Like all movements, the civic engagement movement has struggled to find conceptual and operational coherence. Disparate strategies have produced internal tensions. One key dilemma has been whether the movement should confront and challenge the dominant institutional culture or accommodate the status quo. For example, in the mid-1990s, a number of service-learning proponents argued that the surest means of anchoring it in the core work of the academy was to adhere to academic norms. While this helped engender widespread legitimacy of the practice, it also has come to mean that on many campuses the premise of service-learning is identical to that of field or clinical placements—the emphasis is squarely on the professional and disciplinary learning of students, and the community benefits are secondary. On many campuses what passes for “engaged scholarship” is largely indistinguishable from applied research. Even the language of recent declarations points to tensions. Should engagement be predicated on “academic neutrality,” or should institutions foster the notion of faculty as moral agents whose “moral and civic imaginations” are directed at public work? From an operational standpoint, the field is fragmented. Important efforts aimed at promoting civic learning such as diversity initiatives, democratic deliberation, global citizenship, and community-based learning and research operate in isolation from one another. Few campuses actively seek to integrate such efforts.

One of the key characteristics of a powerful movement is its conceptual and ideological coherence. Strong movements are propelled by compelling and clearly articulated purposes. Since movements develop in order to challenge the status quo, it is particularly important to identify what they are moving against. In the early 1990s, Page Smith bemoaned the emergence of “academic fundamentalism,” which he defined as “the flight from teaching, the perniciousness of most academic research, the disintegration of the disciplines, the alliance of universities with the Department of Defense, the National Aeronautics and Space Agency, etc., and, more recently, with biotechnology and communications corporations, and, last but not least, the corruptions incident to ‘big time’ collegiate sports” (1990, p. 1). Proponents of civic engagement have been pushing against a number of trends in higher education, providing a counterweight to forces that have undermined the democratic purposes of colleges and universities:

- The persisting influence of the ivory tower: “Disciplinary guildism” (Benson, Harkavy, and Hartley 2005)—the pressure for faculty to pursue narrow disciplinary specialization and seek knowledge for its own sake (the German university model) in order to advance professionally—has resulted in scholarly activity whose purpose is to advance theory but often does little to address pressing social problems.
- The corporatization of the university: The “management revolution” (Keller 1983) that embraced the notion of student-as-customer emphasized credentialing and de-emphasized the formative aspects of education. Fears of demographic shifts, a weak economy in the 1980s, and shifting values of students (toward a more-privatized view of higher education—a college education as a ticket to a good job) led to many institutions to develop new professional and vocational programs, which produced dissonance on many campuses, where the larger historic purposes (e.g., a liberal arts education) were perceived as having been abandoned. Commercialization and commodification continue to shape campus practices (e.g., partnering with corporations, launching popular degree programs, expanding admissions and development offices into major administrative features of the university).
- The crisis in undergraduate teaching and decontextualized learning: The 1970s and 1980s saw a good deal of discussion about general education. Many felt the curriculum had lost coherence. The Banking Model of Education (as described by Paulo Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed [1970]), where faculty present in lectures and place ideas into the heads of students, predominated. Learning also seemed decontextualized—uncoupled from the real world—and it remains so today. This is problematic since many students have grown up in middle class “bubbles” and never encountered others from different racial, ethnic, or socio-economic backgrounds.
- Moral somnolence and civic disengagement: The value neutrality of the German university model (in contrast to the character-building
emphasis of the English model and the earlier American models [Reuben 1996]) raised questions of the relevance of higher education to address the pressing ethical and political challenges of our times. This was particularly evident in the university’s inability to prepare students for lives of civic engagement, despite frighteningly low levels of political engagement and widespread mistrust of government. As Frank Newman (1985) put it, “If there is a crisis in education in the United States today, it is less that test scores have declined than it is that we have failed to provide the education for citizenship that is still the most significant responsibility of the nation’s schools and colleges” (p. 31).

- The politics of academic epistemology: As David Mathews notes in “Democracy’s Megachallenges Revisited” (2008), the way in which colleges and universities are engaged with local communities “has implications for politics. . . . Colleges and universities have an understanding of citizenship that is implicit in nearly everything they do, including the kind of education they provide to undergraduates, the kind of leadership they champion in leadership programs, and the services they offer to their communities” (p. 208). Expert-driven, hierarchical knowledge generation and dissemination is not only an epistemological position but also, as Harry Boyte (2008) points out, a political one. Traditional academic epistemology, with its embedded values, methods, and practices, signifies “pattern of power” relationships and creates a “technocracy” and a particular politics that is “the core obstacle to higher education’s engagement.” Not only are the power and politics of expert academic knowledge what he calls “the largest obstacle in higher education to authentic engagement with communities”; they are also “a significant contributor to the general crisis of democracy.” Their “core negative functions,” he explains, “are to undermine the standing and to delegitimize the knowledge of those without credentials, degrees, and university training . . . conceiving of people without credentials as needy clients to be rescued or as customers to be manipulated” (p. 108). In this way of thinking and acting, he notes, genuine reciprocal learning is just not possible.

**What We Need Are Not More Programs**

A 2008 article in the Chronicle of Higher Education profiled the efforts of an urban university that, like many others, has made efforts to reconceptualize its mission around engagement with the city it is part of. The university has been sensitive to shifting demographics and has endeavored to design learning environments where diverse students can thrive. The article points to significant reform in the university’s general education curriculum, which now emphasizes experiential learning and has established courses and programs with partners in the community as part of the students’ educational experience. The curriculum now includes a number of community-based programs in areas including culture and the arts, legal aid, economic development, and support for small business. The article notes that the university’s idea of “place-based learning” has been in practice for decades and that the campus’s efforts are part of a larger national trend focused on urban-serving universities that advocates for greater collaboration between cities and higher education institutions. This example (at least as it is described by the Chronicle) is in many ways representative of what is happening at colleges and universities across the country: universities working together with their communities. Such efforts are laudable, as they move universities beyond the anachronistic role of the ivory tower. However, in our view, engagement that is defined solely by activities that occur in a particular place fall short unless there is clarity about the larger democratic purposes of the activities and a commitment to expressing this democratic ideal through institutional practices and policies. Without the intentionality of process and purpose, there is a diminution of democratic potential. Students may learn, and important service may be rendered. But rarely does such an approach to engagement result in actively contesting a problematic status quo or engender concerted action to challenge and change it by every democratic means possible.

To paraphrase John Dewey—who wrote in Democracy and Education (1916) that “mere activity does not constitute experience” (139)—mere activity in a community does not constitute civic engagement. Civic engagement defined by purpose and processes has a particular meaning in higher education and is associated with implications for institutional change. Purpose refers specifically to enhancing a public culture of democracy on and off campus and alleviating public problems through democratic means. The processes of engagement refer to the way in which those on campus—administrators, academics, staff, and students—relate to those outside the campus. Purpose and processes are inextricably linked—the means must be consistent with the ends, and the ends are defined by democratic culture. The norms of democratic education are determined by the values of inclusiveness, participation, task sharing and reciprocity in public problem solving, and an equality of respect for the knowledge and experience that everyone involved contributes to education and community building. Democratic processes and purposes reorient civic engagement to what we are calling “democratic engagement”—engagement that has significant implications for transforming higher education such that democratic values are part of the leadership of administrators, the scholarly work of faculty, the educational work of staff, and the leadership development and learning outcomes of students. Democratic engagement has epistemological, curricular, pedagogical, research, policy, and culture implications. It adheres to the shared understanding that the only way to learn the norms and develop the values of democracy is to practice democracy as part of one’s education.
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Without a democratic purpose, engagement efforts are often pursued as ends in themselves, and engagement becomes reduced to a public relations function of making known what the campus is doing in and/or for the community and providing opportunities for students to have experiences in the community. Engagement in this sense reflects the dominant academic culture of higher education, often characterized as "scientific," "rationalized," "objectified," or "technocratic," meaning that the approach to public problems is predominantly shaped by specialized expertise that is "applied" externally "to" or "on" the community, providing "solutions" to what has been determined to be the community's "needs."

The distinction we are making between civic engagement as it is widely manifested in higher education and what we are calling democratic engagement is not attributed to the kind of knowledge and expertise generated in the academy but to whether that knowledge and its use are inclusive of other sources of knowledge and problem solving. The measure of the democratic processes and purpose of engagement is demonstrated by a capacity to learn in the company of others and not to rely solely on the expertise of the academy. As Peter Levine (2007) has observed, "Technical expertise has evident value. No one can doubt that we are better off because of the specialized knowledge possessed by physicians, engineers, economists, and others. Expertise is such a fundamental organizing principle that we often overlook its drawbacks and limitations—even for democracy" (p. 106). Democratic engagement is not dismissive of expert knowledge—on the contrary, it is expertise in solving social problems that is often sought by communities—but is critical of expertise that claims an exclusionary position relative to other forms of knowledge and other knowledge producers. Attention to process raises the question of how expertise is positioned and exercised. Attention to purpose defines the ways in which expertise can be exercised democratically.

The distinction that we are making between civic (or community) engagement as it is predominantly practiced in higher education and democratic engagement as an alternative framework, and the conceptual comparison of the two frameworks, recognizes that civic engagement on many campuses has elements of each of these frameworks, in some cases due to efforts to shift to a more democratic framing of engagement. Drawing these distinctions is intended to assist academic leaders and practitioners in the design and implementation of engagement efforts on campus with an intentionality of democratic purpose and an awareness of the kind of change in institutional culture needed to make civic democratic engagement a part of the institution's identity.

**Civic Engagement Framed by Activity and Place**

The dominant framework of engagement in higher education is grounded in an institutional epistemology that privileges the expertise in the university and its application externally, through activities in the community. "This epistemology," William Sullivan (2000) has noted, "is firmly entrenched as the operating system of much of the American university." There exists, writes Sullivan, an "affinity of positivist understandings of research for 'applying' knowledge to the social world on the model of the way engineers 'apply' expert understanding to the problems of structures" (p. 29). Knowledge produced by credentialed, derached experts is embedded in hierarchies of knowledge generation and use, creating a division between knowledge producers (in the university) and knowledge consumers (in the community). In the positivist scheme, "researchers 'produce' knowledge, which is then 'applied' to problems and problematic populations." Academic expertise focuses "on building theory, being 'objective,' writing mainly for each other in a language of their own creation, building professional associations, and staying away from political controversies" (p. 29). Academic knowledge is valued more than community-based knowledge, and knowledge flows in one direction, from inside the boundaries of the university outward to its place of need and application in the community.

This framework of engagement locates the university as the center of solutions to public problems and educates students through service as proto-experts who will be able to perform civic tasks in and on communities that they work with because they will have the knowledge and credentials to determine what to do to help communities improve. In this framework, students, in their developing citizen roles, often will not be taught the political dimensions of their activities because questions of power typically are left out of the context of objectified knowledge production and the way that "service" is provided to communities. Civic engagement activities in community as an end in themselves perpetuate a kind of politics that rejects popularly informed decision making in favor of expert-informed knowledge application. Politics is something to be kept separate from the dispassionate pursuit of knowledge because it is understood in terms of competing partisan positions and opposing ideologies. It is thus not only avoided by academics who perceive such work as advocacy but also prohibited by federal mandate when community service programs are funded through federal agencies. What has emerged on many campuses are remarkably apolitical "civic" engagement efforts.

The dominant form of civic engagement that has emerged in higher education reflects interactions between those in colleges and universities with external entities in the community that are defined by partnerships (formal and informal relationships) and mutuality (each party in the relationship benefits from its involvement). Partnerships and mutuality allow the university to better meet its academic mission by improving teaching and learning and through community service and applied research opportunities. Communities benefit from the involvement of the university as students and faculty help in meeting unmet community needs. Engagement is enacted for the public, and
because it entails the provision of a social service, it is understood by academics as “civic” in its aims and outcomes.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FRAMED BY PROCESSES AND PURPOSE

A democratic framework shaped by attention to processes and purpose is “based on both sides bringing their own experience and expertise to the project,” noted Ernest Lynton (1994), and “this kind of collaboration requires a substantial change in the prevalent culture of academic institutions” (p. xii).

It challenges leaders and practitioners of civic engagement on college and university campuses to reframe community-based teaching, scholarship, and service so that, as Davyd J. Greenwood (2008) explains, “The terms of engagement, the ways of studying the issues and the ownership of the actions and the intellectual products are . . . negotiated with the legitimate local stakeholders” (p. 333). Collaborative knowledge generation and discovery that brings together academic knowledge with the local knowledge of community stakeholders in defining the problem to be addressed, a shared understanding of the problem, and designing, implementing, and evaluating the actions taken to address the problem is what Greenwood (2008) calls “a democratizing form of content-specific knowledge creation, theorization, analysis, and action design in which the goals are democratically set, learning capacity is shared, and success is collaboratively evaluated” (p. 327).

Community partnerships in a democratic-centered framework of engagement have an explicit and intentional democratic dimension framed as inclusive, collaborative, and problem-oriented work in which academics share knowledge-generating tasks with the public and involve community partners as participants in public problem solving. As Kerry Ann O'Meara and Eugene Rice (2005) point out, “The expert model . . . often gets in the way of constructive university-community collaboration” because it does not “move beyond ‘outreach,’” or “go beyond ‘service,’ with its overtones of noblesse oblige” (p. 28). A shift in discourse from “partnerships” (relationships) and “mutuality” (shared benefit) to that of “reciprocity” (cocreation) is grounded in explicitly democratic values of sharing previously academic tasks with nonacademics and encouraging the participation of nonacademics in ways that enhance and enable broader engagement with and deliberation about major social issues inside and outside the university. Democratic engagement seeks the public good with the public, and not merely for the public, as a means of facilitating a more active and engaged democracy.2 Reciprocity signals an epistemological shift that values not only expert knowledge that is rational, analytic, and positivist but also a different kind of rationality that is more relational, localized, and contextual and favors mutual deference between laypersons and academics. Knowledge generation and discovery is a process of cocreation, breaking down the distinctions between knowledge producers and knowledge consumers.

It further implies scholarly work that is conducted with shared authority and power with those in the community in all aspects of the relationship, from defining problems to choosing approaches, addressing issues, developing the final products, and participating in assessment. “The design of problem-solving actions through collaborative knowledge construction with the legitimate stakeholders in the problem,” writes Greenwood (2008), takes place in collaborative arenas for knowledge development in which the professional researcher’s knowledge is combined with the local knowledge of the stakeholders in defining the problem to be addressed. Together, they design and implement the actions to be taken on the basis of their shared understanding of the problem. Together, the parties develop plans of action to improve the situation together, and they evaluate the adequacy of what was done. (p. 327)

Reciprocity operates to facilitate the involvement of individuals in the community not just as consumers of knowledge and services but also as participants in the larger public culture of democracy.

Democratic engagement locates the university within an ecosystem of knowledge production, requiring interaction with other knowledge producers outside the university for the creation of new problem-solving knowledge through a multidirectional flow of knowledge and expertise. In this paradigm, students learn cooperative and creative problem solving within learning environments in which faculty, students, and individuals from the community work and deliberate together. Politics is understood through explicit awareness and experiencing of patterns of power that are present in the relationship between the university and the community—politics is not reduced to partisanship and advocacy. In the democratic-centered paradigm, academics are not partisan political activists, but, as described by Albert Dzur (2008), “have sown the seeds of a more deliberative democracy” in universities and communities “by cultivating norms of equality, collaboration, reflection, and communication” (p. 121). Civic engagement in the democratic-centered paradigm is intentionally political in that students learn about democracy by acting democratically. (See Table 1.1)

Civic engagement without reciprocity (processes) and democratic dimensions (purpose) is not the same as democratic civic engagement. Civic engagement shaped by activity and place devoid of attention to processes and purpose represents what Greenwood (2008) calls “a tendency for . . . engagement to become simultaneously fashionable and disengaged” (p. 332). Civic engagement without an intentional and explicit democratic dimension keeps academics and universities disengaged from participating in the public culture of democracy. Further, it does not compel the same kind of change in institutional culture that democratic civic engagement requires.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civic Engagement (Focus on Activity and Place)</th>
<th>Democratic Civic Engagement (Focus on Purpose and Process)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnerships and mutuality</td>
<td>Reciprocity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit-based understanding of community</td>
<td>Asset-based understanding of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic work done for the public</td>
<td>Academic work done with the public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Production/Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied</td>
<td>Inclusive, collaborative, problem-oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unidirectional flow of knowledge</td>
<td>Multidirectional flow of knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epistemology</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Positivist, scientific, technocratic</td>
<td>Relational, localized, contextual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinction between knowledge producers and knowledge consumers</td>
<td>Cocreation of knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primacy of academic knowledge</td>
<td>Shared authority for knowledge creation</td>
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<tr>
<td>University as the center of public problem solving</td>
<td>University as a part of an ecosystem of knowledge production addressing public problem solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Dimension</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apolitical engagement</td>
<td>Engagement that facilitates an inclusive, collaborative, and deliberative democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge generation and dissemination through community involvement</td>
<td>Community change that results from the cocreation of knowledge</td>
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</table>

**Institutional Change for Democratic Engagement**

Civic engagement shaped by activities and place requires change in practices and structures and is associated with what Larry Cuban (1988) has described as “first-order change,” which aims to improve “the efficiency and effectiveness of what is done... to make what already exists more efficient and more effective, without disturbing the basic organizational features, without substantially altering the ways in which [faculty and students] perform their roles. Those who propose first-order changes believe that the existing goals and structures... are both adequate and desirable” (p. 341). The dominant framework of civic engagement need not fundamentally alter the established organizational structures and culture of higher education. It does not require what Peter Eckel, Barbara Hill, and Madeline Green (1998) refer to as changes that “alter the culture of the institution,” those that require “major shifts in an institution’s culture—the common set of beliefs and values that create a shared interpretation and understanding of events and actions” (p. 3). The dominant expert-centered framework of civic engagement does not compel change that transforms institutional culture. The pervasiveness of civic engagement, from this perspective, does not appear to have slowed down or stalled in any way. There is a proliferation of engagement activities and innovative community-based practice throughout the university and across higher education. Civic engagement appears to be flourishing.

Civic engagement shaped by processes and purpose, with its explicit democratic value of reciprocity, points to change in the institutional culture of colleges and universities, or what Cuban (1988) identifies as “second-order changes” that “seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together. These changes reflect major dissatisfaction with present arrangements. Second-order changes introduce new goals, structures, and roles that transform familiar ways of doing things into new ways of solving persistent problems” (p. 342). Second-order changes are associated with transformational change, which Eckel, Hill, and Green (1998) define as change that “(1) alters the culture of the institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviors, processes, and products; (2) is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole institution; (3) is intentional; and (4) occurs over time” (p. 3). Cultural change focuses on “institution-wide patterns of perceiving, thinking, and feeling; shared understandings; collective assumptions; and common interpretive frameworks,” which work as “the ingredients of this ‘invisible glue’ called institutional culture” (p. 3). From this perspective, the civic engagement movement seems to have hit a wall: innovative practices that shift epistemology, reshape the curriculum, alter pedagogy, and redefine scholarship are not being supported through academic norms and institutional reward policies that shape the academic cultures of the academy. There are limits to the degree of change that occurs institutionally, and the civic engagement work appears to have been accommodated to the dominant expert-centered framework. Democratic engagement is not embedded in the institutional culture. It remains a marginalized activity, and its sustainability is questionable. (See Table 1.2.)

While the analysis provided here points to a dominant form of civic engagement that has emerged in higher education that is largely devoid of both long-term democracy-building values and higher education’s contribution to the public culture of democracy, our aim is to demonstrate that an alternative framework is possible and can contribute to the re-shaping of higher education to better meet its academic and civic missions in the twenty-first century. As Sullivan (2000) reminds us, “Campuses educate their students for citizenship most effectively to the degree that they become sites for constructive exchange and cooperation among diverse groups of citizens from the larger community” (p. 20). It is this democratic-centered framework of civic engagement that holds the promise of transforming not only the educational practice and institutional identity of colleges and universities but our public culture as well.
TABLE 1.2 TRANSFORMATION THROUGH CHANGE IN INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-Order Change</th>
<th>Second-Order Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is done—to make what already exists more efficient and more effective.</td>
<td>Aims to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together. These changes reflect major dissatisfaction with present arrangements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not disturb the basic organizational features or substantially alter the ways in which faculty and students perform their roles. Those who propose first-order changes believe that the existing goals and structure are both adequate and desirable.</td>
<td>Introduces new goals, structures, and roles that transform familiar ways of doing things into new ways of solving persistent problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not require changes that alter the institution's culture—the common set of beliefs and values that creates a shared interpretation and understanding of events and actions.</td>
<td>Is associated with transformational change, defined as change that (1) alters the culture of the institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviors, processes, and products; (2) is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole institution; (3) is intentional; and (4) occurs over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on institution-wide patterns of perceiving, thinking, and feeling; shared understandings; collective assumptions; and common interpretive frameworks as the ingredients of the &quot;invisible glue&quot; of institutional culture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


REFERENCES


NOTES


4. The literature on institutional change in higher education is considerable and growing. Our analysis of institutional culture, institutional transformation, and institutionalization draws heavily on Cuban 1988. Cuban's distinctions are drawn from Watzlawick, Weakland, and Frisch 1974. They describe first-order change as change that occurs within an existing system, which itself remains unchanged. Second-order change results from a change in the system itself. See also Eckel, Hill, and Green 1998; Kuh and Whitt 1988; and Tierney 1988.