairs [television program](#). For these same reasons, she had also developed close relationships with local reporters and news directors. We did not have a co-sponsor for our first academy but did identify a co-sponsor for our second academy (through discussions at the post-academy networking reception). We provided a [certificate of participation](#) but did not provide academic or CTE credit of any kind.

Before agreeing to host a Civic Leadership Academy, it is also important to consider who will:

- plan the series;
- plan each session;
- handle logistics (e.g., room, A/V, programs, food, furniture, etc.);
- invite the speakers;
- write the press releases;
- talk to the media;
- answer questions from the speakers and from the public;
- promote the series on campus;
- promote the series on social media and community calendars; and,
- moderate each event.

In our case, the director of the American Democracy Project, a faculty member with a one-course release, worked overtime on this project with the help of the campus event planner and a student intern. Students from the non-partisan Political Science Club helped host the sessions.

Once you have decided to move forward with the academy and determine who will do the work required, it is important to discuss how you will:

- assess the effectiveness of the academy;
- keep in touch with people after the event;
- learn from the experience; and,
- capitalize on the new connections and knowledge gained.

At IU South Bend, we use event surveys and academy completion rates to assess the effectiveness of the academy. We compiled an email list (using sign-in sheets and event surveys) to supplement our social media presence and provide a direct communication link to academy participants. We also used this participant list to track participation and to determine who would receive completion certificates. As noted earlier, we capitalized on new connections when working with academy participants to plan a follow-up academy on asset-based community development strategies.

Pandemic Adaptation

In the era of COVID-19, it is important to consider how a Civic Leadership Academy can be moved online while maintaining core curriculum and audience engagement. While IU South Bend's academy sessions were hosted on campus and at a local library to allow for live-audience Q&A, such academies could also be converted to webinars, giving moderators control of who can ask questions, who sees the questions, and which questions are posed to candidates. For example, the Q&A tab in Zoom allows participants to send questions to the host, co-host, and panelists (either with the attendee's name or anonymously, based on the settings approved by the host). The host can also determine whether attendees are able to view all questions or answered questions only. The "answered questions only" feature approximates our standard practice of collecting notecards at our live events in order to allow moderators to screen out personal attacks and questions that do not pertain to the event topic. Zoom conferencing also facilitates additional forms of attendee engagement. The host can allow attendees to "upvote" questions and/or comment on the questions, helping the moderator prioritize questions of greatest interest to attendees. The "raise hand" feature offers another way to involve attendees in Q&A. Enabling the "raise hand" features allows the host to "call on" specific people by announcing their name, unmuting their microphone, and asking them to unmute their own microphone, before allowing them to ask a question in their own voice. The host can decide whether or not to allow follow-up questions or to mute the questioner as soon as the question is asked. This feature has been popular during governors' daily media briefings featuring questions from reporters sheltering at home across their state. Zoom webinars can be recorded, shared, and posted online as part of an event archive, allowing people to participate even if they were unable to attend the original webinar.

Conclusion

This checklist of factors to consider, and the list of suggested topics for discussion, should prove useful when designing your own Civic Leadership Academy. We hope your series is as fruitful

as ours was. Such academies can help higher education fulfill its public purpose. As people working in higher education, one of our most important roles, if we choose to accept it, is educating for democracy. Hosting a Civic Leadership Academy is a wonderful way to teach beyond the campus. It allows us to meet a critical need in fostering the knowledge, skills, and motivation people need to make a meaningful difference in their communities—and the world.

Author



Elizabeth Bennion is a professor of political science and director of the American Democracy Project at Indiana University South Bend. She teaches American politics, with an emphasis on political behavior. Professor Bennion is the founding director of IUSB's American Democracy Project, president of the Indiana Debate Commission, and host of WNIT's live weekly television program *Politically Speaking*. In these capacities she moderates political discussions, public issue forums, and candidate debates for local, state, and national candidates. Professor Bennion has won numerous awards for her teaching and service, including local, state and national civic education awards. She has published widely in academic books, journals and newsletters, including the *Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science*, *eJournal of Public Affairs*, *Indiana Journal of Political Science*, *Journal of Public Affairs Research and Practice*, *Journal of Political Science Education*, *Political Behavior*, *Political Research Quarterly*, and *PS: Political Science & Politics*. Her teaching, research, and service promote civic education and engagement. Dr. Bennion is co-founder (with J. Cherie Strachan) of the Intercampus Consortium for SoTL Research and co-founder (with Richard Davis) of the Civic Engagement Section of the American Political Science Association. Her specialty is large, multi-campus surveys and field experiments designed to test the effectiveness of various interventions designed to increase students' civic and political engagement. Professor Bennion is currently working on a co-edited book on teaching civic engagement globally (a follow-up to her first two books: [*Teaching Civic Engagement: From Student to Active Citizen*](#) and [*Teaching Civic Engagement Across the Disciplines*](#)).

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Review of Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump

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Author Note

Review of *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump*
by John Fea (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018)

Review of *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump*

by John Fea

(Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018)

In *Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump*, John Fea, professor of history at Messiah College, has written a fine and all too necessary book that helps explain how we have reached this moment when *Christianity Today* calls for the impeachment and removal of a sitting president while the broader evangelical church embraces the same leader. A thoughtful, gentle guide for the perplexed, Fea is writing directly (though not exclusively) to fellow “white evangelicals” who share his befuddlement at the overwhelming, fervid, and ongoing support their religious compatriots offer to Donald Trump.

It is a question that the mere 19% of white evangelicals (to whom the book is dedicated) who do not support Trump are constantly asking – as are scholars, members of the mainstream media who provide countless bewildered stories about white evangelical men in diners across the rust belt, and, of course, Democratic party activists: how do these “so-called Christians” reconcile themselves to supporting such a crude, self-aggrandizing, and decidedly un-Jesus-like person as Donald J. Trump? Fea takes this question seriously and his mission is two-fold: as a historian, he wants to trace the path that leads to white evangelical support for Trump, and as a white evangelical Fea wants to invite his devout readers to a different path, a road where they might redeem themselves, their faith, and perhaps even their nation.

As the author of the widely read *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation?* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), Fea is knowledgeable and engaging, entreating his readers to follow the path from John Winthrop to Paula White. Fea demonstrates that Trump did not “come from nowhere” and capture the Republican party or white evangelical Christians; rather, Trump has tapped into and is made possible by a long arc of evangelical engagement in American politics that is not simply a matter of policy aspirations, but a tone and style of anti-democratic, anti-pluralist, anti-reason ideology. Fea builds his argument steadily and painstakingly. And he does so not as a champion of progressive causes. Indeed, Fea is critical of left politics, too, faulting progressives for their blind-spots and biases up to the point of resting on false equivalencies of responsibility for contemporary conditions.

Fea does not break any new ground here; numerous historians have explored this terrain in great detail, and Fea relies on their scholarship. But breaking new ground is not Fea’s mission. Rather he is seeking a new audience, offering to the 19% of white evangelicals – and any of the remaining 81% who might be willing to listen – an explanation of how we have reached our current moment of reckoning. How can he as a historian explain to fellow white evangelicals how they have come to be the base of Donald Trump’s Republican party, how this church of public purveyors of “family values” and personal responsibility can get into bed with the most profligate of presidents.

What Fea is describing – though he does not use this language – is the problem of white evangelical Christian identity politics. For Fea, white evangelical Christianity is too often not merely expressive of but rooted in the three strands of fear, desire for temporal power, and nostalgia. “Evangelicals,” Fea explains, “have always been very fearful people, and they have built their understanding of political engagement around the anxiety they have felt amid times of

social and cultural change” (8). Every difference seems to be experienced not as a wonder, but as a threat – and a threat over which one must seek power and from which one must be secured.

For example, in speaking about Barack Obama, Fea describes him as “the perfect foil for the evangelical purveyors of the politics of fear. Obama was an exotic figure to many white conservative Christians, and he represented nearly everything that made white evangelicals afraid: he grew up in Hawaii and spent time as a child in a predominantly Muslim country; he was the son of a white woman and a black man; he not only had a strange name, but he had the same middle name as a well-known Muslim dictator whom the United States waged war against” (18). Somehow, white evangelical Christians who espouse the importance of personal responsibility at every turn were made to fear Obama, the “poster child for demographic changes taking place in the country” (18). Here and throughout *Believe Me*, Fea offers a descriptive account of white evangelicals’ fear of Obama and the “GOP Fear-Mongers” who generated and preyed upon these fears. But this discussion of what white evangelicals feared is familiar, and it elides the more important question of *why* white evangelicals opted for fear.

Or to put the question more pointedly, Fea does not dwell on the appeal of fear – and the particular vitality white supremacist, misogynist, and heteronormative fears lend white evangelicalism in the United States. It is not simply that fear is baked into evangelical belief and practice, but that such fears are the force that gives the faith meaning. The greater the threat, the more powerful the deliverance. Fea names this addictive, misguided, and paradoxical white evangelical commitment to fear directly: “Even the most cursory reading of the Old and New Testament reveals that, ultimately, Christians have nothing to fear.” And yet, Fea suggests, most white evangelicals lack “the kind of spiritual courage necessary to overcome fear” and as a result do not simply embrace their fears but revel in the “political strongmen” who first acknowledge the legitimacy of these fears and then promise deliverance (p. 45). Donald J. Trump did not invent this formula; evangelicals have, in their lack of spiritual courage, demanded and gloried in this message for generations. Despite the literal biblical reassurance to “fear not,” white evangelicals are primed for fear, their identity is stoked by fear, and the sources of fear are around every unfamiliar turn.

Throughout *Believe Me*, Fea’s critique of the contemporary state of evangelical politics has a subtext of wistful longing. Rather than rising to the hope of the gospel promise that the belief in Jesus as savior offers a release from fears of the future, evangelicals have too often turned in terror from the future – and accordingly from the faith in the divine message – back toward a crabbed and partial fantasy of past glory days. The socio-political ideology that emerges from this fear of the future is rooted in nostalgia. Wisely, Fea writes: “In the end, the practice of nostalgia is inherently selfish because it focuses entirely on our own experience of the past and not on the experience of others...Nostalgia can give us tunnel vision. Its selective use of the past fails to recognize the complexity and breadth of human experience... Conservative evangelicals who sing the praises of America’s ‘Judeo-Christian heritage’ today, and who yearn for a Christian Golden Age, are really talking about the present rather than the past” (159-60).

Fea’s assessment of white evangelical nostalgia leads directly to what I thought was the to the strongest contribution of *Believe Me*: the connection between the nostalgic longing to Make America Great Again and the joint narcissism of Trump and white evangelical America. If nostalgic narcissism leads one to romanticize and celebrate only one’s imagined past, it is also illustrative of a refusal to seek to understand the experiences of another’s present and eliminates the need to imagine a pluralist future. Trumpian narcissism, in other words, is indicative of

narcissism and self-centeredness that has become the predominant feature of white evangelical Christianity. The white evangelical Christian message is one devoid of humility, and rather glories in its righteousness – the self-aggrandizing sentiments of the prosperity gospel demonstrate this phenomenon all too clearly. The President’s narcissism is welcomed by white evangelicals because it corresponds to their self-regard. Together, they represent what political theorist William Connolly calls a “resonance machine.”^[1]

That Fea is surprised and confused by the white evangelical support for Donald Trump illustrates both the strengths and weaknesses of this book. Fea invites readers who share his surprise on a historical journey through, for example, the failures of white evangelicals to stand up for racial justice in the United States – and indeed through the many ways that white supremacy has depended upon the faint sheen of moral legitimacy provided by evangelical Christianity over the last 150 years. The road to Donald Trump on this reading is not filled with surprising hairpin turns, but is rather a pretty straight shot. And so, the great limitation of *Believe Me* is the presumption that contemporary white evangelical Christians are somehow acting in a manner that betrays their tradition, when in fact with few exceptions, since the era of Charles Finney and the pre-Civil War evangelical abolitionists, most white evangelical interventions into the American political culture have been in devout opposition to democratic pluralism, to equal access to power and opportunity for those outside of white evangelical communities, to a refusal to respect the equal dignity and moral standing of non-white evangelical people as anything other than threats, pity, targets for missionary zeal, or transactional dealing.

Indeed, for all that Fea is justifiably concerned with the danger of conservative nostalgia for a mythical “greater America,” Fea himself concludes *Believe Me* with liberal nostalgia for the Southern Christian Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Rather than engaging with contemporary political activists, Fea prefers to highlight lessons he learned from a 10-day “civil rights movement bus tour” (p. 181). In the absence of white evangelical efforts to promote social justice rooted in the commitment to inclusion and equality that Fea finds in the teachings of Jesus, he turns to the example 1960’s civil rights activists hoping they might help shine a little light in the terrible darkness so that white evangelicals can “take a long hard look at what we have become” (191). Perhaps Fea concluded that that turning to contemporary Black Lives Matter or LGBTQA+ activists or Christian feminists as lights in the darkness would be too much to ask of his bewildered white evangelical readers. As such, Fea is trying – desperately – to reach people where they are because there is a lot of work they need to do – but such nostalgia is illustrative of the limits of Fea’s vision and his faith in his readers.

In the end, *Believe Me* implicitly offers two basic answers to Fea’s initial question about the evangelical road to Trump that is more precise than the broad categories of Fear, Power, and Nostalgia. While Fea does not make these claims explicitly, they are the underlying subtext and logical conclusion of this book: 1) white evangelical identity politics is tribal – any idea, person, group or belief that stands outside the tribe is considered as a threat that must be dealt with aggressively with the essential end of preserving the security of the tribe. And, 2) relatedly, white evangelical politics is transactional – uncharitable and un-principled means can, and even must, be used to achieve the ultimate ends of the organization. This characteristic of white evangelicalism is of course, most clearly evident in the widespread support of Donald Trump. Even those evangelicals who are gingerly willing to offer mild criticism of the President’s failings or “uncouth language,” do so only as a means of grasping for moral legitimacy in supporting the “imperfect agent God has chosen” to achieve holy ends like the appointment of

pro-life, pro-“religious freedom” judges to courts across the land. Taken together, the result is that the vast balance of white evangelical Christianity is virtually bankrupt as a matter of principled faith. It is no more religious than a corporation, a country club, a trade union, or the Chamber of Commerce.

Fea is understandably reticent to reach this conclusion. He still holds out hope for the 19% to grow as more white evangelicals come to realize how compromised their faith has perhaps always been and has certainly become. Unfortunately, there is little evidence that white evangelicals, so beholden to their fears, so enamored of their political power, so emboldened by their nostalgia, are willing to not just challenge Donald Trump, but to destroy the well-paved road that led to him. There will be pockets of progressive evangelicals – Jim Wallis, Shane Claiborne, Rachel Held Evans, and others will find their audience – but what is more likely to happen is that recognizing the term “evangelical Christian” is too profane to bother redeeming, more people will stop calling themselves evangelicals and will either leave the faith or identify under a different category. As the Pew Research Center for Religion & Public Life reported in October 2019, “The share of U.S. adults who are white born-again or evangelical Protestants now stands at 16%, down from 19% a decade ago.”^[2] What will remain is a harder core of white evangelicals identifying themselves against what they fear, grasping for political and financial power, and justifying their actions as fulfilling a mythological destiny. In this light, Fea’s *Believe Me* is at once a guide for the perplexed and a eulogy for a dying dream of a church, and perhaps for a nation.

1. William Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. [↑](#)
2. <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/> [↑](#)

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Book Review: The Conservative Sensibility

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Author Note

Discussed in this review:

The Conservative Sensibility. By George Will. Hachette Books. June 2019. ISBN: 9780316480932. 640 pages. Hardcover, \$35.

Democracy, Civic Engagement, and Citizenship in Higher Education: Reclaiming Our Civic Purpose. Edited by William V. Flores and Katrina S. Rogers. Rowman & Littlefield. May 2019. ISBN: 9781498590945. 408 pages. Hardcover, \$120.

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Book Review: *The Conservative Sensibility*

by George Will

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Americans typically view the United States as a democracy and are rightly proud of that. Of course, as those of a more precise nature, along with smug college students enrolled in introductory American government classes, are quick to point out, the United States is technically a republic. This is a bit too clever by half since James Madison, in *The Federalist Papers*, defined a republic the way most people think of a democracy—a system of representative government with elections: “[The]... difference between a Democracy and a Republic are, first the delegation of the Government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest.” What the framers thought of as democracy is today referred to as *direct democracy*, the belief that citizens should have more direct control over governing. The Athenian assembly was what the framers, Madison in particular, saw as the paragon of direct democracy—and as quite dangerous. While direct democracy has its champions, most Americans equate democracy with electing officials to do the business of government.

On these terms, there is no doubt that the country is much more democratic today than it was in 1787. Slavery has ended, voting rights have been greatly expanded to groups that might not even have dreamt of voting in the 1780s, and most states now have referendums and initiatives that give people a direct voice in the creation of law. However, these facts do not foreclose debate. Progressives are quick to highlight the ways the United States falls short of many democratic ideals. Too few people vote, and the level of economic inequality is staggering, giving rise to the belief that political equality is a farce. For those on the political right, the dangers of democracy itself remain central to much of their commentary. They fear that the unthinking masses, with their desire for publicly funded programs, will bring on economic ruin and a populist tyranny. This would take the form of unctuous politicians all too eager to trade prudence for power. No matter what one’s final judgment about democracy is—an absolute good, a necessary evil, or just a plain evil—how it is practiced in the United States remains an ongoing problem requiring constant reflection and evaluation.

These reflections are particularly colored by the historical reality that the United States, unlike most countries, has rather explicit founding and governing documents. The country was founded on a set of principles and animated by ideas that, while open to debate about meaning, most agree are central. For conservatives, the founding is usually seen as paramount, and Americans should maintain their connection to it. The Constitution, they argue, is a brilliant, fixed document that makes America safe for a kind of democracy. To some on the left, the founding and the Constitution represent an unfulfilled set of ideals that are only very imperfectly realized. (To those further to the left, the founding is suspect—window dressing to hide the fact that plutocrats run the country and that democracy is largely a sham.)

Indeed, democracy and the founding are enticing subjects for intellectuals, who are wont to see ideas as supreme. Ideas, after all, are a currency that intellectuals possess in abundance, and admittedly, ideas are important. Much to the chagrin of hard-nosed realists, people are often deeply motivated by ideas, the best of which—freedom, equality, justice, fraternity—are worthy of deep reflection and analysis. Important ideas inspire people to act and help define the values they hold and will fight for. Yet, hard material realities also matter a great deal. The most persuasive writers show a keen felicity of mind with ideas while demonstrating a concrete understanding of how things work on the ground.

I mention all of this because George Will has written what I think can safely be called his magnum opus: *The Conservative Sensibility*. The book addresses both the meaning of conservatism and the nature of the American democratic project, and for those interested in conservatism, or the work of George Will, it will enthrall them with his exploration of the ideas that animate *American* conservatism. The importance of freedom and the political structures best designed to foster freedom are always reason enough for another thoughtful book. Will's writerly ease and wit make it a pleasure, whether one agrees with him or not, to read his account of what is right about America (mostly the founding, the Constitution, and a few later key figures like Lincoln) and what is wrong with contemporary America (mostly every politician today, lazy people, entitlements, and Woodrow Wilson).

Some readers will find contentment gliding along as Will explicates important political thinkers and ideas. Good men (and it is mostly men in the book) are subtly praised and bad men are skewered in elegant prose. What a joy not to have to worry about the lives of anyone but these men. What a satisfaction to think the New Deal was simply a collection of thoughts and bad policies created by a misguided, irritating, problem-solving power seeker like Franklin Roosevelt. However, it is telling that Will only mentions the Great Depression in passing on two occasions in the entire book. One does not have to be an actual worker, African American, or even a field-researching sociologist to wonder: What about all of the people whom FDR was talking to? But why ask this when Will is having so much fun summing up a lifetime of thought? To be fair, this book is not a history but an articulation of a "sensibility." It is not too far removed from the British philosopher Michael Oakeshott's eloquent case for the conservative disposition, made decades ago in his brilliant essay "On Being Conservative." Yet, Will's book is vastly more detailed, systematic, and decidedly American. It is a fascinating account of one influential writer's journey on the philosophic right. In some ways, the book contrasts with his earlier work, *Statecraft as Soul*. A shorter book, *Statecraft* reveals an undeniably more Burkean turn of mind; the role of custom and tradition loom large. That work was published in 1983, and the subsequent decades have forced Will to confront more directly the American version of conservatism. This version accepts the unique characteristics of American history and, most importantly, the classical liberal elements of American conservatism. Burke is still evident in *The Conservative Sensibility*, but he has been effectively retired, a respected distant relative who no longer speaks so vividly to the lives of the American cousins.

In much of the book, Will makes points that many self-identified conservatives will recognize as conservative. He bemoans the rise of the administrative state, with its boundless production of regulations, and he is deeply concerned about the continual flow of power to the executive branch as Congress abdicates its traditional role. The latter point was a hallmark of Republican thinking during the Obama years, though it is much more muted today with Trump, about whom Will is emphatic about not wanting to talk. In these sections of the book, Will sounds like a conservative but not in service to the great American business world; rather, he harkens back to the notion of constitutional balance, once the hallmark of conservative thinking. He also makes clear that the current form of government works "to evade democratic accountability" (p. 132). With so much administration, so many regulations, and so weakened a legislative branch, how can the average citizen possibly render a coherent judgment about what is going on in Washington? Will's concerns are clearly sincere, and he even entertains a number of new constitutional amendments to restore power to Congress, which he rightly observes has delegated

a great deal of power to the executive branch. He offers the impractical (because unlikely) amendments in an attempt to reform and ultimately restore the rightly understood Madisonian balance. At times, Will places himself in the uncomfortable position of a radical serving in the name of conservatism—radial because he suggests significant constitutional reform. However, I think these recommendations are made to make us think, not take to the streets.

Most striking is the extent to which Will's true enemies—the Progressives—and what they wrought are now easily used by the right or left to get what they want. In this sense, Will's target is what he sees as "so called" conservatives. Arguably, his desire is not only to sum up a lifetime of political thought, but also to invigorate a conservative movement that has lost its way. That he recently abandoned the Republican Party is not the least bit surprising. Power must be constrained, and democracy must be limited to protect freedom and maintain a balanced, stable political system.

How one reacts to much of the book's content will depend largely on one's view of the role of government in helping individuals be free and equal citizens. Yet, it is important to emphasize that Will's analysis is all about ideas and is largely devoid of history. The book contains plenty of pithy references to famous people making observations. He cites statistics and provides examples of government mistakes (or what we are to take as mistakes). He tells numerous delightful stories about what politicians did or said. However, the reality of life does not concern him much. As noted earlier, he hardly mentions the Great Depression, and when he does, it is through a vivid image of the Dust Bowl literally landing dust on FDR's desk. A person ignorant of U.S. history would mostly likely come away from the book with a notion of the Progressives as odd creatures out to nefariously transform America, horribly influenced by dangerous European ideas. Though many Progressives were influenced by European ideas, one would hardly know from reading Will that much of what they did was in response to real problems. The political system in the late-19th century was horribly corrupt. Political machines perverted city government, waves of immigration and the rise of modern capitalism created a host of social problems—food unfit to eat, buildings unsafe for workers, and unemployment. No doubt some Progressives were reading Hegel and thinking of the rational German state as a model, but I suspect most were wondering how to help the poor and to find decent water to drink.

The Conservative Sensibility is a call to rethink and clarify what it means to be conservative today in the United States. Will wants his readers to face the reality of a thoughtless culture and an inattentive state linked to a highly populist political system. He is most certainly right to be worried, whether one agrees with all his details or not. There does seem to be wide agreement among both elites and the larger population that something is wrong with America.

If there is hope, one must, of course, look to the future and the rising generations to right current wrongs. On this point, Will is less than sanguine. He treats higher education with a great amount of skepticism—as a place that is dangerously radical, prone to utopianism and muddled thinking. He writes, "We see the spread of intellectual gerrymandering, carving up curricula into protected enclaves for racial, gender, and ethnic factions" (p. 373). One could hardly call universities bastions of conservatism, in his thinking. The excesses of thoughtless faculty, the balkanization of knowledge, and the fostering of grievances all make universities suspect in his eyes. However,

is Will right about this? Maybe there is a way to think about higher education in a more favorable light.

Willam Flores and Katrina Rogers, editors of *Democracy, Civic Engagement, and Citizenship in Higher Education* (2019), offer a quite different, positive perspective on the role universities must play in creating (or recreating) democracy. All of the contributors to the volume work in higher education, but that does not mean their points should be dismissed. As with any multi-author book, there are a myriad of perspectives. However, there are two main themes: American democracy is in serious trouble, and universities are uniquely positioned to do something about it. I should say up front that reading books about higher education in the midst of the current pandemic is sobering. At this point, it is hard to know exactly what post-COVID-19 society will look like, especially when higher education in particular seems to be facing dire challenges. Yet, assuming there will be universities in the future and that they will have some role in the state of American democracy, the book is valuable. Indeed, given the deepening crisis in American democracy, the arguments advanced in the book may be more urgent than at the time it was published.

At the heart of *Democracy, Civic Engagement, and Citizenship in Higher Education* is the argument that colleges play an important role in their communities and in fostering a new generation of engaged citizens. In part, this idea is an old one, that universities have never been simply cloistered places. An overriding concern, though, is that higher education is being transformed by a single-minded devotion to producing skilled workers—the summum bonum of the modern university. This view is seemingly held not just by those who fund higher education, but by those attending. Among the many varied but related themes explored in this book is how intensely the contributors believe in the community-oriented goals of their respective institutions—in the need to give back to those communities. As Jonathan Alger and Abraham Goldberg say of their school, James Madison University, the goal is to prepare “each generation of engaged and enlightened citizens who will learn the skills necessary to identify, articulate, and pursue the common good even as they build their own lives and careers” (p. 106). This brings to mind Tocqueville’s observation about enlightened self-interest. This book attests to the rich variety of efforts being made to “create” a generation that wants to give back, even as individuals strive to get ahead. From high enough, the authors are in general agreement: Universities have a vital role in revitalizing democracy through their curricula and their many civic-learning programs. On the ground, there are friendly differences among the individual authors about the specific means of achieving this revitalization. Some emphasize the need for engaged students—future citizens who vote and volunteer in their local communities—while others are concerned with solving specific problems of inequality and environmental degradation and seeking to further social justice.

This kind of focus on specific problems is bound to offend conservatives like George Will. However, the idea of fostering thoughtful, deliberate citizens is not intrinsically anti-conservative. Indeed, many of the authors are intent on making American democracy stronger and are frequently driven by personal stories of duty and responsibility. Will thinks that universities are driven by “identity politics” and that this means people are not made by “conscious choices but by accidents.” In talking about higher education, Will remarks, “It is prudent to keep one’s capacity for pessimism awake” (p. 375). What is striking in reading

Democracy, Civic Engagement, and Citizenship in Higher Education is the authors' unity of purpose. I do not just mean the unity of the contributors' goals for programs; rather, I mean the idea that civic engagement programs can create a citizenry dedicated to a united country. Furthermore, it is not grievances that animate the authors; it is the fierce desire on the part of college presidents, faculty, and students to give back to their communities. These are not generally communities of ethnicity but the shared communities of their localities. For the most part, their activities are rooted in the nearby. This book is a testament to a strong, reasonable faith that public-spiritedness can be, and is being, awakened in students today—students who have at least some devotion to the common good.

In 1990, William F. Buckley published a little book calling for a program of national service. This book, *Gratitude*, grounded its argument in the notion that much was wrong with the world, that it was hedonistic and corrupt. We needed to be reminded of our debt to the nation and the bonds that unite us as citizens. Buckley wrote that “materialistic democracy beckons every man to make himself a king; republican citizenship incites every man to be a knight.” I am not sure what Buckley would think of the call to civic engagement, but the focus on citizenship would certainly offer common ground. George Will's conservative sensibilities might make him leery of the leftwing “do gooderism” of college programs designed to make students think less about themselves and more about others. Yet, the reality is, higher education is well positioned to call on the more communal nature of individual souls. It strikes me that the liberal or progressive tone of some civic engagement programs is much less essential than the ability to summon students to think less about themselves and more about others. This is neither a right or left ideal but rather a foundation stone for making democracy work better and leading us past the tribal polarization that threatens to weaken the American political edifice.

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Book Review: A Citizen's Guide to Impeachment

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Book Review: *A Citizen's Guide to Impeachment*, by Barbara Radnofsky
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A Citizen's Guide to Impeachment, by Barbara Radnofsky. New York: Melville House
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High crimes and misdemeanors. We hear this phrase—outlined in the U.S. Constitution—used by politicians and news media when discussing impeachment, but what conduct is included in high crimes and misdemeanors? Must it be a serious crime? A misdemeanor? What is the process surrounding this phrase? *A Citizen's Guide to Impeachment*, by Barbara Radnofsky, provides useful guidance in understanding the impeachment process, its historical background, and key lessons from the formal impeachment proceedings held throughout U.S. history. As the title suggests, the book is intended to serve as a “guide for citizens in a participatory government,” and it meets that goal in fine fashion.

Structure

The three chapters that make up *A Citizen's Guide to Impeachment* include a discussion of the origins of impeachment law, a discussion of the legal principles and process of impeachment, and summaries of the formal impeachment proceedings conducted in the United States. The first chapter on the origins of impeachment law describes the Founding Fathers' reliance on their knowledge of and experience with English law and their predictions of potential dangers posed by future leaders. These dangers include incapacity/negligence, tyranny, corruption, betrayal of trust to a foreign power, and treason. In the U.S. Constitution and accompanying *Federalist Papers*, the authors addressed the nature of the impeachment process, to whom it applied, the type of conduct it covered, and safeguards for both the process and the accused.

Chapter 2 pertains to the legal principles and congressional process of impeachment, including the House of Representative's role in initiating the impeachment inquiry, conducting an investigation, and voting on any articles of impeachment presented to the full chamber. If any article is passed by a simple majority, the process moves to the Senate for trial and a final verdict. If convicted, the official is automatically removed from office. The Senate can hold a separate vote to determine if the official is disqualified from future office.

This chapter also offers an interpretation of the high crimes and misdemeanors clause of the U.S. Constitution. While treason and bribery are also listed as impeachable offenses in the Constitution, they have not been identified as frequently as high crimes and misdemeanors in impeachment articles, nor do they garner the same questions regarding interpretation. The high crimes and misdemeanors clause applies to both officers of the executive branch as well as federal judges. It does not require criminal intent, an actual crime, or a violation of a law or the Constitution; rather, the clause has been broadly defined and can include conduct that violates the public trust. Whether the conduct poses a substantial harm or risk of harm to society is a critical factor in determining if it passes the high crimes and misdemeanors test.

It is helpful to examine presidential conduct subject to impeachment in light of the president's responsibilities to faithfully execute the law and the Office of the President, and to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution. Abusing power, violating citizens' rights, and acting in derogation of other constitutional powers are prohibited. Further, the impeachment process is protected from presidential pardon—of oneself or someone else.

The last chapter of *A Citizen's Guide to Impeachment* details the facts, results, and key lessons associated with each of the 19 formal impeachment processes conducted in the United States. Sixteen of the formal proceedings have concluded with a Senate verdict, and all eight Senate convictions involved the impeachment and removal of federal judges. These cases serve as valuable precedent for interpreting the impeachment clause, providing guidance for future proceedings. Many of the key lessons relate to the type of conduct that satisfies the high crimes

and misdemeanors test, including the accepted premise that the conduct does not have to be criminal in nature. Conversely, not all crimes are impeachable. There continues to be a preference for bringing articles of impeachment under the high crimes and misdemeanors clause even if the questionable conduct could be considered treason or bribery. The broader scope and lesser burden of proof for high crimes and misdemeanors is favored. In considering whether conduct meets the high crimes and misdemeanors standard, the Senate has affirmed the potential for substantial harm or risk to society as a major determinant.

The book identifies several examples of impeachable presidential conduct from President Nixon's impeachment inquiry, including responsibility for the actions of subordinates, responsibility for occurrences they "have reason to know," even if actual knowledge does not exist, misleading the public, violating constitutional principles (e.g., infringing on powers of other branches, interfering with investigations, withholding information, etc.).

Previous cases have established that intent is not required for an impeachment conviction, and both abuse of power for financial or personal gain, as well as personal conduct can qualify as impeachable offenses. Additional lessons relate to the process itself, affirming that impeachment is not a criminal legal process and only allows for the removal from office and disqualification from future office, and that the Senate's deliberative nature makes it the body best-suited to conducting the trial.

Potential Applications

There are several excellent possibilities for applying the principles of *A Citizen's Guide to Impeachment*: aiding the citizenry in understanding the impeachment process; guiding university instructors and administrators in facilitating discussions with students; and contributing to the dialogue between a university and its surrounding community.

First, in a very basic way, this book can help people understand the impeachment process. For example, since impeachment is a political process, rather than a criminal or legal one, it does not have to meet the same legal standards as a court proceeding. The two-step process originates in the House and ends in the Senate. If an article is passed by a simple majority in the House, the official is "impeached." However, the Senate must convict by a two-thirds super majority (or 67 votes) in order for the official to be removed from office.

Second, the book can serve as a guide for university discussions between and among students and faculty, extending beyond the classroom to forums and informal conversations. Educators interested in not only increasing civic literacy but civically engaging students have an obligation to lead and support conversations with their students. While political science is an obvious discipline in which to hold these discussions, academic units in history, sociology, international relations, criminal justice, and psychology may also offer opportunities for such dialogue. Further, educators and administrators involved in civic leadership/education, student government, and various student affairs areas may find this a helpful tool in educational programs and informal conversations.

A Citizen's Guide to Impeachment can also serve as a useful resource for explaining how the impeachment process works and for guiding students through critical-thinking exercises. Because this is a unique process that has been used in a very limited number of instances in U.S. history, many students have a limited understanding of how the impeachment process works in the context of the three branches of government.

While impeachment is not a criminal legal process, one may draw several parallels between the two. The House initiates the impeachment inquiry, deciding whether there is enough evidence of conduct that rises to the level of high crimes and misdemeanors to pass articles of impeachment. This parallels a grand jury's role in considering whether to indict an individual, formally accusing them of committing a crime. If any articles of impeachment are passed in the House, the Senate conducts a trial, with the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court presiding. The Senate's role is similar to a court and jury, and the Chief Justice's role aligns with that of a judge in a legal proceeding. Even though the Chief Justice presides over the impeachment trial, the Supreme Court cannot review the Senate's decision and is otherwise uninvolved in the process. Unlike a trial in the legal system, there is no appeal of a Senate impeachment verdict; the verdict is final. While House members serve as prosecutors in presenting the case to the Senate, the format does not have to follow a judicial-style trial. In addition, even if the impeachable offenses are criminal in nature, the Senate separates itself from the criminal process by requiring independent proof.

The forethought of the Founding Fathers in distributing the impeachment process across the two houses, and specifically giving the Senate the power to convict, was validated in early impeachment cases. The Senate's deliberations confirmed that it is best-suited to conduct an impeachment trial because it can put partisan allegiances aside. Furthermore, the required two-thirds majority vote for conviction necessitates bi-partisan support. In contrast to a simple majority vote requirement, the super majority requirement of 67 votes also prevents the vice president, who can only vote to break a tie, from casting a deciding vote that would allow them to succeed to the presidency. Additionally, senators fully understand the potential harm to the separation of powers if the process is abused. Lastly, the Senate's flexibility in format is better suited for this type of process than following the strict legal process required by the courts.

Third, this book can assist faculty in providing information to university and local communities. As citizens strive to better understand the impeachment process and accompanying standards of conduct, educators have an important role to play. Educational programming, such as presentations and forums, offers important opportunities for educators to extend civic education beyond their student populations. Additionally, as universities endeavor to improve or maintain town and gown relationships, this programming generates prospects for interaction and dialogue between the two communities.

A Citizen's Guide to Impeachment is written in lay terms that clarify the impeachment process and highlight its significance to the separation of powers of the three branches of government. As stated in its conclusion, the essential lesson to take from the book is the importance of participating in democracy. One of the best and most significant ways to do so is to be informed and to vote.

Limitations

True to its title, *A Citizen's Guide to Impeachment* does not embrace an academic or scholarly examination of questions of constitutional or statutory interpretation, case law, or technical issues related to impeachment. Therefore, it does have limitations for scholarly use beyond its intent to serve as a helpful resource for citizens and educators for the basic purposes mentioned earlier.

Another limitation of the book is its lack of discussion of the politics of the process itself. Decisions to move forward with a formal impeachment inquiry, pass articles of impeachment, and vote on a verdict are not made in a vacuum. Therefore, it is essential to consider the political environment in which these decisions are made. In today's environment, opposing political parties control the chambers of Congress, and it is unknown whether congressional members will break

party lines to support or refute possible articles of impeachment. Political polarization has increased dramatically over the past few decades, making it more challenging for individuals to break party lines, lest they face significant consequences. Consequently, as Democrats hold a majority in the House and Republicans hold a majority in the Senate, there is a distinct possibility that a Senate verdict could further solidify the partisan divide as the United States enters the 2020 general election campaign. Congressional votes are likely to have significant and immediate consequences. The impeachment process affords a mechanism for safeguarding the Constitution; however, these potential outcomes underscore the fact that it is a political process with political consequences.

Although understanding the impeachment process and studying prior impeachment cases as a sort of roadmap for current proceedings is helpful in guiding conversations, modern technology, the 24-hour news cycle, social media, and increasing difficulties in evaluating media credibility contribute to feelings of uncertainty. Though *A Citizen's Guide to Impeachment* can help citizens understand the impeachment process, it cannot help them traverse a highly unpredictable political environment. Citizens must make informed decisions and be their own best advocates, rather than deferring to elected officials to fill that role.

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