The tango of citizenship learning and participatory democracy

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Introduction
Among the multiple sites for learning the competencies and values of citizenship is the associational space known as participatory democracy. By participatory democracy I do not mean token consultations without authentic decision making power, clientelistic relationships that disempower and control people, or even basic associationalism in the sense of membership in community associations. Instead, I mean inclusive processes of deliberation that are bound to real and substantive decisions. This type of participation would be consistent with the category of ‘citizen control’ in Sheryl Arnstein’s (1966) participation ladder model and with the category of ‘participation’ in Macpherson’s (1977) four models of liberal democracy. These participatory processes can be present in schools, families, the workplace and a variety of organizations such as churches, advocacy groups, neighbourhood associations, political parties, housing cooperatives, or social and environmental movements.

A particularly strong form of participatory democracy refers to processes of shared decision making and governance between government and civil society. Examples of these processes of co-determination are municipal experiments like the participatory budget of Porto Alegre (Brazil) and the neighbourhood councils of Montevideo (Uruguay). Participatory democracy not only contributes to the construction of more transparent, efficient and democratic ways of governing, but also constitutes privileged spaces for civic learning and for the redistribution of political capital. Based on empirical data recently collected with participants on these processes about their experiential learning, I submit that participatory democracy is a particularly effective school of citizenship. Through participation in deliberation and decision-making (and in collectively elaborating fair and workable criteria for making decisions), ordinary citizens develop not only a variety of civic virtues (like solidarity, tolerance, openness, responsibility, and respect), but also political capital, that is, the capacity for self-governance and for influencing political decisions. In this framework, political capital includes five components: knowledge, skills, attitudes, distance to power, and resources (Schugurensky 2000a).

In sum, the main argument is that participatory democracy provides powerful opportunities for citizenship learning, and as such it constitutes an informal school of citizenship. Three hypotheses about the potential of these schools of citizenship guide this study: the ‘reciprocal’, the ‘expansive’ and the ‘anticipatory’. The first is that a reciprocal relationship exists between democratic learning and the quality of local democracies. In a sort of virtuous circle, local democracies nurture citizenship and political learning, and citizenship learning nurtures healthier local democracies. The expansive is that the learning acquired in mini-democracies is likely to be transferred (horizontally or vertically) to other settings. The anticipatory is that the learning acquired by social actors interested in building a more democratic society (be they participants or observers of the process) has an inspiring dimension (enlarging the realm of possibility) but also a realistic dimension (learning about potential challenges and obstacles for the next experiment).
Learning by doing: citizenship learning and participatory democracy

The idea that the very act of participating in deliberation and decision-making has a high pedagogical potential can be traced back at least to Aristotle, and was clearly formulated by Rousseau. As Carole Pateman (1970) noted in her classic book on participatory democracy, the central function of participation in Rousseau’s theory is an educative one, using the term ‘education’ in the same wide sense that permeates Freirean thought. Rousseau’s ideal system, says Pateman, is designed to develop responsible, individual social and political action through the effect of the participatory process itself. Along the same lines as Rousseau, J.S. Mill also identified the educative function of participation in local governance.

For Mill, who wrote during the mid-1800s in England, it was at the local level where the real educative effect of participation occurs. This is because the issues dealt with at this level directly affect the individuals and their everyday life, and also because it is at this level where ordinary citizens stand a better chance of being elected by their peers to serve on a local body or committee. It is by participating at the local level, claims Mill, that the individual really ‘learns democracy.’ In Mill’s own words,

We do not learn to read or write, to ride or swim, by merely being told how to do it, but by doing it, so it is only by practising popular government on a limited scale that the people will ever learn how to exercise it on a larger one (Mill 1963, p.186, quoted in Pateman 1988 [1970], 31).

Like Mill, G.D.H. Cole argued that it is through participation at the local level and in local associations that people could learn democracy more effectively: “Over the vast mechanism of modern politics the individual has no control, not because the state is too big, but because he [sic] is given no chance of learning the rudiments of self-government within a smaller unit (Cole 1919, p.157)” (quoted in Pateman 1988 [1970] p. 38). For Cole, the most appropriate space for the educative effect of participation was industry, because individuals are involved in relationships of superiority and subordination, and because they spend a great deal of their time there.

Following Rousseau, Mill and Cole, Pateman contended that the existence of representative institutions at national levels is not sufficient for a healthy democracy. She argued that other spheres nurturing political socialization (what she calls 'social training') for the development of the individual attitudes and psychological qualities that are necessary for good quality participation need to be created and invigorated. Since 1989, one of these new spheres, known in Brazil as a public, non-state sphere ('esfera publica, no estatal'), is the participatory budget of Porto Alegre, to which I will refer later on.

For now, let us remember that in Pateman’s framework, the justification for a democratic system in the participatory theory of democracy rests not so much in its effectiveness for governance, but primarily on the human results (particularly political learning) that are accrued from the participatory process. She characterizes the participatory model as one where maximum input (participation) is required, and where output includes not just policies (decisions) but also the development of the social and political capacities of each individual. This means that political capacity is both a result and a precondition for good participation, and that there is constant
‘feedback’ from output to input (Pateman 1988: 43). A central point in this theory is that once
the participatory system is established, it becomes self-sustaining because the very qualities that
are required of individual citizens if the system is to work successfully are precisely those that
the process of participation develops and fosters. Hence, in a virtuous circle, the more the
individual citizen participates, the better able she or he is able to participate (Pateman 1988
[1970], 25).

The development of political capacities, then, takes place through the process of participation
itself, and this is certainly a process of informal learning:

The major function of participation in the theory of participatory democracy is therefore an
educative one, and educative in the very widest sense, including both the psychological aspect
and the gaining of practice in democratic skills and procedures. Thus there is no special problem
about the stability of a participatory system; it is self-sustaining through the educative impact of
the participatory process. Participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for it;
the more individuals participate the better able they become to do so. Subsidiary hypotheses
about participation are that it has an integrative effect and that it aids the acceptance of collective

Having said that, it is important to be reminded of Dewey’s observation (1938:25) that not all
experiences have the same pedagogical potential. He argued that although all genuine education
comes about through experience, this does not mean that experience and education are one and
the same, or that all experiences are equally educative. Dewey even contended that those
experiences that retard or distort the growth of further experience are mis-educative. Hence, we
are not referring here to any type of political experience, but to one lived through a democratic
process of deliberation and decision-making based on dialogue, fairness and respect for the
decisions taken.

The nature of informal citizenship learning in local democracy
In this context, the last quote by Pateman suggests that one important learning dimension has to
do with the development of certain psychological attitudes that nurture more participation. These
psychological attitudes are closely connected to increases in political efficacy, that is, the
confidence in one’s capacity to influence political decisions. One of the earliest definitions on
political efficacy was the one advanced by Campbell, Gurin and Miller (1954). For them,
political efficacy refers to the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an
impact upon the political process. In other words, it is the feeling that engaging in civic action is
worthwhile. Regardless of the scope of the political system, which seems to be crucial in terms
of psychological effects, is the ability and power of a group to influence a decision.

Given the spread of the so-called ‘democratic deficit’ expressed in high levels of electoral
absenteeism and low confidence in political institutions, there is an urgent need for ordinary
citizens to learn political efficacy by participating in politics. As Pierre Bourdieu (1991) pointed
out, the fact that the political field is monopolized by professional politicians is not a natural
phenomenon and can be challenged through social action. This is particularly important for
lower income groups, since studies of political efficacy usually find a correlation between socio-
economic status, political efficacy and political participation: lower income groups tend to have a lower sense of political efficacy, and tend to participate less. Hence, the educative effect of participation for the development of political efficacy is especially relevant for those groups who are underrepresented in local democracy and have less experience with these processes.

However, the change in psychological attitudes is not the only educative effect. For instance, Rousseau, Mill and Pateman also emphasized the broadening of outlook and interests and the appreciation of the connection between private and public interests. They also noted the gaining of familiarity with democratic procedures and the learning of democratic skills, the relationship between local decisions and the wider social and political environment, and the influence of the broader social and political environment on the local reality. Moreover, beyond individual learning, it could be argued that the group as a collective learns too, as it becomes to be more integrated, fairer in its procedures and criteria, and more willing to reach and accept consensus.

The learning that is acquired through participation (be it related to attitudes, knowledge or skills) often has an expansive effect. This means that, as people become more familiar with, and more effective in, local democracy, they also become more interested (and even more engaged) in broader issues of regional, national or international scope. Early research on this topic, undertaken by Kojala (1965) with the Yugoslavian Workers’ Councils as a case study, has shown that over time participants move from discussing ways to manage their most immediate environment to dealing with policy issues and decisions that transcend their immediate environment.

Indeed, participation in local governance nurtures a wider educative effect because it broadens interests and outlooks and develops more practical capacities for political participation. Such participation, and the consequent learning that derives from it, fosters the development of more informed, critical and engaged citizens who are eager to learn more and to take on larger challenges. As citizens become more enlightened, empowered and confident, they become ready to go beyond their circle and become more active in other spheres. Important in this regard is the shift from passivity to the feeling of agency. Drawing on Cole, Pateman argues that industrial working relations nurture obedience and passivity, and that through self-governance and workplace democracy people can acquire the democratic skills and virtues that are necessary to participate in the larger system:

Only if the individual could become self-governing in the workplace, only if industry was organised on a participatory basis, could this training for servility be turned into training for democracy and the individual could gain the familiarity with democratic procedures and develop the necessary ‘democratic character’ for an effective system of large-scale democracy (Pateman 1988 [1970], 38-39).

It is possible that after a taste of self-governing, some participants may still be interested only in local affairs and not in other levels of governance. However, the new political learning can assist them to be better able to assess the performance of national representatives, to weigh the impact of decisions taken by national representatives on their own lives and their immediate surroundings, and to take decisions of national and international scope when the opportunity arises. Through interacting, deliberating and making decisions with others, and through
achieving collective goals, more participant citizens have a greater capacity to develop political competencies than non-participant citizens. They are also more likely to develop a more detailed knowledge of their own communities and of local political processes, and to generate greater feelings of political efficacy and self-confidence, which could be transferred to a variety of social contexts. Moreover, they are more likely to clarify their values and interests, enlarge them in light of the values and interests of others, and be more responsive to claims of justice and the common good (Mansbridge 1997 and 1999, Pateman 1970, Almond and Verba 1963, Berry et al. 1999, Franke 1999, Merrifield 1999).

Indeed, one important aspect of this expansive effect is the transition from narrow self-interest to the common good, and from looking only at one’s street as the centre of the universe to a more comprehensive understanding of the community as a whole. This does not mean to abdicate on one’s interest, but to develop a process in which the self-interest is negotiated with other people’s interests with the principle of justice as a guideline. In this regard, it can be argued that there is a connection between agency and the development of civic skills and virtues. For instance, Rousseau claims that through the participatory process citizens learn to take into account wider matters than their own immediate private interests because of the need to gain co-operation from others, and this is how we learn that the public and private interests are linked. For Rousseau, the logic of the participatory system is such that citizens are forced to deliberate according to their own sense of justice, and they have to reach a common ground in order to make the deliberation possible. Along the same lines, Mill noted that when individuals are solely concerned with their own private affairs and do not participate in public affairs then the ‘self-regarding’ virtues suffer, and the capacities for responsible public action remain undeveloped. Conversely, when citizens participate in public affairs, they are forced to widen their horizons and to take the public interest into account. Then, as a result of participating in decision making, individuals learn to identify their own impulses and desires, and learn to be public as well as private citizens (Pateman 1988 [1970], 25). A case in point is the participatory budget of Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Informal learning through the participatory budget
The participatory budget (PB) of Porto Alegre has been in continuous development since its inception in 1989. Its institutional features have been discussed extensively in the literature (see, for instance, Abers 2000, Genro 2001, Baijerle 1998, Schugurensky 2001a, 2001b). In a nutshell, the PB is an open and democratic process of participation that allows ordinary citizens to make decisions together on municipal budget allocations. This includes neighbourhood discussions and decisions about priorities regarding investments in local infrastructure like pavement, sewage, storm drains, schools, health care, childcare, housing, etc. It also includes thematic forums on city-wide issues such as transit and public transportation, health and social assistance, economic development and taxation, urban development, education, culture and leisure. While the model is far from perfect, the PB has promoted a more efficient, transparent and accountable administration of public resources, an outstanding achievement in itself in the context of Latin America. By using equity criteria in budget allocations and bottom-up processes, it has also improved the living conditions of poor communities by reversing previous priorities that used to favour higher income areas. These are important accomplishments that have inspired participatory budget models in many progressive municipalities in Brazil and abroad.
However, there is another accomplishment that is particularly fascinating, especially from an educator’s viewpoint. This accomplishment relates to the impressive amount of civic and political learning that is acquired throughout the participatory process. Most of this learning, I submit, is informal. It is true that the architects of the participatory budget expected some political and civic learning to occur during the process of collective deliberation and decision-making (a sort of positive ‘hidden curriculum’), but the pedagogical dimension was somewhat in the periphery of their radar. It is also true that some learning undertaken by participants was the result of organized and planned non-formal educational activities like workshops, but most of their civic and political learning was informal. Furthermore, most of this informal learning was unintentional and sometimes even unconscious. In a previous paper (Schugurensky 2000b), I distinguished three types of informal learning: self-directed (which is intentional and conscious), incidental (unintentional but conscious) and socialization (unintentional and unconscious). The preliminary findings of my research in progress on the PB suggests that most of the learning acquired by participants was incidental or part of the socialization process.

Informal learning is often hidden, seldom recognized, rarely valued and largely unexplored (Livingstone 1999, Schugurensky 2002). As informal learning processes are usually unplanned, unconscious and unnoticed, it is not surprising that the knowledge acquired is mostly tacit. In a pioneering book entitled precisely *The Tacit Dimension*, Polanyi (1966) characterized tacit knowledge as “that which we know but cannot tell.” In an earlier text, Polanyi (1958) noted that tacit knowledge is difficult to identify and to express, and remains inarticulate.

Although mostly unplanned, inarticulate and tacit, the informal learning of the participatory budget has nurtured the empowerment of neighbourhood associations and popular organizations and the development of a new democratic culture that eliminated political clientelism (the typical exchange of favours for votes). This learning has also promoted the ownership of projects by the community, the preservation of public property, the revitalization of civic life, and an increase in citizen participation, community organizing and political activism. Moreover, in-depth interviews with participants have shown significant changes in political knowledge and skills, democratic attitudes and civic behaviors that sometimes are transferred to other settings (Schugurensky 2004). Additionally, this learning is largely acquired by those who need it the most. In many other experiments of participatory democracy, there is a high representation of middle class and male, members, and of the so-called ‘professional citizens’ (those who belong to multiple associations, have a high rate of participation in social movements and are familiar with the formal political system). However, in the Participatory Budget of Porto Alegre the majority of participants are female and from low-income groups (Baierle 1998).

As the Porto Alegre’s participatory budget and other similar experiments suggest, the pedagogical dimension of participatory democracy is an area that deserves more and deeper attention by citizenship educators and by researchers. A particular useful approach to investigate the educational dimension of local democracy is the tradition known as situated learning.
Situated learning and communities of practice
Following the contributions of authors like Vygotsky, Dewey, Bandura, Freire and others to social learning, situated learning and experiential learning, I suggest that learning cannot be isolated from the activity, the culture and the context in which it takes place. I also suggest that knowledge is socially constructed and that learning often occurs in social interaction. As Berger and Luckman (1966) pointed out in their classic work, our understanding of reality is a social construct intimately connected to human intersubjectivity and everyday life, and shaped by complex processes of externalization, objectivation and internalization.

From a situated learning perspective, learners are involved in “communities of practice” that embody a set a values, behaviors and skills to be acquired by members. This involvement is seldom homogeneous, because people do not usually enter these communities of practice at the same time, and thus an informal system of apprenticeship is often established. As ‘apprentices’ (or beginners, newcomers) move progressively from the periphery of these communities to their centre, they become more active and engaged with the culture, and with time they assume the role of ‘masters’ (or experts, oldtimers). Furthermore, the literature on this topic reveals that most of this situated learning is unintentional and hence it is incidental rather than deliberate. For instance, in a study conducted by Gear et al. (1994), it was reported that, in spite of using Tough’s concept of intentional learning projects to ask about informal learning, 80% of the learning episodes mentioned by their interviewees were not intentionally sought. Similar findings have been reported by Brown, Collins & Duguid (1989) and by Lave & Wenger (1990). Likewise, Foley (1999:1), in a recent study on informal learning in social action, argues that “the most interesting and significant learning occurs informally and incidentally, in people's everyday lives.” Comparable insights are provided by the social movement learning tradition (Adams 1980, Horton and Freire 1990)

As Jonassen (1994) points out, situated learning takes place when learners work on authentic and realistic tasks that reflect the real world. The knowledge content and the capacities developed are determined by the demands of the real world and the particular context in which learners are interacting. If knowledge is decontextualized, as happens in many classrooms all over the world, then knowledge becomes inert, and students learn new concepts but may have difficulties applying them in the absence of a real context for its use. This constructivist approach applies also to the learning of citizenship and democracy, the topic of this chapter. Although it may sound like a cliché, it is no less true that one of the best ways to learn democracy is by doing it, and one of the best ways to develop effective civic and political skills is by observing them in the real world and exercising them. In other words, it seems that the old model of apprenticeship, based on observation, modeling, trial and error, and regular social interaction still has something to contribute today to educational theory and practice.

Summary and conclusions
In educational discourse, informal learning is usually conceptualized as a residual category of a residual category. If formal education refers to the institutional ladder that goes from preschool to graduate studies, and nonformal education refers to any organized educational activity that takes place outside the formal education system (e.g. short courses, workshops, professional development, etc.), then informal learning often becomes a loose category that encompasses ‘anything else’ that is not included in the previous two. Given this characterization, it is not
surprising that informal learning is at the margins of the educational conceptual and research radar. Indeed, most research and policy initiatives still tend to concentrate efforts in formal education, and to a lesser extent in nonformal education. Informal learning is often undervalued and seldom recognized by institutions and researchers.

Hence, it is not surprising that in terms of our understanding of processes and outcomes, informal learning is still largely a black box. This is unfortunate, because much of the relevant (in the sense of personally meaningful and significant) learning acquired throughout our lives occurs in the area of informal learning. This certainly applies to the area of political and civic learning, and particularly to the learning required to act effectively in processes of participatory democracy. For this reason, this site includes issues and debates on citizenship education and on participatory democracy (two distinct fields of specialized studies) but pays special attention to the intersection between them, that is, the informal civic and political learning that occurs in local processes of deliberation and decision-making.

In this site informal learning was conceived of as any learning, purposeful or not, that involves the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes or values that are not formulated in an externally imposed curriculum. Confirming the arguments of classic theories in the field, it was found that participatory democracy is a particularly effective setting to learn the values, skills and competencies for the effective exercise of citizenship. Indeed, J.S. Mill claimed that participatory democracy fosters among participants an ‘active character.’ G.D.H. Cole made references to the development of ‘a non-servile character.’ For Rousseau, participatory democracy nurtures a cooperative character, which includes an interest for the common good, and a capacity to define collectively the common good and to make democratic decisions to put it into practice. For Pateman, it promotes a democratic character, which consists of a capacity for self-governance and political efficacy.

As the experiences recounted by participants in local democracy show, participatory democracy has the potential to fulfill those expectations if there is a proper space to learn democracy by doing it. Through the process of participatory democracy, people learn to become more informed, engaged, and critical citizens who can deliberate and make decisions in a democratic fashion, who can think not only about their specific grievances but also about the common good. This means learning a new political culture that is based on active citizenship, solidarity and equity, that is, a culture in which we are not only spectators but also actors, and in which the common good and the needs of the most marginalized members of society come before our particular demands. It also means learning new ways to relate to each other and to the government, building relationships based on collaboration and respect. An informal school of citizenship provides opportunities for political and democratic learning that is as broad as possible and enjoyed by as many people as possible. Thus, political capital (understood, as noted above, as the capacity to influence political decisions) is more equitable redistributed, and is no longer an exclusive monopoly of professional politicians and the so-called ‘professional citizens.’

The development of political efficacy and political capital, however, is only part of the educative effect of participation. There is also the broadening of perspectives, the awareness of the connections between private and public interests, the gaining of familiarity with democratic
procedures, the concern for improving the urban landscape and the quality of life for residents, and the development of political and democratic skills and attitudes. A school of citizenship also means learning how to practice democracy in-between elections. We are not born democrats, and often we are not raised to be active democratic citizens. Democracy is something that we can learn everyday beyond the occasional act of voting, and the more democratic the enabling structures that nurture the deliberation process, the more significant the democratic learning will be. Most political forums today, be they right, center or left, are characterized not by dialogue but by monologues and confrontation. Participatory democracy, while not a perfect model, provides more for listening and for dialogue, which are important preconditions for learning.

This does not mean that participatory democracy should be promoted as an alternative to representative democracy but rather as a complement to it. Also, it is clear that in order to be an effective informal school of citizenship, participatory democracy experiments should be characterized by inclusive, free and fair decision-making processes that depart from the traditional patterns of tokenism, therapy, or manipulation. It is the creation and functioning of true democratic spaces that allow people to learn democracy by doing it. Indeed, participants learn democracy through research, deliberation and decision-making. They also learn by following up on the decisions agreed upon collectively, by evaluating the process at the end of each cycle, by identifying mistakes, and by developing new criteria, policies and guidelines that improve the quality and fairness of the democratic process and of its outcomes in the next cycle. Given their pedagogical impact, good participatory democracy processes constitute non-recognized educational institutions that nonetheless would fulfill an important educational purpose.

One implication of all this is that we need to find new ways of doing politics and of learning politics. Indeed, there is pressing need to create a multiplicity of healthy democratic spaces in schools, in the workplace, in municipal governments, in neighbourhoods and in a variety of locations where people who are affected by decisions usually made by others regularly congregate. Such archipelago of democratic agoras could certainly contribute to make politics more relevant and enjoyable, and to develop informal schools of citizenship in every community. This means the creation and nurturing of genuine democratic learning communities aiming at further democratizing our existing democracies. This is not the only way to make a better world, but it can be a modest contribution in that direction.

References


A Case Study in Transforming a Public Housing Project into a Tenant-Managed Housing Co-operative

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1. Introduction

Prior to the 1960s, public housing was the primary model that governments in both Canada and in the United States used to provide affordable housing for low-income earners. Since the 1960s the public housing model has fallen out of favour (Rose, 1980; Sewell, 1994), which has resulted in both countries developing alternative approaches and models to providing affordable housing (Drier and Hulchanski, 1993; Wexler, 1996). More recently, a pilot project that combines the efforts of public housing residents and other key stakeholders has created an innovative housing model in downtown Toronto, Canada, referred to as a public housing co-operative.

The conversion of the Alexandra Park housing project into the Atkinson housing co-operative took place from 1992 to 2003 and balances public housing residents’ need to have greater control over the fate of their community with the government’s legal responsibility of maintaining a public asset. Furthermore, the Atkinson Housing Co-operative represents a unique three-way partnership between the government, a co-operative housing resource group and the co-operative members or residents. This case study outlines the process and the community development activities that led to the community becoming Canada’s first public housing project.

Since this is the first conversion of its kind to have taken place in Canada, there are valuable lessons that can be gleaned from this case study. Therefore, the objective of this case study is to discuss the process with the intent of providing a framework that can be of value to others interested in replicating this model. Including the introduction, this paper has six sections. The second section provides a brief account of the various approaches of improving public housing projects found in Canada and in the United States. The third section describes in detail the community’s background and the process of converting into the Atkinson Housing Co-operative. The fourth section is a description of what it takes to establish a co-operative housing community. Also of importance in the creation of the Atkinson Housing Co-operative was the community and public support, which is described in the fifth section. In addition to the community and public support was the critical role that the community development initiatives played in providing education and training opportunities for the residents. Since the Atkinson Housing Co-operative is a new housing model, the sixth section discusses the impact of the Atkinson Housing Co-operative on government’s involvement in providing affordable housing.

Approaches to Improving Public Housing

The original public housing projects found throughout North America were seen as the solution to housing low-income households. Over time these projects became unwieldy to manage and expensive to build and maintain (Rose, 1980; Sewell, 1994; Vale, 2002). The properties had deteriorated from when they were built and contained above average rates of crime and other
social problems (for example, drug activity and vandalism) commonly related to ghettoizing 
large numbers of low-income families (Prince, 1998; Sewell, 1994; Spence, 1993). As a result, 
governments in Canada and in the United States reconsidered building and maintaining large 
public housing projects and started seeking alternative approaches to providing affordable 
housing; however, each nation approached the issue differently (Spence, 1993; Wexler, 1996). 

In the United States, the federal level of government has taken a private-sector approach to 
addressing the need for affordable housing. One strategy used by the government was to 
encourage private-sector involvement by giving direct subsidies to eligible households, referred 
to as Section 8 vouchers, to be used to rent housing from a private landlord (Galster, Tatian and 
Smith, 1999; Pendall, 2000). However, the vouchers are vulnerable to market forces and there is 
no guarantee that the value of the vouchers increases in response to changes in the housing 
market.

A second strategy was to demolish, convert or sell existing public housing properties in order to 
 improve low-income individuals’ opportunities to become homeowners. The series of financing 
programs, known as “The Homeownership and Opportunity for People Everywhere” (HOPE), 
encouraged private sector involvement by offering grants or guaranteeing low interest mortgages 
to individuals or developers (HUD Programs 2003). More recently the federal government 
encouraged reclaiming or rehabilitating public housing by replacing abandoned or decrepit 
properties with new communities using funds from the “Program for Revitalization of Severely Distressed Public Housing” (HOPE VI). These new communities would then be owned by 
individuals or by collectives in the form of Limited Equity Co-operatives (HUD Programs, 2003; 
Rohe ,1995; Saegert and Winkel, 1998), tenant managed corporations (Koebel and Cavell, 1995; 
Vale, 2002), or private dwellings.

Canada approached the issue of improving the public housing stock and to continue to provide 
affordable housing in a different way. The National Housing Act, which is the legislation 
regulating housing practices, was amended in 1973 to limit the government’s involvement in 
administering housing programs (that is, public housing). The amendments encouraged the 
production of other forms of affordable housing, referred to as social housing. The government 
opted would enter into partnerships with third sector organizations—that is, co-operatives and 
non-profits—as the principal means to develop and administer affordable housing (Carter, 1997; 
Van Dyk, 1995; Rose, 1980; Smith, 1995). These new housing models were smaller than most 
public housing projects and were also better integrated within their communities.

The new partnerships created two new distinct housing models—non-profits and co-operatives— 
that share the characteristic of resident involvement in how their community is managed and 
governed. The governance and management functions of co-operative and non-profits occur on-
site and residents and the sponsors of the organizations are very involved. The operations of 
these new housing models differed markedly different than public housing, which has always 
been part of the government bureaucracy and has not involved the residents directly in the 
governance and decision making. Typically, many public housing projects are collectively 
governed by a single board of directors of government appointees that are neither independent of 
the government nor accountable to the residents. With such a governance and administrative 
structure the residents do not have a direct say in the development and management of their 
community.
In the 1990s the relationship between the government and third sector organizations started to change. Under the influence of neoconservative policies, the different levels of the Canadian government began to reconsider their role in providing affordable housing. For instance, in 1993, the federal government withdrew from financing of social housing and downloaded the responsibility to the provinces (Carroll and Jones, 2000; Van Dyk, 1995). Following the 1995 election in Ontario, Canada’s largest province, the Conservative government placed a freeze on building new affordable housing (even canceling contracts) and started to change existing policies, a change that was intended to encourage the involvement of the private sector to satisfy the need for social housing (Ontario, 2002). As the governments were disengaging themselves from the provision of affordable housing, a public housing community in downtown Toronto called for control over the fate of their community by converting into a housing co-operative. The remainder of this paper will describe the process that this community followed in order to become Canada’s first public housing co-operative.

The Atkinson Housing Co-operative

Background

Prior to becoming the Atkinson Housing Co-operative the property was known as the Alexandra Park housing project. The property is located in downtown Toronto and opened in 1968 as one of the many public housing projects built in Canada from 1940 to 1975 (Rose, 1980; Sewell, 1994; Smith, 1995). The development was part of the City of Toronto’s 1950s urban renewal plans, referred to as ‘slum clearance’ initiatives (Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto 1970). The renewal plans replaced the original grid pattern design of the area with winding pedestrian walkways and built walls that separated the residents from the outer neighborhood (Lapointe and Sousa, 2003). According to Lapointe and Sousa (2003), the design of the property has contributed to the different social problems that exist in the community by making it difficult for residents to interact with one another, and for providing protection for drug dealers.

The property has 410 units and includes 140 apartments in two medium-rise apartment buildings and 270 townhouses. The community has always been geared to families, with 332 families and their children making up 81 percent of the households (see Table 1). Seniors account for 10 percent of the households and singles and childless couples another 9 percent.

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<tr>
<th>Composition</th>
<th># of Households</th>
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<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>81%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seniors</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singles/Childless Couples</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1976, a residents’ association was formed, known as the Alexandra Park Residents’ Association (henceforth referred to as the residents’ association). The residents’ association had two functions in the community. The first function was to represent the interests of the residents to the wider community and to the government; however, even though the residents’ association officially represented residents’ voice it had very little power. The second function was to
oversee the local community center, which was built in 1976. The community centre provided residents with access to recreational and educational activities as well as the opportunity to control a key feature of the community and demonstrating self-governance. The residents’ association was also granted charitable status, a factor that in the early stages eased the conversion process.

During the 1980s different social problems found in public housing projects, such as physical violence, prostitution, and drug activity, became more prevalent in Alexandra Park. Although the residents feared for their security they endured the problems because they could not afford to rent or own housing in the private market. The government housing agency\(^1\) implemented various strategies to combat the growing rate of crime (Carder, 1994); however, neither the residents nor residents’ association were consulted. Consequently, there was a widespread belief among the residents that the housing agency was not effectively addressing their security needs. In response to a growing sense of fear and the lack of voice within the government housing agency the residents’ association called for an independent security company, that was knowledgeable and sensitive to the needs of the residents, to patrol the community. However, those calls were ignored, but the residents’ association decided to apply local solutions to the systemic social problems that existed in the community.

In 1988 the president of the residents’ association, Sonny Atkinson, worked with the local police division to improve the sense of security within the community. One initiative was to increase the frequency of foot patrols by involving residents in the actual patrols. During his foot patrols Sonny noticed that the criminals used the many barrier walls as hiding spaces. As a result, Sonny Atkinson and the local police convinced the government that the design of the project encouraged criminal activity and other social problems. As a result of successful lobbying several walls were demolished in the early 1990s. According to anecdotal accounts, the street patrols and tearing down the walls effectively reduced the levels of crime activity. For the residents the tearing down of the walls was a symbolic action of the community trying to open itself to the wider neighborhood. Another outcome of these initiatives was that by the end of the 1980s the notion of gaining control of the community emerged within the residents’ association.

Sonny Atkinson often stated that the drug issue was the prime motivator that led to call for more local control. However, residents expressed other concerns related to a general lack of community cohesion. For instance, the residents were very concerned about a household’s security of tenure because the amount of rent was contingent on a household’s income level. As a result, there was very little motivation to increase a household’s income since it would lead to higher rents. This problem was compounded by a lack of stability in a household’s income. There was also a general concern that if a household was under- or over-housed, due to a change in household composition, the family would have to move to another community if an appropriate sized unit was not available. This latter concern was greatest for older residents whose children had moved (Sewell, 1994).

The residents’ association was disappointed with the efforts of the housing agency to improve the quality of life and to keep the community safe. Sonny Atkinson also criticized the slow

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\(^1\) The Ontario government agency associated with managing the public housing stock has had three different names and mandates over the years: Metro Toronto Housing Authority; Metro Toronto Housing Corporation; and more recently the Toronto Community Housing Corporation. In this case study the term housing agency will be used to refer to the government agency associated with providing public housing in Ontario.
response to maintenance requests and argued that residents who had the ability to make some of the repairs should be paid for the work (Carder, 1994). In response to the housing agency’s perceived inertia, in 1992 Sonny Atkinson started to openly call for local control over four key areas: maintenance; tenant selection; security procedures; and the maximum rent charged to residents. In essence, the residents’ association believed that by increased tenant control in the management of the community, the residents would feel safer and a healthier community would emerge.

In 1992 the local member of the provincial parliament and a group of leading housing advocates and activists—referred to as the Public Housing to Co-op Conversion (PHCC) Working Group—made the residents’ association aware of two models that focus on resident control in the management of the community (Lapointe and Sousa, 2003). The first model was tenant self-management, which is more common in the United States. Tenant self-management gives some control to the residents, but the ultimate decision making is done within the government agency. The second model was to become a non-profit co-operative (henceforth referred to as co-operative), which is more common in Canada and Europe. A housing co-operative operates as an autonomous organization that receives some funding from the government to make the rents affordable for low-income earners. The residents’ association decided to pursue the option of converting into a co-operative because the needs of the community converged with co-operative housing practices.

In the spring of 1993 representatives of the co-operative sector, local politicians and the community leadership held an information meeting for the residents. The purpose of the meeting was to inform the residents about co-operative living and how the community can become a co-operative. The outcome of the meeting demonstrated to the leadership that there was enough interest to officially embark on the goal of becoming Canada’s first public housing co-operative (Lapointe and Sousa, 2003).

**Converting into a Co-operative**

The residents’ association, led by Sonny Atkinson, proceeded to work with a member of the PHCC working group to develop a plan to convert the Alexandra Park housing project into a housing co-operative. The plan combined community development activities and steps to establish the legal basis for the conversion to proceed. The plan had the support (in principle) from both the co-operative sector and from the governments. Provincial and municipal politicians supported the plan because they held out hope that a resident controlled community would be an innovative way to address the complex problems in public housing. The co-operative sector supported the community’s action because the conversion held out such great potential for co-operative housing. However, moving the plan from conception to implementation created unanticipated challenges and took more time than had been anticipated when the residents had agreed to converting into a housing co-operative.

Since this conversion was the first of its kind in Canada, according to a source in the co-operative sector, “there was no blueprint. Every step had to be created based on existing conversion experiences… while being sensitive to the uniqueness of public housing.” Therefore, dealing with unforeseen obstacles and great uncertainty became part of the conversion process. One area of ongoing concern was the lack of financial resources to ensure that the conversion process would succeed. Although all levels of government supported the initiative in principle,
they did not provide financial resources for community development activities. Despite the lack of financial resources, the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto, an umbrella organization for housing co-operatives in Toronto hired to as a support group, and the residents’ association decided to raise the necessary funds to support the conversion.

The initial step in the conversion process was to hold a referendum in order to gauge the overall community support for the initiative. After six months of community development activities, on April 22, 1995, the residents’ association held a referendum on the question: “Do you support Alexandra Park becoming a housing co-operative?” The residents expressed strong support for the conversion, with 72 percent in favour. The result gave the leadership a strong mandate to become a housing co-operative. The vote also served as a mandate for the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto to become involved.

Following the referendum victory the residents’ association and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto created a business plan that outlined how the new co-operative would function (Atkinson Co-operative, 1996). The business plan was also intended to demonstrate to the government that the community was serious and able to convert into a co-operative. The Atkinson Housing Co-operative became incorporated in 1997 and the first board of directors was comprised of the same individuals that formed the residents’ association’s board of directors. However, the Atkinson Housing Co-operative board became the official community representative.

In 1998 the new co-operative board and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto started to meet regularly with government representatives in order to develop a work plan that would specify the process of transferring management responsibilities. Since it was almost three years after the referendum, the government was reticent and insisted on further proof that the community was ready to become a housing co-operative. Therefore, in the late fall of 1998 the co-operative board and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto held a second referendum, referred to as a community vote, and the ballots were translated into nineteen different languages.

The purpose of the second vote was to have as many residents as possible voice their support or opposition to the co-operative conversion. The outcome of the second vote saw an increase in level of resident support for the co-operative. Sixty five percent of the households voted, and 79 percent of those voting were in favour. According to the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto, 45.5 percent of the votes were submitted in a language other than English.

After the second vote, the co-operative board and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto renewed their efforts with increased vigor to get government representatives to demonstrate support for the conversion. A working group of key stakeholders was established in 1999 with two purposes: to determine the legal steps required to take the different stakeholders through the conversion process; and to construct an operating agreement laying out the management responsibilities that the community would have once the conversion was completed. The working group met for over four years, and over that period the government continued to introduce obstacles and concerns about the community’s ability to manage the property. As a result, the co-operative board felt that the discussions appeared to be more a round of negotiations and less of a working group.

The co-operative board and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto deemed that further community development activities was necessary in order to alleviate the government’s
concerns; however, the activities came at a considerable financial cost to the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto. Despite the lack of funds, in 1998 the co-operative board and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto initiated a comprehensive community development program and membership recruitment drive that lasted from 1998 to 2003. The program had the following goals:

1. Educate the community about co-operative living
2. Raise awareness of the ongoing conversion process
3. Maintain momentum for the conversion to occur
4. Recruit members

The community development plan targeted six major language groups—English, Vietnamese, Spanish, Chinese, Portuguese, and Somali. Individual meetings were held for each of the six groups and newsletters were printed in the six major languages and distributed to each of the households. Overall, the community development program was quite successful. At the time of transferring management responsibilities in 2003, 80 percent of households are members of the co-operative, which is consistent with the results of the second vote.

As described above, Sonny Atkinson was the leader most closely associated with the call for increased resident involvement at Alexandra Park. In 1997 the co-operative board decided to have a contest with the dual propose of maintaining momentum for the conversion as well as finding a new name for the community. The community decided to honour Sonny’s contribution by naming the co-operative the Atkinson Housing Co-operative. Unfortunately Sonny Atkinson passed away in 1998, which meant that he was never able to witness the increased resident involvement and local control he passionately sought.

Establishing a Co-operative community

The Atkinson Housing Co-operative is different from most housing co-operatives in that there is no income mixing; all members and non-members alike pay the housing charge on a rent-geared-to-income basis. The local housing agency representing the government has input in creating the operating and capital budgets, thereby limiting the actual amount of control the members have in the overall decision making. Despite the differences there are enough similarities to other housing co-operatives that Atkinson co-operative is considered to be a housing co-operative; however, Atkinson co-operative will always straddle the line separating co-operatives and public housing. There are four areas that needed to be addressed in order to formalize the public housing co-operative model. Those areas are: the relationship to the government housing agency; type of resident control; member participation; and diversity in governance.

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2 Although the housing agency had maintained that no funds would be available, they provided token resources to the conversion process that added to the effectiveness of the different activities.

3 Those residents who have chosen not to become members remain in the community as tenants of the co-operative and will be protected under government legislation referred to as the tenant protection act.

4 As of 2001, the Ontario government downloaded housing to the municipalities and at this point a local housing agency representing the municipality of Toronto oversees Atkinson Housing Co-operative.
4.1. Relationship to the Government Housing Agency

The original proposal in the business plan was to lease the property from the government. However, an operating agreement was considered more appropriate since it was the best way to account for different stakeholder interests in the conversion and in support of the community. The operating agreement was created according to four principles: first, the community needs to have a resource group (e.g., Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto) with which it associates itself, thereby providing the community with credibility. The motive behind the first principle was the recognition that public housing residents may not immediately be capable of operating a housing property, and the expertise of the resource group will ensure that Atkinson co-operative operates in an accountable and transparent fashion.

The second principle is related to who establishes the rent ceilings, or the rent cap, which is analogous to the market rent. At present, government housing agency establishes the rent ceilings, and they will retain control of that process. Since the Atkinson co-operative cannot establish the rent ceilings a key motivator of community building—that is setting rents—is beyond the control of the community. It is too early to ascertain the impact of this principle, but given past practices in public housing the rents will often be quite high, thereby ensuring that members will not want to remain in the community.

The third principle is that new tenants would come from an existing centralized waiting list, and they are required to become a member of the Atkinson Housing Co-operative. Using a centralized waiting list is now the standard for all government assisted housing properties, including co-operatives and non-profits, and Atkinson will continue to refer that list for new members. The fourth principle specifies that the operating budget will be negotiated with the government housing agency on an annual basis. These four principles served as guidelines for the final agreement between the Atkinson Housing Co-operative and the City of Toronto, and it will now serve as a template for other public housing projects that wish to convert into a co-operative.

The operating agreement also clarifies the sources of revenue that Atkinson co-operative can access. The Atkinson Housing Co-operative has access to the same sources of revenue as other co-operatives, but because Atkinson’s members are totally of low-income and have their rent geared to their income, revenue from the housing charges can vary from month to month. In that regard, Atkinson differs from other housing co-operatives, where there is normally an income mix and the revenues tend to be more stable and come from three sources: housing charges, rent subsidies for members with low-incomes, and small fees associated with parking and laundry. The expectation is that Atkinson co-operative will meet monthly revenue benchmarks set by the provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Atkinson operating budget makes a distinction between operating and fixed costs. Operating costs are controlled by the co-operative in terms of the general expenditures, for example, on staffing and on maintenance. The fixed costs are beyond the control of the co-operative, for example, realty taxes and utilities. The process of creating and approving the budget is similar to that of other housing co-operatives and involves the finance committee working with property management to establish a draft budget that goes to the Atkinson board of directors and then to the membership for final approval. Unlike other housing co-operatives, the final step is for the co-operative to obtain approval for the budget from the municipal housing agency. This extra
step reflects a lack of confidence on the part of government in self-management by the residents. Once approved, there is a monthly payment from the municipal housing agency.

It is common practice for housing co-operatives to have a capital reserve fund for rehabilitation and maintenance work on the property. The fund is replenished annually from four sources of revenue: the housing charges; a government bridge subsidy; operating surplus; and miscellaneous sources of revenue. Atkinson co-operative operates like other public housing projects in that there is no capital reserve and the municipal housing agency establishes and funds the capital priorities because Atkinson is a public asset. Not having a reserve fund limits the co-operative’s ability to make improvements deemed necessary by the residents. The Atkinson property is over 30 years old and requires a significant amount of repairs, but the co-operative is expected to maintain and to maximize the existing life expectancy of the property. There is one additional source of revenue for Atkinson in lieu of a capital reserve fund. The co-operative will be able to retain surplus funds from the operating budget in the community to be used for capital repairs.

The mechanism that the residents could access in order to call for capital improvements is that same process that other government assisted housing properties will access. Specifically, the Atkinson membership is encouraged to take part in participatory budgeting practices organized by the municipal housing agency. Participatory budgeting, a relatively recent innovation, allows for the input of tenants in public housing into the budgeting priorities of the municipal agency. Participatory budgeting is not particular to Atkinson, but is addition to the process that the co-operative has for creating its own budget.

4.2. Type of Resident Control

Like other co-operatives, the members of Atkinson control the community through the creation and implementation of by-laws that set out the conditions for living and participating in the community’s system of governance and the rights and responsibilities of the membership. The process of establishing these by-laws involved the membership through committees and at a community meeting.

According to a source at the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto, two by-laws had to be in place prior to the completion of the conversion. The first by-law is the organizational by-law (which was approved by the membership in November 1999) outlines the rules for membership, elections procedures, and evictions among other things, thereby ensuring that the co-operative has a document outlining an elections process and an accountability structure. Shortly after the organizational by-law was passed an occupancy by-law was developed and passed by the members. The occupancy by-law is similar to a lease in that it outlines the standards under which individual members are able to reside in the co-operative.

Although both by-laws were in place prior to the conversion having been completed, the community continued to work on new ones that would serve to improve the living conditions for the entire community. Consequently, different committees have created other by-laws dealing with Other by-laws have since been created by the different committees—a conflict of interest, spending, maintenance improvement, parking, rent arrears, and rent subsidy.

4.3. Member Participation

As described above, there are some differences between Atkinson and most housing co-operatives; however, the system of governance at Atkinson conforms to the norms for other
housing co-operatives. The board of directors is the legal authority for the co-operative and is responsible to develop and approve any by-laws or legal agreements. Hence, the board makes all major policy decisions and seeks approval from the general membership.

The board of directors has 11 residents elected by the membership; however, the lack of knowledge and experience was a barrier to effective functioning. The Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto and the board of directors determined that one way to overcome any obstacles was to add three non-resident, appointed by the board for two-year terms. The membership approved the addition of three advisors with voting rights, even though many believe that it adds one more layer of accountability. Having non-resident advisors on a board differs from other housing co-operatives, but it is too early to determine the efficacy of this innovation.

In addition to a democratically elected board of directors, the community has established a strong committee structure that provides opportunities for all members to participate in decision making. At this time there are the following ongoing committees:

1. Rehabilitation/maintenance and finance committee
2. Parking and security committee
3. Welcoming and member education committee
4. Landscape
5. Newsletter committee
6. Co-operative conversion committee

The committees have been effective in engaging members of the community in decision making and in advising the board of directors. For each committee, a board member serves as a liaison thereby ensuring that there is a clear line of communication between the board and the various committees. The board liaison reports on the work by the committee and brings forward its recommendations. The committee’s role is formal and, where necessary, the liaison requests a motion or that a letter is written regarding some issue.

Despite numerous challenges and the inexperience of the membership in self-governance, the organizational structure is transparent and accountable and the governance has been relatively effective. Some key indicators of the governance’s effectiveness have been an increase in community consultation; more residents voicing concerns in a constructive manner; and increased awareness of the role of the committees in the community.

As described above, one of the key assets of Alexandra Park, the forerunner to Atkinson co-operative, was an established tradition of resident participation. However, the election of the Atkinson board and its related committee structure represented an increased level of responsibility. With the co-operative, the leadership had to be more aware of issues and skilled at resolving them.

Even after the co-operative was incorporated, the residents’ association continued, and this created some confusion as to the lines of authority over the community centre, for example. In the summer of 2001 the co-operative board and the residents’ association became two distinct organizations once again. The residents’ association had the sole responsibility to manage the community centre and operates independently of the co-operative board of directors. The co-
operative board retains responsibility for the whole property. The members of the residents’ association are the members of the co-operative, but the board of directors is not comprised of members of the Atkinson co-operative. Fortunately, the co-operative conversion created a greater understanding of the need for the community centre to have accountable and transparent business practices, something that has been a concern. As a result, there is hope that the community centre will flourish and regain its prominent place in the community.

4.4. Diversity in Governance

The membership of the Atkinson Housing Co-operative has been quite stable over time, which is one reason that the community was considered as a prime candidate to become a co-operative (Metro Toronto Housing Corporation, 2001). The co-operative membership is quite diverse and changes are representative of those observed generally in public housing in Toronto. While ethnic diversity has always been a characteristic of the neighbourhood in which Atkinson is situated, the diversity within the co-operative has become more pronounced in recent years. According to figures provided by the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto (see table 2), as of 1998 the five major non-English language groups accounted for 48 percent of households.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Groups</th>
<th># of Households</th>
<th>% of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>197</strong></td>
<td><strong>48%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto, 2002*

The diversity has resulted in many challenges for the community leadership. A number of divisions along ethnic, cultural and even religious lines have emerged over the years, and those divisions are most noticeable during the elections. According to some residents there has been an increase in the representation of single ethno-cultural groups, which has given some residents the impression that individual groups are aiming to take greater control of the community. However, evidence, based on observations and election results, demonstrates that some ethno-cultural groups have become more active in the community. Furthermore there is a lack of evidence that a ethno-cultural group is attempting to gain greater control of the community for their own purpose. Nevertheless, ongoing efforts to increase ethnic and language representation on the board of directors have been successful. At the present time the co-operative’s board of directors is closer to being representative of the ethnic diversity of the community than ever before.

Community Development: Education and Supports

Prior to becoming the Atkinson co-operative, the community has been part of a network that provides a variety of recreation and education activities for the residents. Over the years the residents’ association collaborated with other agencies to provide programs geared to youth and senior citizens. Since the conversion got underway, both the co-operative board of directors and
the residents’ association have benefited from participating as a partner in an informal network associated with delivering social services.

A concern expressed by the residents and the government representatives during the conversion process was whether the board of directors could become familiar with the intricacies of managing a multi-million dollar property. In general, the concern was whether public housing residents could be responsible enough to maintain the property and protect the interests of the residents and of a public asset. Residents of public housing projects do not normally have formal education and training opportunities in how to manage a housing community. Before the conversion to the Atkinson co-operative, the residents’ association ensured that programs and events were occurring in the community by maintaining an independent financial structure. The residents’ association had to depend on training provided by government agencies, non-profit organizations, and third party funders, such as independent foundations. The funders and local agencies want the community to be successful, and they see their role as promoting community development and inclusive values.

Over the past ten years the emphasis of education and training activities have focused on the board of directors and on the membership at large. The current operating agreement stipulates that a third party organization will provide education workshops and community development initiatives at Atkinson over an extended period of time. The education opportunities include: training of board of directors; literacy programs to enable residents to read the co-operative’s documents; race relations to help members become more understanding and sensitive to the needs found in a diverse community; and basic to advanced computer training courses.

As described above, the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto has been integral to the conversion by working with the co-operative board of directors to establish proper business practices. In the case of residents’ association, the association has received invaluable support from outside resources to establish business systems that are accountable and transparent. Formally, municipal representatives do not see themselves as directly involved in Atkinson co-operative or on the residents’ association beyond the capacity of funder. However, the city’s support and understanding throughout the conversion process has ensured a base level of programs and events.

At the present time the community is still going through a series of changes. Various network partners have voiced concerns about the state of the community centre within the co-operative. The concern is the lack of proper business practices within the community centre will have a negative impact on the co-operative. Fortunately, both formal and informal partners want to see the co-operative succeed and the community has been given a considerable amount of flexibility in learning proper business practices and planning. A source at the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto has stated that it will take at least ten years for the co-operative to overcome its dependency on external groups and to function on its own. For the members of the co-operative, a fundamental challenge will be to overcome the tradition of paternalism and mismanagement that has existed for the past thirty years under external management.

**Impact of the Atkinson Housing Co-operative**

Throughout the conversion process the social housing system underwent a series of changes. The introduction of neoconservative policies in the 1990s caused all levels of government to reconsider their role providing social housing. In fact, the federal and provincial governments started to divest itself of the responsibility of managing housing geared to low-income earners.
However, in spite of the challenges facing the social housing system the conversion of Atkinson continued. Through persistent political lobbying by members of the co-operative sector, the Conservative government has looked favorably on the conversion because it was in line with its downsizing and divestment agenda.

With the introduction of the Social Housing Reform Act in January 2001, the ownership, financing and management for all forms of government funded housing was devolved onto the municipalities (Ontario, 2000). The legislation also outlined a new relationship to government for non-profits and co-operatives. In spite of the changes in government focus, the Atkinson conversion continued. However, the negotiations determining precisely what responsibilities could be vested within the Atkinson Housing Co-operative and what should remain with the government housing agency was dependent on the general changes occurring within the social housing system. As a result of this conversion, a new model of social housing has been created. The new model represents a unique hybrid arrangement that differs from other housing co-operatives but also differs from other public housing projects (Sousa and Quarter, 2003).

Since the Atkinson represents the first conversion of its kind in Canada, the community has had a high public profile over the past ten years. For instance, community agencies continue to offer support to Atkinson in order to ensure that the community is successful. Additionally, the principal of a local elementary school has encouraged the integration of the seven co-operative principles into the curriculum at all grade levels and previous residents have maintained a connection to the community because of the conversion. The high level of public awareness and support for the conversion has culminated in establishing a municipal by-law associated with social housing that explicitly encourages future conversions of public housing into co-operative housing.

In Toronto, with approximately 160 housing co-operatives spread throughout the city, there is a considerable public support for the co-operative housing model. However, the stigma associated with public housing persists because of the high concentration of low-income earners, a prevalence of social problems and the general design of the housing projects. The executive director of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto stated that: “The motive behind the conversion is to improve the lives of the residents and the condition of the community. Although we will not immediately see all that we had hoped for in this conversion, the lives of the residents will gradually improve.” For many involved in the process, a sense of control and security of tenure will establish a feeling of hope by giving all members a reason to feel pride in their accomplishments.

The Atkinson co-operative will face many challenges in the future. One of the challenges for the community will to develop a stable membership by creating stronger sense of community by reducing the turnover normally found in public housing projects. The goal for many residents has been to move out as quickly as possible, and it is too early to determine whether becoming a co-operative will change that pattern. Another challenge will be the negative perception associated with low-income communities. It is hoped that changes within Atkinson will have an impact on the external perception of Atkinson. Several directors of the board and other members have established links with local agencies to address issues that concern residents within Atkinson and from the surrounding neighborhood. It is too early to tell whether the Atkinson conversion will reduce the stigma, but these initiatives demonstrate the early stages of change.
The original Alexandra Park housing project was not intended to have many of the features found in co-operatives because public housing was intended to be temporary housing and managed by a government bureaucracy. The combined vision and determination by the residents and the co-operative sector, particularly the Co-operative Housing Federation of Toronto, to see improvements to quality of life of public housing residents contributed to the development of the Atkinson Housing Co-operative. The members of Atkinson do not yet feel part of a movement with a strong history and tradition of mutual support. The Atkinson Housing Co-operative has benefited from the altruism associated with the co-operative sector, and the experience at Atkinson will be invaluable for other public housing projects wanting to convert into a housing co-operative.

Acknowledgements

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References


riverrun, past Eve and Adam’s, from swerve of Shore to bend of bay, brings us by commodious vicus of recirculation back to Howth Castle and Environs.
—Finnegans Wake, James Joyce

“The problematic horizon of language”
Poststructuralist perspectives can be described as a closer investigation into the human making of meaning – into language - understood in both a narrow and in a widest possible sense.

Such an approach describes Jacques Derrida’s philosophical practise, which can be said to start in the initial part of Of grammatology with a strong appeal; “that a historico-metaphysical epoch must finally determine as language the totality of its problematic horizon.” (Derrida, 97:6)

Derrida states that what is most commonly identified as language, and especially as structures of logic, inescapably inhabits a certain type of imperialism implicit in language as such. Logical structures, according to Derrida, are constructed by concepts set up in a binary opposition - a dualism - where one side of the opposition suggests an identity which is preferable. This preferred side gains its legitimation through a reference to some kind of naturalism or unambiguous truth.

We are told, by Derrida, both to investigate our use of words, concepts and ideologies, and to include all human gestures and signs in a widened understanding of language, which he gives the name writing. This will have to be a writing, which also includes the open space, the clearings between the signs.

The concept, which I would like to investigate on this occasion, is the word transformative. The reason why I find it highly meaningful is that it in my opinion provides us, as academics/pedagogues, with the opportunity to treat the concept – transformative – in a way that might bring forth a true transformative attitude. I believe that we in this way are taking the word transformative seriously, and that such an investigation of concepts entails important pedagogical and political implications.

To give a concept a treatment
In the preface to On cosmopolitanism and forgiveness, Simon Chritchley focuses on Derrida’s treatment of concepts; a treatment which in many ways can be described as Derrida’s “methodology”, though this word must be put under erasure, like all others.
“He selects a concept from what he always describes as “the heritage” – lets call it the dominant Western tradition – and then proceeds, via an analysis that is at once historical, contextual, and thematic, to bring out the logic of that concept.” (Derrida 01:ix)

In my reading of Derrida I have not found that he has given the concept transformative such a treatment. He some times uses the word to describe a writing, which is deliberately jeopardising or breaking up form or structures of meaning, in order to give rise to some new more unpredictable and less univocal form. Should we identify this as a pedagogical act when Derrida says,

“The unreceivable – that which takes at a determined moment the unformed form of the unreceivable – can, even should, at a determined moment, not be received at all (..)” (Derrida in Ulmer 85: 160)?

In this way a radical opening is brought into the pedagogical project, a change of focus from transferring knowledge towards the questioning of knowledge itself. Such a questioning is only made possible by risking receivability; by risking any predictable and secure form.

The transformative – looking for it in “the heritage”.
If our intention is to try to give this concept a Derridean treatment, then we must look for it in the “dominant Western tradition”. We face difficulties when it comes to finding it in texts identified as philosophical or scientific. But on looking for it in “the other” of the philosophical, in fiction or literature, the picture might change.

We might start out from an old source, Ovid’s Metamorphoses, which both implicitly and explicitly has given inspiration to some of our greatest writers, such as Shakespeare and James Joyce. I would like to focus on a possible line, and maybe a break between these writers, Ovid and Joyce, because in a poststructuralist perspective Joyce is made to play an important role in what might be described as the ongoing drama of language.

In the English version Metamorphoses starts out in book 1 with; Chaos transformed into the ordered universe. In the presentation of the books from I to XV, the word, transform is used at least 21 times. In addition to this the same meaning is presented as change, and likewise.

It is probably not coincidental that we have to go to the field of literature to find this word in use. There might be some implications to it that makes a more traditional philosophical attitude foreign to this concept.

“A new mutation in the history of writing, in history as writing.” (Of grammatology:8)
One of Derridas major concerns is the relationship between philosophy and literature when it comes to searching for and expressing truth. In fact this relationship as a field of knowledge and questions was what he first wanted to concentrate upon as a thesis, in the initial part of his career. In a statement in Deconstruction and pragmatism he links literature to freedom of speech, and to democracy.
“Thus, what defines literature as such, within a certain European history, is profoundly connected with a revolution in law and politics: the principled authorization that anything can be said publicly. In other words, I am not able to separate the invention of literature, the history of literature, from the history of democracy.” (Mouffe, 96:80)

Derrida states that literature allows one to pose questions that are often repressed in a philosophical context. In the essay, *Khora*, Derrida studies Plato’s *Timaeus* and brings out that which has to be foreign to a philosophical discourse. Khora seems to defy that “logic of noncontradiction of the philosophers” “of the binarity, of the yes or no.”

Through a close reading of this text, which can be said to be one of those initiating philosophical thinking, Derrida points out the neutralisation of the conditions necessary for philosophy in order to take a primal position in an opposition to fiction. The neutralisation is already there. It is always already there. Khora inhabits all texts, “she” is the abyss itself, impossible to exclude from any utterance, any expression.

Derrida’s project might be described as a pedagogical project because he is trying to inspire a change in ways of thinking, from thinking - or a making of meaning - based upon oppositions towards a thinking based upon difference. He does so by repeatedly showing that the idealisation of the noncontradictional relies on some kind of metaphysics and what might be described as violence. His close reading of some of Plato’s texts, such as *Timaeus*, shows that Plato can not be said to be unambiguously platonic. Timaeus talks about Khora, some thing or no thing, some place and none place which can not be placed in any opposition. “One cannot even say of it that it is neither this nor that or that it is both this and that.” Khora transforms; “some times she/it appears to be neither this nor that, at times both this and that” (89) “She” is the very thing/place or absence of thing/place that makes things/places possible. “She” is the radical opening in human making of meaning, in writing, which makes writing possible.

Derrida uses the word mutation about this change towards a thinking/writing based upon difference and he describes and provokes it in *Of grammatology*. This mutation is described on some occasions as the “death of speech”, or the death of the unquestioned and implicit understanding that speech is closer to nature because it is closer to the idea at one with it self. This mutation has already taken place, and we can find it in much of what is identified as art, in poetry, in literature, in the theatre and in painting. Derrida’s project is to point to this mutation where he can be said to function as a kind of pedagogue in the task of also bringing about a consciousness and understanding of this mutation in the field of philosophy and science - and into the institutions of society. This is because his critical investigation into language itself brings us directly to some important political questions.

**Finnegans Wake as an example of the “mutation”**

Derrida and Umberto Eco share the same attitude towards Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake*, that it might be looked upon as

“The touchstone for thinking about language in our time.” “The Wake is an epistemological metaphor showing the consequences for cognition of field theory. The
reader’s relationship to the Wake models the relationship of the poststructuralist student to the fields of knowledge, whose “content” may be identified with the encyclopaedia.” (Ulmer 85: 308, 310)

A mutation can be read as a transformation, or metamorphoses, a change of form by decomposition or by deconstruction, where the new form is not a result of a linear means to end attitude. On the contrary it is due to a deliberate jeopardising of form and control.

Derrida points to Joyce, and especially to *Finnegans Wake*, as both an example of this mutation and as a kind of pedagogical text, which can contribute to confirming and creating it.

In the essay “Two words for Joyce”, Derrida compares what he sees as two great models, two great paradigms with respect to thought: Husserl who “proposes to render language as transparent as possible, univocal”(..) “The other great paradigm would be the Joyce of Finnegans Wake.” (Derrida in Attridge/Ferrer 84:149)

Instead of the univocal, Joyce “repeats and mobilizes and babelizes the (asymtotic) totality of the equivocal, he makes this his theme and his operation..” Instead of trying to make language transparent and to secure this minimal readability Joyce:

“(..)tries to make outcrop, with greatest possible synchrony, at great speed, the greatest power of the meaning buried in each syllabic fragment, subjecting each atom of writing to fission in order to overload the unconscious with the whole memory of man; mythologies, religion, philosophies, sciences, psychoanalysis, literature.” (Attridge/Ferrer 84:149)

In this way Joyce’s project can be said to be a different one to Husserl’s, Husserl here being taken as a representative for the philosophical urge for the univocal. Instead Derrida, inspired or haunted by writers such as Joyce welcomes the equivocal in a new type of writing, accepting that this demand towards language as to function in a transparent and univocal way is a demand that language is unable to fulfil.

In this kind of writing the relationship to “the heritage” would be as Derrida puts it “to start where ever you are”, the different fields of knowledge can not be treated separately - they are all interwoven into each other. And a deep questioning, perhaps especially a questioning from a pedagogical position, would have to move across all territories of knowledge.

**The difference between improvement and transformation**

In so-called “traditional” philosophical thinking, which also can be said to be the grounds for scientific thinking, transformation can be made to function as an opposition to some thing, maybe to stagnation. Transformation might then be looked upon as synonymous with change, and maybe to such words as development or improvement.
In a landscape made up by such oppositions, we, as pedagogues or academics concerned with practical problems in the educational institutions of society, might identify our position and our task to be that of taking part in finding new grounds for a pedagogical practise.

It is this question of new grounds that Derrida poses on several occasions and in several ways. Here in Khora; “Khora is not, is above all not, is anything but a support or a subject which would give place by receiving or by conceiving, or indeed by letting itself be conceived.” (95:94)

Derrida's radical questioning does not lead us to new grounds. Instead it leads us to a kind of abyss. It leads us to accept a radical opening implicit in all kinds of human making of meaning, in culture as such. This is an opening, which leaves us unable to seek firm grounds, to find legitimation for our actions and our practises in any texts of laws, regardless of these laws being identified as “natural” or philosophical.

This abyss, present in and between all concepts, also inhabits the word Transformative. In Ovid we can see it used to describe a change of form; initially giving form to chaos itself. The gods or humans are given the form of birds, animals, plants and rocks. Much like Joyce does, when he lets the gossiping washerwomen become transformed into a rock and a tree. There is no linear evolution in this change of form. On the contrary, the transformation is a sudden event and in some ways unpredictable. It goes beyond the demand for control, beyond the possibility to declare the means and ends in advance.

To sum up so far; In what may be identified as the heritage of the concept transformative, we might first point to the fact that it is most frequently used in the field of literature, and here it is used to describe a change of form that is not to be identified as predictable and linear.

If we were to use this concept in an academic, scientific, philosophical discourse, this would also have implications for how we would give form and content to a transformative pedagogy. We would have to let the implicit notions contained in scientific and philosophical projects face up to Derrida’s critique of language.

Again and again, using texts from Plato, Levy Strauss, and Rousseau among others, Derrida has focused on how thinking in oppositions has been given legitimation by making reference to a “natural” relationship between the spoken word and the univocal idea at one with itself. Derrida’s point here is that there is no such thing as this natural relationship. Instead we have to accept that there is no unbroken link between the sensible and the intelligible. Plato himself is talking of Khora as a third genus between these, and a genus that is implacable, a genus with no positive or negative territory.

To accept an identity as a pedagogue under these conditions might be described as a radicalisation of a Socratic position. It entails a paradoxical trust in the pedagogical task as such letting go of the belief of the possibility of any unambiguous means and ends in pedagogical practise. We might have to accept and to welcome the fact that a pedagogical practice best might be described as an act, which exceeds all “pedagogies”, exceeds all thinkable ends. Instead a pedagogical practise would have to be one that still lets “human values” act as a source of
inspiration, but without the belief of ever being able to give these concepts a fixed definition or firm unambiguous expression.

In this way a transformative pedagogy would be one willing to sacrifice territories in a continual fashion. And accepting that implicit in all that might be identified as culture or language, implicit in the project “human beings” there is an inescapable element of violence, which can be best dealt with by accepting this as an unavoidable fact, though always seeking to minimalize the effect of this violence. Instead of searching firm ground in a landscape of univocal knowledge, we would have to let our pedagogical practice find form through what Derrida names political inventiveness.

**Firm ground – or the riverrun**

Poststructuralist perspectives might also be described as the attempt to challenge any “cosmic structures”, to provoke harmony and the desire and need for master strategies. Ovid’s project seems to be that of changing chaos into cosmos. *Metamorphoses* both starts and ends in this way, strongly emphasising the paternal logos at the end of the book. Such paternal laws are deeply questioned, both by modernist perspectives in literature and by poststructuralist philosophy. So, although inspired by Ovid, we would also have to challenge him when he makes the transformative into a tool for cosmic structures or firm grounds.

The avant-garde, the modernist poets and writers, Joyce and Derrida among others have emphasised the possibilities which can be experienced at the borders of the receivable. Instead of trying to secure the grounds, to look for solid rocks of secure knowledge on the banks of the River Liffey, might we propose a venture into the water?

“A way a lone a last a loved a long the”

Finnegans Wake, James Joyce

**References**


Developing Our Commons Sense:  
Sustainable Learning in Urban and Rural Communities

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Introduction

In the face of ongoing social and environmental crises, the question of sustainability takes on a growing importance. What does it mean and how can we work toward it? Using the commons as the focal point in the search for sustainability, this paper will argue that sustainability in both urban and rural communities must be learned, involves participatory democracy and depends on social change. Sustainable learning can be understood as a kind of lifelong learning that helps us to develop our ‘commons sense’, which means placing the commons at the centre of our thinking, feeling and acting in the world.

The Commons

As a form of collective ownership, the commons has a long history, from the ancient village commons to the farmers’ markets still found in every country of the world today. It represents our human heritage, a common resource that people share and steward together. Invisible to market calculus, the commons serves the public good, not private accumulation. The commons nurtures everyone through its universal services, and increases our individual and collective well-being. Its ethic of inclusion reaches beyond the self to help fulfil the basic needs of all people.

Beneath the commons, however, is the collective concept of the civil commons – any co-operative human construction that protects and/or enables universal access to life goods (McMurtry 1999). While the commons itself consists of land or other resources, the civil commons involves the projects that people plan together to make the land and resources available for common use. In essence, the civil commons is co-operative, not competitive. It is a human construction, and so must be brought into being by human agency. It protects through rules and regulations, and enables through opening up spaces and opportunities. It involves universal access, not privileged entrée for those who can buy their way in, and it provides life goods, such as breathable air, nutritious food, clean water, adequate shelter, environmental spaces, and learning opportunities. Environmental legislation, health and safety regulations, public education, old-age pensions and universal health-care are all examples of the civil commons in action. This is the heart of sustainability, and reaches back through time to support us today and lend assurance to the future.

In the age of corporate globalization, however, it is not the commons that is being globalized, but laws to break the commons. Trade agreements, “rounds” at the World Trade Organization and G-8 meetings all work to destroy the common support systems that have been carefully built up over hundreds of years. Seen as a barrier to trade, the free services provided by the civil commons are being annihilated to make way for priced services that contribute to corporate profit. To the market calculus, the destruction of the commons leads to growth and prosperity,
without asking growth of what and prosperity for whom. The attacks on public healthcare and education are just two examples of the current assault on the co-operative human constructions of the civil commons. What can be done to prevent these attacks on our shared support systems? The solution lies within the concept of the civil commons itself.

Common Sense and Power

To protect and promote the civil commons in our lives, we need to put it at the centre of our ways of thinking, feeling and acting in the world. This means developing what I term our “commons sense,” which is quite different from the well-known but co-opted phrase “common sense.”

Gramsci laid out the power parameters for common sense when he discussed the concept of hegemony. For Gramsci (1971, 12), hegemony comprises

the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is “historically” caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

This dominance was not only based on consent. Gramsci understood that behind the “spontaneous consent” of the people stood enormous force, ready to rise up and protect ruling class predominance if consent failed to materialize or was eroded by experience.

The apparatus of state coercive power ... ‘legally’ enforces discipline on those groups who do not “consent” either actively or passively (Gramsci 1971, 12).

Thus, for Gramsci (1971, 80), hegemony has two sides - it is

characterised by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion - newspapers and associations - which, therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied.

The “spontaneous consent” enjoyed by the dominant group and expressed in the organs of public opinion (such as the mass media, schools and churches) results in a maintenance of the status quo that can be difficult to challenge because it captures the hearts and minds of ordinary people. According to Williams (in Entwistle 1979,15),

Gramsci’s most creative and distinctive development of Marxism, was his exploration of the essential problem of breaking the bourgeois hegemony over workers’ minds, the need for workers and the workers’ party to think themselves into historical autonomy, without which no permanent revolution is possible.
Gramsci’s concept of hegemony provides us with a succinct and useful way for understanding the current predominance of corporate globalization and its seeming stranglehold on the hearts and minds of ordinary people. Under its hegemonic rule, people become unable to voice their own needs and interests, but assume the interests of the dominant elite as their own. Their very consciousness becomes “the product of constant conditioning and a well-integrated fantasy created in the interests and images of the powerful” (Heaney 1996, 5). In short, they have been socialized into maintaining the status quo.

In this way, hegemony highlights not only the political and economic control exercised by the dominant class, but its success in projecting its own particular way of seeing the world, human and social relationships so that this is accepted as ‘common sense’ and part of the natural order by those who are in fact subordinated to it (Bullock 1999, 388).

This view is echoed by Thomas Heaney (1996, 11), who argues that “the effectiveness and stability of power rests on the installation of a commonly agreed-upon font of ‘truth’, a ‘common sense’, which supports the status quo.” A clear example of an understanding of common sense supporting the status quo can be found in the Ontario Conservative Party’s use of the term in their infamous “Common Sense Revolution,” which stripped away the protections of the civil commons and paved the way for private control.

Total hegemony, however, is never fully achieved. It is not only contested, but also provides a learning opportunity:

Every relationship of “hegemony” is necessarily an educational relationship and occurs not only within a nation, between the various forces of which the nation is composed, but in the international and world-wide field, between complexes of national and continental civilisations (Gramsci 1971, 350).

In spite of being surrounded by hegemonic common-sense stories promoted by the mass media and educational institutions that tell us that the commons will only come to a tragic end and our future lies in the global market, many people are realizing that intensified market operations will not bring prosperity to the Majority World. It is becoming increasingly clear that “the old ways of making sense no longer work and we are increasingly challenged to devise new ones” (Heaney 1996, 11). We must learn our way in to new ways of making sense.

**Developing Our Commons Sense**

One new way of making sense is to develop our commons sense – an understanding that socially, politically, culturally, environmentally, and even economically, we need the civil commons to support our daily lives and promote our individual and collective well-being. Developing our commons sense is a lifelong learning project. We need to (re)learn how to work together to establish those co-operative human constructs that protect and/or enable universal access to life goods. Building on the civil commons heritage we already possess, such as public healthcare, we must learn how to place the commons at the centre of our thinking, feeling and acting in the
world, so that working through the commons comes to be a matter of commons sense. Working through the commons entails, almost by definition, the notion of citizenship.

**The Commons Needs Citizenship**

Citizenship is a contested term, with meanings ranging from civil activist to obedient supporter of the status quo. Whatever its meaning, however, citizenship needs politics in order to survive.

According to Lipson (1981), politics is the process in which a community confronts a series of great issues and chooses between opposing values. Two opposing sets of values in the world today are money values, that drive corporate globalization, and life values, that undergird the civil commons (McMurtry 2002). Money values promote capital accumulation, first and foremost. Under this values orientation, life serves money interests. Life values enhance life on the levels of thought, feeling and action. Under this values orientation, money serves life interests.

In the age of corporate globalization, money values prevail and more and more forms of life are bent to serve money interests. Spread by the common sense that serves the dominant elite, money values subordinate all forms of life to capital accumulation. The predominance of one set of values in the world destroys the basis of political engagement – debating crucial issues and choosing between opposing values – and the role that citizens play in that engagement.

The state has traditionally been one of the major sites of political engagement. But the state may appear to be obsolete because of its lack of ability (or lack of interest) to deal with the problems posed by corporate globalization. Within the state, according to Robert R. Cox (1995, 9),

> decision making is now in the realm of bureaucrats and lobbyists and is fragmented into innumerable confrontations between specific interest groups. Politics has become a game of management, in which there are no conflicts of values, only adjustment of interests. Politics in the sense of choice by political subjects among different social projects is disappearing. The death of politics is the death of the citizen, which is the death of democracy.

The death of politics is not only the death of the citizen and democracy, but also the death of the civil commons. Without the citizens to fight for it, and the forms of participatory democracy that help to build it, the civil commons is being destroyed and bureaucrats and lobbyists increasingly promote the global market. And the role people are required to play in the global market is not one of citizen, but of consumer, obediently buying the private goods and services the global market offers. Those without the money to consume have no role to play and no right to live, and are blamed for their lack of consumer status.

In a world dominated by transnational corporations, many people have turned their back on the state, looking only to the local or the global for solutions to their problems. But turning away from the state forecloses it as a forum for political engagement. As Cerny (1999, 140) reminds us, “Thinking globally but acting locally undermines the state as an arena of collective action.” In spite of its shortcomings and outright pandering to transnational corporations, the state is
crucial to the civil commons and the role that citizens play in building it. The state is the current vehicle we have for the universalization of the formal aspects of the civil commons. Few other entities are capable of guaranteeing universal access to life goods such as health care and education. If we did away with the state (which, not coincidentally, plays into the corporate agenda), who, for example, would guarantee and enforce our constitutional rights under The Charter of Rights and Freedoms? The community is not powerful enough and any global mechanism is completely lacking.

**Sustainable Learning**

In the face of the hegemonic control of corporate globalization and the possibility of the death of politics, citizenship and the civil commons, it is important to remember that “the replacement of the existing hegemony requires painstaking and protracted political education” (Entwistle 1979, 4). Political education is essentially values education, an ongoing process of learning to choose between life values and money values. While learning to contest hegemony may be “painstaking and protracted,” learning to choose life values over money values will help to replace the existing hegemony of corporate globalization with the commons-sense alternative of the civil commons. Citizenship, and the lifelong learning that is part of it, is essential not only to prevent the death of politics but also to maintain the civil commons and work toward sustainability.

Sustainable learning is a form of lifelong citizenship learning that develops our commons sense and helps to build the civil commons. It involves learning our way out of unsustainable ways of life and learning our way in to new ways of being. Based in opposing hegemony, engaging in dialogue and replacing money values with life values, sustainable learning is an ongoing process that challenges the homogenizing compliance to the status quo engendered by corporate globalization. In essence, sustainable learning is a participatory, transformative process that involves learning through social action, developing critical consciousness and encouraging dialogical engagement, all within a life-values perspective. Sustainable learning is a process of building the capacity and power of people to recognize, name and confront the impacts of corporate globalization and to change the present unsustainable situation. It should enable people on both sides of the North-South divide to make sense of the complex local-global dynamics in order to create solidarity around a common sustainable vision of individual and community well-being based in building the civil commons (Sumner 2003, 26).

According to Laxer (2003, 142), “shared active citizenship is the strongest glue that can bind together the people of heterogeneous countries.” Shared active citizenship can also bind together people within and among heterogeneous communities and regions. And part of that citizenship is the collective forms of learning people engage in for survival. Whether at the local, national or international level, sustainable learning is at the heart of the civil commons and the provision of shared supports for all. To prevent the destruction of our common support systems, citizens can participate in sustainable learning and develop their commons sense through participatory democracy, collective problem solving and an appreciation of those shared life values that underlie the creation, maintenance and enhancement of the civil commons.
References


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“Planners are not free agents, able to choose any course of action they want” (Cervero and Wilson, 1994). This statement is definitely true for the planning of an adult ESL program. ESL is one of the major publicly funded basic adult education programs in the United States. In reviewing the literature regarding the usage of program budget, Galbraity, Sisco and Guglielmino (1997) categorized the budget into five purposes: planning, delegation, coordination, control, and performance review. The major budget resource of an ESL program is from the government, which already sets the purpose of the program, the meaning of budget is not merely for financial purposes, but it also embodies the goals of the whole program planning. In the application of judgment, particularly in institutional settings, it may be useful to have policies or principles to use as standards or guidelines (Houle, 1996). However, in the process of program planning, adult educators are legitimated by the responsibility of offering adult learners learning opportunities. With the concern of learners' needs, the task of adult educators in planning ESL programs is not merely to address the needs and goals of public expectations that originated from policy makers and social interests. Adult educators have to formulate a program that represents and fits the needs and interests of the target population— immigrants.

Balancing the powers and interests

“Power relationships frame planning contexts”(Wilson and Cervero, 1996). Planning is a social activity in which people negotiate with each other. Becoming knowledgeable about the internal and external powers and interests that affect the program planning is a prerequisite for program planning. The internal powers and interests may from learners, instructors, staffs, and the organization itself. The external powers and interests are from public expectations and policy. Power is subordinate to interest. While interest arises, the power comes to support the interest. For instance, budgets are the representation of powers and interest that come from public expectation and policy. When policy and public expectation show less interest in a certain program, the budgets are less or even zero. A class is not a class when there is no learner in the class. Therefore for adult learners, attending class is the representation of their power and interest.

Orem (1989) indicates social and political forces beyond the control of the adult educator largely determine the future of ESL teaching. Forces include the changing nature of public and private funding, immigration reform, and the related issue of language rights. For instance, during 1920s and 1930s, adult education played a prominent role in the Americanization program (Lewis, 1934, Orem, 1989). The policy makers’ interest was on forming a homogeneous society through culture and language learning. For immigrants, the learning of proficient English language skills allows them to advocate for their specific position and needs. Immigrants may not expect to be assimilated by language and culture learning in ESL class. Program planner's task in this case is to use their power to construct their program within which the powers and interests of majority and minority individual are balanced (Wilson and Cervero, 1996).

Sorting and prioritizing program objectives based on the responsibility of adult educator
Though the goal of ESL programs are different in some extent for each party as indicated above, all of them share the same program objective—English learning. The program planner’s duty is to identify what level and what content will fit the learners’ needs and also satisfy the sponsor’s interests.

ESL program is not compulsory education. Most of the ESL learners are voluntary participants who conduct their learning with their awareness of needs and interests. The philosophy of adult education is the belief that adult learners’ unique experience is the inherent knowledge that serves for the foundation of adult learning. By referring prior experiences adults learn reflect their thinking about value and judgment to practical experience. The experiences of immigrants are cultural bounded. Therefore by identify the individual’s needs and interests with the concern of immigrants' culture differences, adult educator may determine the learning object that is fit the learners' need.

One tool that program planners can use to determine the needs and interests of adult immigrants is the Need and Interest Assessment (NIA). According to Galbraith, Sisco and Guglielmino (1997), the purpose of conducting a NIA is to get data from the population that is expected to participate in the program offering. However in ESL program planning, we need to emphasis the importance of getting data from current participants because most of them may attend the higher level class or remain in the same class after the previous class ends. By identifying their learning objective in the present and in the future, we can predict whether they will maintain their learning in this program, and also we can adjust the learning objective to reflect the current learners’ learning experience.

Census data can also be used for pointing out areas of need for certain types of programs; specifically, we can identify the need for ESL programs from the data that indicates the population of immigrants in certain counties, school districts, and communities. For instance, according to the Census 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000) three issues that are relevant to our future program planning. First, the number of limited-English-proficient adults served in adult education programs will continue to increase. Second, workplace English will displace general “survival” English because of increased of H-1 quota. Third, with these two trends, there will be a shortage of qualified, trained ESL teachers and an increased use of volunteers.

In short, from the perspectives of individual learners and government, the objects of ESL program are more than English learning. By helping immigrants to understand equal opportunity and social security laws, welfare right, community property, and legal problems, the ESL program is serving the higher level of learning objectives. While sorting the needs and interests of program, adult educator with an awareness of the contextuality of knowledge and the culturally constructed nature of values, morals, and beliefs (Brookfield, 1986) should responsible for assisting immigrant adults to adept to the new society through ESL program.
Preparing for the transfer of learning in content and instruction design

Learning is a process that occurs on different levels and depends upon the type of teaching employed (Boyle, 1981). Adult ESL program is aimed to help immigrants to adapt to cultural differences and to obtain communication competency through language learning. The progress of immigrants’ English competence should be observable since rote memory recall is at the lower level of learning. However a higher level of learning requires active interaction through process. It is a critical and inevitable task for adult immigrants to apply their learning to their immediate daily life situations. The adaptation of cultural differences may or may not be an overt change that is observable by educators. From this viewpoint, ESL program is not merely a language-learning program. It is an adult learning program that involves concept of adult learning, such as adult self-concept, self-directed and transformative learning.

Mezirow (1997) notes, “transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference.” This frame of reference consists of a coherent experience such as concept, values and conditions responses. Immigrants come from different societies within which they have their own experiences and values. While the values, concepts they brought from their societies are no longer referable in this new society; immigrants may adopt the value, concept of new society and incorporate them with their old experiences to generate a new frame of their reference. Therefore, the applying of transformative learning in immigrants ESL program may help immigrants to get more control of their new life in the new society. The design of content and instruction should ensure the occurrence of learning.

To sum up, all adults define who they are based on their accumulation of unique sets of experiences. Because adults define themselves in this way, they have a deep investment in the value of those experiences. With this understanding to view the learning of immigrant adults, when those experiences and their worth are minimized, as their status as minority adults, not only are the experiences rejected, but also the immigrant adult feels rejected as a person. During the process of planning an ESL program, planners of adult education endeavors are responsible for facilitating learning and for providing avenues for self-actualization, and they must accomplish this within the framework of existing cultural differences.

Staff requirements and needs

The major problem in ESL programs regarding the teacher is the status and qualification of the instructor. For the status part, most of the instructors in ESL class are part-time teachers, who are paid only for the time spent teaching in the classroom, and are usually unavailable for student consultations or for the work on important committees within the institution. Increasingly, the workload in these areas will fall on an overburdened full-time staff or on administrators. (Orem, 1989)

Regarding the qualification, two critical problems emerge from the previous problem. First, because the instructor works as a part-time teacher, he/she might lack experience and knowledge in teaching adult. Most of all, in reality, many ESL teachers work as high school or elementary school in daytime; therefore, their instruction methodology and philosophy is based on childhood pedagogy. Second, the ESL learners are adult learners who have diverse experiences and backgrounds in language, ethnicity identity, culture, and national identity etc. The instructor without experience in dealing with diversity might fall into a certain stereotypes or value judgments that ignore or prejudice immigrant adults’ experience and knowledge.
The first problem is remediable by increasing the budget to offer those teachers full-time positions. However, the qualification of an instructor is hard to guarantee merely by an academic certification in the relevant field. Staff meetings, workshops, and conferences might offer opportunities for ESL teachers to become more aware of their tasks and responsibilities within a whole context understanding.

Class size is another problem that influences the quality of instruction. In a language learning class, the class size will affect the quality of teaching and learning. According to the Adult and Vocational Annual Report of the Arizona Department of Education (1998), ideally the class size for an ESL class should be maintained at less than eighteen-to-one learner-to-teacher ration. However, due to budget limitations and the increase of immigrants, class size often are out of control, meaning that teachers in ESL class have to struggle to keep pace with the schedule and to notice the unique needs of every individual. Policy makers should be made awareness of this situation so as to raise the budget planned for the ESL program.

**Formulating evaluation plans for every stakeholder**

“Interests produce program”(Wilson and Cervero, 1996). The maintenance of the program relies on every stakeholder’s interest and expectation. So it is necessary to formulate a complete evaluation plan for every stakeholder. In an ESL program, the result of evaluation is aimed for organization/institute, program planner, educators, and learners to remedy their administration, program planning, instruction methodology, and learning. Moreover, the result of evaluation is also an examination of the policy.

From the perspective of each stakeholder, planned change is a necessary prerequisite to effective economic and social progress for people and communities. Educational changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes of people are necessary to achieve economic, environmental, and social change. (Boyle, 1981) Utilizing this viewpoint to see the need of evaluation of ESL program, the function of evaluation is that it serves as quality maintenance to ensure whether every interested party is satisfied.

**Coordinating facilities and resources**

In coordinating facilities and resources for ESL program, a program planner has to address the specific need of immigrants. In question part B, researchers of acculturation found that immigrants’ English competence is positively correlated to their economic status. Transportation problems and the access of information about ESL classes and other related resources could become barriers that impede immigrants’ participation. Though every stakeholder in the program shares the right to advocate their priority, in coordinating facilities and resources, the program planner should address and satisfy the needs of immigrant learners by offering a learning opportunity that is easily assessable.
Conclusion

“Interests are the motivations and purposes that lead people to act in certain ways when confronted with situations in which they must make a judgment about what to do or say.” (Wilson and Cervero, 1996) As adult educators, our interests and our concerns are to help adult learners to change their social conditions and to help adult learners to acquire the content and information necessary to live complete lives (Apps, 1973). Our mission in ESL program planning is based on our belief in adult education to assure adult immigrants have access to quality educational opportunities, through which immigrant adults acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for effective participation in society.

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362.
The notion of democracy occupies a privileged place in our society. Everyone believes democracy is desirable. Indeed, educators, policymakers, politicians, and community activists alike pursue dozens of agendas for change under the banner of furthering democracy. The nature of their underlying beliefs, however, differ. For some, a commitment to democracy is associated with liberal notions of freedom, while for others democracy is primarily about equality or equality of opportunity. For some, civil society is the key, while others place their hope for social change in healthy free markets. For some, good citizens in a democracy volunteer, while for others they take active parts in political processes by voting, forming committees, protesting, and working on campaigns. It is not surprising, then, that the growing number of educational programs that seek to further democracy by nurturing “good” citizens embody a similarly broad variety of goals and practices.

We titled this article "What Kind of Citizen?" to call attention to the spectrum of ideas about what good citizenship is and what good citizens do that are embodied by democratic education programs nationwide. We added the subtitle "The Politics of Education for Democracy" to underscore our belief that the narrow and often ideologically conservative conception of citizenship embedded in many current efforts at teaching for democracy reflects neither arbitrary choices nor pedagogical limitations but rather political choices with political consequences.

We spent two years studying ten programs that shared a basic set of priorities: they all hoped to teach good citizenship (through civics curriculum, service learning, and other means) by engaging students in analysis and action on community issues. But the different curricula we examined affected students in a variety of ways, not all of which were shared across programs. Moreover, the meanings leaders of these programs brought to notions of citizenship and to the term “democratic values” varied significantly. In our study, we were interested in these kinds of questions:

- What kind of citizen does each program aim to develop?
- How do students of these programs see themselves engaging in civic life?

In what follows, we detail three conceptions of citizenship that emerged from our analysis of both democratic theory and program goals and practices. We then describe two of the ten programs we studied and share data—both quantitative and qualitative—that illustrate the need for more discriminating analyses of programs that seek to nurture good citizens. We will be making the case that educators need to take into account the varied notions of citizenship reflected in different programs and that decisions we make in designing as well as researching these programs are, in fact, political.
Philosophers, historians and political scientists have long debated which conceptions of citizenship would best advance democracy (see, for example, Kaestle, 2000; Smith, 1997; Schudson, 1998). Indeed, as Connolly (1983) has argued, conceptions of democracy and citizenship have been and will likely always be debated – no single formulation will triumph. Even though the work of John Dewey has perhaps done the most to shape dialogues around education and democracy, scholars and practitioners have interpreted his ideas in multiple ways, so no single conception emerges. In large part, this diversity of perspectives occurs because the stakes are so high. Conceptions of “good citizenship” imply conceptions of the good society (Parker, 1996).

Currently, for example, as David Miller (1995) points out, both center-left and center-right thinkers emphasize citizenship (leading, in part, to the resurgence of interest in citizenship as a goal). At the same time, their reasons for focusing on citizenship and their definitions of what this focus implies differ markedly. Miller argues that conservatives’ interest in the concept stems from their emerging recognition that free market dynamics are insufficient to bring cohesion to society. In particular, they hope to promote both moral values and social responsibility by focusing on citizenship. They portray the “good citizen” as one who “sticks to the rules of the economic game while at the same time performing acts of public service such as charitable work in his or her local community” (433). Miller writes that the center-left, on the other hand, believe that emphasizing conceptions of good citizenship that embody a sense of shared identity will help provide a diverse population with a rationale for and commitment to “defend[ing] redistributive economic policies” (433). These are but two perspectives. The ways these two groups think about the importance of “good citizenship” in a democratic society also differs significantly from those who, often referencing Robert Putnam’s (2000; 1993) work, argue that promoting collective civic participation more generally will make both the democracy and the economy function more effectively. Needless to say, there are many other visions and each reflect somewhat different formulations of the desired connections between democracy and citizenship (see also Tarcov, 1996; Soder et al., 2001).

What Kind of Curriculum?
The diverse perspectives on citizenship and the significant implications of these differences are also quite clear when one examines dialogues that surround educational efforts to promote democratic aims. This vital intellectual discourse does not provide anything close to consensus. For example, Walter Parker (1996) describes three very different conceptions of citizen education for a democratic society: “traditional,” “progressive,” and “advanced.” He explains that traditionalists emphasize an understanding of how government works (how a bill becomes a law, for example) and traditional subject area content as well as commitments to core democratic values – such as freedom of speech or liberty in general (see, for example, Butts, 1988). Progressives share a similar commitment to this knowledge, but they embrace visions like “strong democracy” (Barber, 1984) and place a greater emphasis on civic participation in its numerous forms (see, for example, Newmann, 1975; Hannah, 1936). Finally, “advanced” citizenship, according to Parker, is one that builds on the progressive perspective but adds careful attention to inherent tensions between pluralism and assimilation or to what Charles Taylor, labels the “politics of recognition” (1994, cited in Parker).

Others, place a greater emphasis on the need for social critique and structural change. They argue that educators should promote what Jesse Goodman (1992) calls “critical

In striking contrast with these perspectives is the relatively conservative vision of citizenship education put forward by those who emphasize the connection between citizenship and character (Bennett, 1995; 1998; Bennett, Cribb, & Finn, 1999). Rather than viewing the problems in need of attention as structural, they emphasize problems in society caused by personal deficits. Schools, therefore, according to advocates of character education, should be charged not only with conveying facts about how the government works (as in traditional civic education) but also with teaching students to be honest, charitable, “…diligent, obedient, and patriotic” (Wynne, 1986, 6). This view aligns with the conservative view described by Miller above and harkens back to what Shudson (1998) describes as a vision of 'colonial citizenship' "built on social hierarchy and the traditions of public service, personal integrity, [and] charitable giving" (294).

To make matters more complicated, educators put forward a diverse array of strategies for achieving these goals (Hahn, 1998). For example, many emphasize the development of knowledge and skills. Marshaling considerable data, Neimi and Junn (1998) show that civics courses can teach important, relevant information and Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) show that such information is a fuel that enables multiple kinds of “good citizens” to be effective. Others promote community service and service learning, stressing the importance of actual experiences in the community to foster civic identities (Barber, 1992; Education Commission of the States, 2000; Youniss & Yates, 1997). In addition, many tout the importance of preparing students for democratic citizenship through schools that function as democratic communities themselves (Glickman, 1998; Power, 1988; Wade, 1995) while many have studied stubborn contradictions in these kinds of reforms (Oakes et al., 2000; Zeichner, 1991). These strategies, in turn, are neither mutually exclusive nor limited to a particular conception of the good citizen. Since the focus of our study came out of an initiative to explore democratic values in education, our discussion that follows is less about different strategies educators use to get to a particular democratic destination than about the varied conceptions of the destination itself, thus our focus: what kind of citizen?

**Three Kinds of Citizens**

Our framework aims to order some of these perspectives by grouping three differing kinds of answers to a question that is of central importance for both practitioners and scholars: *What kind of citizen do we need to support an effective democratic society?* In mapping the terrain that surrounds answers to this question, we found that three visions of “citizenship” were particularly helpful in making sense of the variation: the personally responsible citizen; the participatory citizen; and the justice oriented citizen (see Table 1).

These three categories were chosen because they satisfied our two main criteria: 1) they aligned well with prominent theoretical perspectives described above, and 2) they articulate ideas and ideals that resonate with practitioners (teachers, administrators, and curriculum designers). To that end, we consulted with both the 10 teams of educators whose work we studied and with

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1 For a description of a contemporary curriculum that reflects this emphasis, see Westheimer and Kahne (2002).
other leaders in the field in an effort to create categories and descriptions that aligned well with and communicated clearly their differing priorities.

A caveat: although these three categories were chosen to highlight important differences in the ways educators conceive of democratic educational aims, we do not mean to imply that a given program might not simultaneously further more than one of these agendas. These categories were not designed to be mutually exclusive. For instance, while a curriculum designed principally to promote personally responsible citizens will generally look quite different than one that focuses primarily on developing capacities and commitments for participatory citizenship, it is possible for a given curriculum to further both goals. Indeed, when discussing the Bayside Students for Justice curriculum below, we will highlight the ways it incorporated a concern for personal responsibility into its focus on broader issues of justice. At the same time that such overlap may occur, we believe that drawing attention to the distinctions between these visions of citizenship is important. It highlights the importance of examining the underlying goals and assumptions that drive different educational programs in design and practice.

The Personally Responsible Citizen

The personally responsible citizen acts responsibly in his/her community by, for example, picking up litter, giving blood, recycling, volunteering, and staying out of debt. This conception aligns well with the center-right perspective Miller outlined and the Colonial conception of the good citizen identified by Schudson. The personally responsible citizen works and pays taxes, obeys laws, and helps those in need during crises such as snowstorms or floods. The personally responsible citizen contributes to food or clothing drives when asked and volunteers to help those less fortunate whether in a soup kitchen or a senior center. S/he might contribute time, money, or both to charitable causes.

Both those in the character education movement and many of those who advocate community service would emphasize this individualistic vision of good citizenship. Programs that seek to develop personally responsible citizens hope to build character and personal responsibility by emphasizing honesty, integrity, self-discipline, and hard work (Horace Mann, 1838; and currently proponents such as Lickona, 1993; Wynne, 1986). The Character Counts! Coalition, for example, advocates teaching students to “treat others with respect…deal peacefully with anger…be considerate of the feelings of others…follow the Golden Rule…use good manners” and so on. They want students not to “threaten, hit, or hurt anyone [or use] bad language” (Character Counts!, 1996). Other programs that seek to develop personally responsible citizens hope to nurture compassion by engaging students in volunteer activities. As illustrated in the mission of the Points of Light Foundation, these programs hope to "help solve serious social problems" by “engag[ing] more people more effectively in volunteer service” (www.pointsoflight.org, April 2000).

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2 Our desire to respond to prominent educational theories related to democratic ideals and to develop a framework that practitioners would find both clear and meaningful led us to modify our categories in several ways. For example, we began this study emphasizing a distinction between “charity” and “change”. We had used this distinction in earlier writing (Kahne and Westheimer, 1996). Through the course of our work, however, it became clear that this distinction did not do enough to capture main currents in dialogues of practitioners and scholars regarding democratic educational goals and ways to achieve them. In addition, once our three categories were identified, we found that some of our rhetoric failed to clearly convey our intent. For example, we had initially titled our third category the “social reconstructionist.” As a result of dialogues with practitioners this was changed to the “social reformer” and finally to the “justice oriented citizen.”
The Participatory Citizen

Other educators see good citizens as those who actively participate in the civic affairs and the social life of the community at local, state, and national levels. We call this kind of citizen the participatory citizen. Proponents of this vision emphasize preparing students to engage in collective, community-based efforts. Educational programs designed to support the development of participatory citizens focus on teaching students about how government and other institutions (e.g., community-based organizations, churches) work and about the importance of planning and participating in organized efforts to care for those in need, for example, or in efforts to guide school policies. Skills associated with such collective endeavors—such as how to run a meeting—are also viewed as important (Newmann, 1975; also see Verba, at al., 1995 for an empirical analysis of the importance of such skills and activities). While the personally responsible citizen would contribute cans of food for the homeless, the participatory citizen might organize the food drive.

In the tradition of De Tocqueville, proponents of participatory citizenship argue that civic participation transcends particular community problems or opportunities. It also develops relationships, common understandings, trust, and collective commitments. This perspective, like Benjamin Barber’s notion of “strong democracy,” adopts a broad notion of the political sphere—one in which citizens “with competing but overlapping interests can contrive to live together communally” (1984, 118).

Similar themes have been emphasized throughout this nation’s history. Dewey (1916) put forward a vision of “Democracy as a Way of Life” and emphasized participation in collective endeavors. To support the efficacy of these collective efforts, he also emphasized commitments to communication, experimentation, and scientifically informed dialogues. Such commitments were also prevalent in the educational writings of the Nation’s founders. Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, and others viewed informed participation in civic life as a fundamental support for a democratic society and saw education as a chief means for furthering this goal (Pangle & Pangle, 1993).
From “What Kind of Citizen? The Politics of Educating for Democracy” by Joel Westheimer & Joseph Kahne

Table 1. Kinds of Citizens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Personally Responsible Citizen</th>
<th>Participatory Citizen</th>
<th>Justice Oriented Citizen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acts responsibly in his/her community</td>
<td>Active member of community organizations and/or improvement efforts</td>
<td>Critically assesses social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Works and pays taxes</td>
<td>Organizes community efforts to care for those in need, promote economic development, or clean up environment</td>
<td>Seeks out and addresses areas of injustice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obeys laws</td>
<td>Knows how government agencies work</td>
<td>Knows about social movements and how to effect systemic change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recycles, gives blood</td>
<td>Knows strategies for accomplishing collective tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteers to lend a hand in times of crisis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctions</td>
<td>Contributes food to a food drive</td>
<td>Helps to organize a food drive</td>
<td>Explores why people are hungry and acts to solve root causes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Assumptions</td>
<td>To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must have good character; they must be honest, responsible, and law-abiding members of the community</td>
<td>To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must actively participate and take leadership positions within established systems and community structures</td>
<td>To solve social problems and improve society, citizens must question and change established systems and structures when they reproduce patterns of injustice over time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

†For help in structuring this table, we are indebted to James Toole and a focus group of Minnesota teachers.
The Justice Oriented Citizen

Our third image of a good citizen is, perhaps, the perspective that is least commonly pursued. We refer to this view as the justice oriented citizen because advocates of these priorities use rhetoric and analysis that calls explicit attention to matters of injustice and to the importance of pursuing social justice. Although educators aiming to promote justice oriented citizens may well employ curriculum that makes political issues more explicit than those who emphasize personal responsibility or participatory citizenship, the focus on social change and social justice does not imply an emphasis on particular political perspectives, conclusions, or priorities. Rather, justice oriented citizens critically assess social, political, and economic structures and consider collective strategies for change that challenge injustice and, when possible, address root causes of problems. The vision of the justice oriented citizen shares with the vision of the participatory citizen an emphasis on collective work related to the life and issues of the community. Its emphasis on responding to social problems and to structural critique make it somewhat different, however. Building on perspectives like those of Freire, Shor, and Goodman noted earlier, educational programs that emphasize social change seek to prepare students to improve society by critically analyzing and addressing social issues and injustices. These programs are less likely to emphasize the need for charity and volunteerism as ends in themselves and more likely to teach about social movements and how to effect systemic change (See, for example, Issac, 1995; Bigelow and Diamond, 1988). While those who support the development of participatory citizens might emphasize developing students’ skills and commitments so that they could and would choose to organize the collection of clothing for members of the community who can’t afford it, those who seek to support the development of justice oriented citizens would emphasize helping students challenge structural causes of poverty and devise possible responses. In other words, if participatory citizens are organizing the food drive and personally responsible citizens are donating food, justice oriented citizens are asking why people are hungry and acting on what they discover. That today’s citizens are “bowling alone” (Putnam, 2000) would worry those focused on civic participation. Those who emphasize social justice, however, would worry more that when citizens do get together, they often fail to focus on or to critically analyze the social, economic, and political structures that generate problems.

The strongest proponents of this perspective were likely the Social Reconstructionists who gained their greatest hearing between the two world wars. Educators like Harold Rugg (1921) argued that the teaching of history in particular and the school curriculum more generally should be developed in ways that connect with important and enduring social problems. George Counts (1932) asked, “Dare the School Build a New Social Order?” He wanted educators to critically assess varied social and economic institutions while also “engag[ing] in the positive task of creating a new tradition in American life” (262). These educators emphasized that truly effective citizens needed opportunities to analyze and understand the interplay of social, economic, and political forces and to take part in projects through which they might develop skills and commitments for working collectively to improve society.

Conflicting Priorities

1 For a discussion of the distinction between pursuit of justice oriented citizenship and indoctrination, see Westheimer and Kahne, 2002.
2 Rugg is also sometimes referred to as a progressive experimentalist.
It follows that if program goals and practices aim to develop different kinds of citizens and thereby advance different visions of democracy, then program developers, educational researchers, and funders should be cognizant of and address these differences in their work. Yet conceptions of democratic values and citizenship and the idea of what a good citizen does continue to be narrowly construed.

Most commonly, emphasis is placed on personal responsibility—especially by the character education and community service movements, both of which are well-funded efforts to bring about these particular kinds of reforms. We find this emphasis an inadequate response to the challenges of educating a democratic citizenry. The limits of character education and of volunteerism and the conservative political orientation reflected in many of these efforts have been addressed elsewhere in some detail: critics note that the emphasis placed on individual character and behavior obscures the need for collective and often public sector initiatives; that this emphasis distracts attention from analysis of the causes of social problems and from systemic solutions; that volunteerism and kindness are put forward as ways of avoiding politics and policy (Barber, 1992; Boyte, 1991; Westheimer and Kahne, 2000; Kahne and Westheimer, 1996).

As a way of illustrating what we see as the limitations of personally responsible citizenship, recall the central tenets of the Character Counts! Coalition. Certainly honesty, integrity, and responsibility for one’s actions are valuable character traits for good neighbors and citizens. But, on their own, these traits are not inherently about democracy. To the extent that these traits detract from other important democratic priorities, they hinder rather than make possible democratic participation and change. For example, a focus on loyalty or obedience (common components of character education as well) work against the kind of critical reflection and action many assume are essential in a democratic society. Personal responsibility must be considered in a broader social context or it risks advancing mere civility or docility instead of democracy. Indeed, government leaders in a totalitarian regime would be as delighted as leaders in a democracy if their young citizens learned the lessons put forward by many of the proponents of personally responsible citizenship: don’t do drugs; show up to school; show up to work; give blood; help others during a flood; recycle; pick up litter; clean up a park; treat old people with respect. Chinese leader Jiang Zemin along with George W. Bush (and Al Gore, for that matter) would argue that these are desirable traits for people living in a community. But they are not about democratic citizenship.

Reinforcing these criticisms of an exclusive focus on personally responsible citizenship, a study commissioned by the National Association of Secretaries of State (1999) found that less than 32 percent of eligible voters between the ages of 18 and 24 voted in the 1996 presidential election (in 1972, the comparable number was 50 percent), but that a whopping 94 percent of those aged 15-24 believed that “the most important thing I can do as a citizen is to help others” (also see Sax, et al., 1999). In a very real sense, youth seem to be “learning” that citizenship does not require government, politics, or even collective endeavors.

Research and evaluation of educational programs also reflect this conservative and individualistic conception of personally responsible citizenship. Studies commonly ask participants, for example, whether they feel it is their responsibility to take care of those in need and whether problems of pollution and toxic waste are “everyone’s responsibility” or “not my responsibility.” They rarely ask questions about corporate responsibility—in what ways industries should be regulated, for example—or about ways government policies can advance or hinder solutions to social problems. Survey questions typically emphasize individual and
charitable acts. They ignore important influences like social movements and government policy on efforts to improve society. Educators who seek to teach personally responsible citizenship and researchers who study their programs focus on individual acts of compassion and kindness not on collective social action and the pursuit of social justice (Kahne, Westheimer, and Rogers, 2001).

In contrast to advocates of personally responsible citizenship, some political theorists, sociologists, historians, and educators have championed the importance of civic participation. In *Making Democracy Work* (1993), for example, Robert Putnam argues that participation in civic life and the development of “social capital” are essential. Harry Boyte and Nan Kari make similar arguments in their case for the "democratic promise of public work" (1996). They join a growing number of educators who want to teach the knowledge and skills necessary for civic engagement in community affairs. Advocates of participatory citizenship want students to be schooled in both the broad and minute challenges specific to democratic participation.

Placing social justice at the center of their arguments, other educators and theorists stress that critical analysis and liberatory pedagogy are essential for democratic education. Citizens, according to this view, need not only skills associated with participation but also those required to critically analyze and act on root causes of social problems and inequities. These actions include forms of participation that challenge existing power structures and focus on social change (see, for example, Shor, 1992 and Ayers et al., 1998).

Often, democratic theorists blend commitments to participation with commitments to justice. For example, Barber’s “strong democracy” focuses on forms of civic engagement that are “persuasively progressive and democratic…useful especially to those who are partisans of democratic struggle and social justice” (1998, 10). Similarly, Boyte and Kari (1996) invoke the populist tradition and emphasize the need to recognize the talent, intelligence, and capacities of ordinary people by engaging them in collective civic projects. They stress the importance of forms of civic participation that have historically been used to pursue social justice showcasing, for example, the work of civil rights activists who used nonviolent actions of civil disobedience.

From the standpoint of supporting the development of democratic communities, combining these commitments is rational. Developing commitments for civic participation and social justice as well as fostering the capacities to fulfill these commitments will support the development of a more democratic society. We should be wary of assuming that commitments to participatory citizenship and to justice necessarily align, however. These two orientations have potentially differing implications for educators. While pursuit of both goals may well support development of a more democratic society, it is not clear whether making advances along one dimension will necessarily further progress on the other. Do programs that support civic participation necessarily promote students’ capacities for critical analysis and social change? Conversely, does focusing on social justice provide the foundation for effective and committed civic actors? Or might such programs support the development of armchair activists who have articulate conversations over coffee, without ever acting? We now turn to these questions.

Our empirical investigation of this topic focuses on the subtle and not so subtle differences between programs that emphasize participation and those that emphasize justice. We do this for two reasons. First, due to shortcomings of the personally responsible model as a means of developing citizens, none of the programs funded by the foundation that supported our study emphasized this approach. Moreover, as noted earlier, a significant body of work already addresses the conflicts and limitations of equating personal responsibility with democratic citizenship.
Below, we describe two of the programs we studied to draw attention to the differences in their civic and democratic priorities and to the tensions these differences raise for educators. Both programs worked with classes of high school students and both initiatives were designed to support the development of democratic and civic understandings and commitments. But their goals and strategies differed. The first, which we call Madison County Youth in Public Service, aims to develop participatory citizens; the second, which we call Bayside Students for Justice, aims to develop justice-oriented citizens.

**Method**

**Sample**
This paper focuses on data from two of the ten programs studied as part of the Surdna Foundation’s Democratic Values Initiative. We highlight these two programs because, of the four high school programs in the sample, these two were the ones that most clearly aligned with the two perspectives we wished to investigate (participatory and justice oriented citizenship). The other two high school programs, while compelling for several reasons, embraced a broader and less specific democratic vision.

"Madison County Youth in Public Service" was located in a suburban/rural East Coast community outside a city of roughly 23,000 people. Two teachers were involved in this project, one from each of the county’s high schools. Although we were not able to collect reports on students’ ethnicity, teachers characterized the student population as almost entirely European American (with a few recent immigrants). An estimated three percent of the schools’ students are persons of color. Each year, the teachers worked with one of their government classes, so over two years, four classes participated. Students needed to request to participate in this version of the 12th grade government class, and teachers characterized participants as slightly better than average in terms of academic background. Students who enrolled in the Advanced Placement government course could not participate. More girls (59 percent) than boys (41 percent) participated.

"Bayside Students For Justice" was a curriculum developed as part of a 12th grade Social Studies course for low-achieving students in a comprehensive urban high school on the west coast. The student population is typical of west coast city schools: a total of 25 students took part in the program, and 21 of them completed both pre and post surveys; of those taking the survey, 13 were female (62%) and 8 male (38%), 8 were African American (38%), 1 was Caucasian (5%), 8 were Asian or Pacific Islander (38%), 1 was Latino (5%), and 3 identified themselves as “Other” (10%). The group tested roughly at national norms and was relatively low-income with 40 percent living in public housing (data provided by the instructor).

Our study employs a mixed-methods approach – it combines qualitative data from observations and interviews with quantitative analysis of pre/post survey data. Our rationale for adopting a mixed-methods approach reflects what Lois-ellin Datta (1997) has labeled “the pragmatic basis” for mixed-method designs. That is, we employed the combination of methods we felt were best suited to our inquiry – the methods that would best enable us to gain insight and to communicate what we learned to relevant audiences (also see Patton, 1988). In part, our attraction to mixing methods stems from recognition of the limits of each particular method of inquiry. By collecting data through interviews, observations, and surveys we are able to triangulate – to see if different forms of data lead us to similar or divergent findings (for a discussion of mixed-methods and triangulation seen Greene and Caracelli, 1997). In addition,
we employed differing methods to take advantage of the strengths of particular approaches as a means of gaining insight and of enabling effective communication of findings.

Procedures
At all 10 sites in our study, we collected four forms of data: observations, interviews, surveys, and documents prepared by program staff. Each year, our observations took place over a two to three day period in classrooms and at service sites. In some instances we were also able to observe formal public presentations by the participating students. These observations took place as close as possible to the end of the spring semester (or, in the case of programs that did not run throughout the year, we collected data as close as possible to the end of the program). Over the two years of the study, we interviewed 61 students from "Madison County" (close to all participating students, in groups of 3 or 4). We interviewed 23 students from "Bayside" (either individually or in groups of 2 to 3. We aimed for a cross section of students in terms of academic ability, enthusiasm for the program, and gender. We also interviewed at least three staff members for each program towards the end (April or May) of each year. Several staff members were also interviewed at the beginning of the first year. Interviews lasted between 20 and 45 minutes and all interviews were both taped and transcribed. Finally, we conducted pre and post surveys of all participating students in September and June. In the case of Madison County Youth In Public Service, we studied the same program for two years. During the second year, we also were able to administer pre and post surveys to two control classrooms. These classrooms were also twelfth grade government classrooms, served students of similar academic ability, and were taught by the same two teachers. Bayside’s program changed significantly after the first year of operation, and so it did not make sense to merge the data from years one and two. In this paper, we report data only from the second year.3 Nor was an appropriate control classroom available in the case of Bayside. To receive feedback and as a check on our interpretations, we shared analysis on our quantitative and qualitative findings with those who ran the programs.

Measures and Analysis
Survey items were selected in an effort to assess capacities and orientations related to aspects of the three kinds of citizenship we identified. As an indicator of personal responsibility we used a scale titled, “Personal responsibility to help others.” For example, it included items that measured students’ individual commitments to recycle.4 Our measure of participatory citizenship was titled “Commitment to community involvement.” We also had three different scales related to social justice. One scale assessed students’ interest in political affairs. Another scale assessed students’ use of “structural vs. individual explanations for poverty.” Students

3 For a discussion of the first year experience and findings see (authors, 2001).
4 Measures of commitment to community involvement, personal responsibility, volunteering, and vision, are adapted from the National Learning Through Service Survey developed by the Search Institute. Some of these measures, in turn were adapted from instruments developed by Conrad and Hedin. See Instruments and Scoring Guide of the Experiential Education Evaluation Project (St. Paul: Center for Youth Development and Research, University of Minnesota, 1981). Items related to Social Capital and Leadership Efficacy draw on a Leadership measure developed for the Community Service Leadership Workshop. Contact Jim Seiber, Issaquah School District 411, Issaquah, WA 98027. For a list of all items associated with each scale, please contact the authors.
were asked, for example, if “people were poor because they don’t work hard enough” or if they were poor because “there aren’t enough jobs that pay decent wages.” A third scale that assessed their desire to work for social justice (for example, one item in the scale read, “when thinking about what needs to be done, I often focus on the root causes of social problems”). Finally, we included several measures associated with students’ civic orientation and capacities: civic efficacy, vision, leadership efficacy, desire to volunteer in the future, knowledge/social capital for community development, following news stories, views on government responsibility for those in need, and employer responsibility for employees. Together, these measures helped us see differences across programs in democratic orientation and capacities that they promoted.

The interviews and observations were designed to help us clarify students’ beliefs regarding what it means to be a good citizen and ways features of the curriculum may have affected those perspectives. To further examine their relative commitments to personal responsibility, participatory citizenship, and social justice, we also asked participants to identify and discuss particular social issues that are important to them and to community members. We encouraged them to describe their perspective on the nature of these problems, their causes, and possible ways of responding. Did they emphasize individual morality, the need for civic participation, a focus on challenging structures or social inequities? Next we asked participants to describe any ways their participation in the given program might have altered their attitudes, knowledge, or skills in relation to these issues.

We asked similar questions of teachers. We wanted to understand their priorities, their conception of responsible and effective citizenship, their perspective on civic education, their strategies, and the ways these approaches did and did not appear to be working. During these interviews we encouraged students and instructors to talk about specific “critical incidents” so that we could better understand the curricular components that promoted varied forms of development. Our methods here were informed by critical incident interviewing techniques (see Flanagan, 1954).

The analysis of interview and observation data occurred throughout data collection as well as after data collection was complete and followed the process described by Strauss (1990) as the “constant comparative method.” This iterative process occurred through reflective and analytical memos between the researchers as well as the ongoing coding of field notes. In particular, we analyzed the interviews for recurring themes and patterns regarding student and teacher perceptions of how participation had affected students’ beliefs regarding citizenship and democratic values. We also asked teachers to reflect on our observations not only to test the accuracy of statements but also to re-examine perceptions and conclusions, drawing on their insider knowledge.

The descriptions that follow were captured from field notes and audio tapes. The quotations are verbatim. Names of schools, students, teachers, and geographical references are pseudonyms.

**Authors’ Predispositions**

Given the ideological nature of the content of our inquiry, it makes sense for us to be explicit about our own perspectives with regard to personally responsible citizenship, participatory citizenship, and justice oriented citizenship. We think each vision has merit. However, although we value character traits such as honesty, diligence, and compassion, for reasons already discussed, we find an exclusive emphasis on personally responsible citizenship
inadequate for advancing democracy. There is nothing inherently *democratic* about the traits of a personally responsible citizen.

From our perspective, the traits associated with both participatory and justice oriented citizens, on the other hand, are essential. Not every program needs to simultaneously address both sets of goals to be of value. But educators must attend to both sets of priorities if schools are to prepare citizens for democracy.

**Developing Participatory Citizens:**  
**Madison County Youth In Public Service**

Madison County Youth in Public Service is run by two social studies teachers in a rural East Coast community. The idea for Youth in Public Service came to one of the teachers after she had attended a speech by Benjamin Barber about the importance of engaging students in public life. These teachers (one a twenty-year veteran and the other a second year teacher) taught a condensed and intensified version of a standard government course during the first semester of the academic year. For the second semester, they developed a service learning curriculum. Students focused on particular topics related to their government curriculum as they worked in small teams on public service projects in their county's administrative offices. Their goal, as one teacher explained, “is to produce kids that are active citizens in our community…kids that won’t be afraid to go out and take part in their community…kids that understand that you have to have factual evidence to backup anything you say, anything you do.”

One group of students investigated whether citizens in their community wanted curbside trash pickup that was organized by the county. They conducted phone interviews, undertook a cost analysis, and examined charts of projected housing growth to estimate growth in trash and its cost and environmental implications. Other students identified jobs that prisoners incarcerated for fewer than 90 days could perform and analyzed the cost of similar programs in other localities; another group helped to develop a five-year plan for the fire and rescue department. For each project, students had to collect and analyze data, interact with government agencies, write a report, and present their findings in a formal hearing before the county’s Board of Supervisors.

The teachers of Youth in Public Service believed that placing students in internships where they worked on meaningful projects under the supervision of committed role models would:

- teach students how government worked;
- help students recognize the importance of being actively involved in community issues; and
- provide students with the skills required for effective and informed civic involvement.

Madison County Youth In Public Service was quite successful at achieving those goals. Our interviews, observations, and survey data all indicated that the experience working in the local community had a significant impact on students, especially as it compared to traditional class work. Janine's reaction was typical:

I learned more by doing this than I would just sitting in a classroom…. I mean, you really don't have hands-on activities in a classroom. But when you go out [to the public agencies] instead of
getting to read about problems, we see the problems. Instead of, you know, writing down a
solution, we make a solution.

Teresa, another student, said:

I kind of felt like everything that we had been taught in class, how the whole government
works….We got to learn it and we got to go out and experience it. We saw things happening in
front of us within the agency. I think it was more useful to put it together and see it happening
instead of just reading from a book and learning from it.

Not only did the activities in the community help to enliven classroom learning, but many of the
students' projects also tangibly affected the local community. Indeed, students talked about the
powerful impact of realizing that what they did would or could make a difference:

I thought it was just going be another project. You know, we do some research, it gets written
down and we leave and it gets put on the shelf somewhere. But in five years, this [curbside
recycling] is going to be a real thing….It's really going to happen.

I didn't expect [our work] to have such an impact….I mean, we've been in the newspaper, like, a
lot.

When asked about how the program influenced their thinking, most students talked about how
the experience deepened their belief in the importance of civic involvement.

I think if more people were aware of [ways they could participate] we wouldn't have as many
problems, because they would understand that…people do have an impact. But I think in our
community…people just don't seem to think that they will, so they don't even try.

By engaging students in projects in the community, Madison County Youth in Public Service
had significant success making learning relevant to students and conveying practical knowledge
about how to engage in community affairs. It developed in students the desire to participate in
civic affairs and a sense that they can make a difference in the lives of others.

Our survey results illustrate these effects. Student responses to questions asked on a five
point Likert scale indicated statistically significant (p<.05) changes in pre- to post-test raw scores
on several measures related to civic participation. As detailed in Table 2, students expressed a
greater belief that they had a personal responsibility to help others (+0.21), a greater belief that
government should help those in need (+0.24), a stronger vision of how to help others (+0.30), a
greater belief that they had knowledge regarding ways to support community development (+0.94, the greatest gain), a stronger sense that they could be effective leaders (+0.31), and an
increased sense of agency—a sense that they could make a difference in their communities
(+0.24). Students also reported that they had a commitment to community involvement (this
increase, +0.19, was marginally significant with p=.06).

The robust nature of these results became clearer during the second year because a
control group was also surveyed. This group had similar academic skills and were taught by the
same two teachers. We used t-tests to examine whether the gains noted above for the students
that participated in the Madison County program were different than those that occurred in the
control classrooms. In one case, for our measure of agency, we did not find a statistically significant difference (p=.22). Thus, while our data indicates statistically significant gains in agency for students who experienced the Madison County curriculum, it is not clear that these changes were different than those experienced by students in the control classrooms. However, for the other six measures on which Madison County students registered statistically significant gains, we did find a statistically significant (P. < .05) difference between the gains of the students in the Madison County program and those in the control classrooms. This, combined with the fact that the control group did not show statistically significant changes on any survey measures, adds to our confidence that the Madison County curriculum supported student development in ways consistent with a vision of participatory citizenship.

The Youth in Public Service program aimed to promote civic participation consistent with a vision of participatory citizenship, to link service to academic content, and to provide a meaningful research experience. We found the program to be notable for its success in these areas. But the program did not aim to foster the justice-oriented citizen’s understanding of structural or root causes of problems. While students did study controversial topics—requiring prisoners to work for small or no earnings, for example, or evaluating a detention center for juveniles—they did not critically examine them. They did not examine data regarding the relationship between race, social class, and prison sentencing or question whether increased incarceration has lowered crime rates. They did not examine whether incarcerating juveniles (as opposed to other possible policies) increases or decreases the likelihood of future criminal activity or investigate which groups lobby for tougher or less strict sentencing laws. Nor did they identify or discuss the diverse ideologies that inform political stances on such issues. Similarly, the group of students who were asked to examine their County’s tax structure to identify possible ways to finance needed school construction conducted a survey to find out residents’ preferences. They found out that 108 of 121 residents said “no” to the idea of a local income tax. These students did not discuss the reasons so many residents oppose a local income tax or examine issues of equity when considering alternative options for taxation.

Students said they learned a great deal about micro-politics such as how different government offices compete for funding, why collaboration between county offices is sometimes difficult, and how to make things happen. However, teachers avoided broader, ideologically-based political issues. One group of students, for example, conducted research for the County Voter Registrar. Their plan was to survey Department of Motor Vehicles’ customers to find out how the process could be improved. They struggled for more than a month to get permission from the DMV to conduct this survey. They were unable to make any progress until they contacted their state representative. Their request was then approved. As a student explained, “I basically learned about how our government works and who has pull.” While valuable, their exploration did not consider the ways interest group and party politics have influenced voter registration policies. Students were not asked why some groups opposed practices that would ease the voter registration process.

In general, we did not find evidence in student interviews, our observations, or our analysis of survey data that student projects and associated analysis examined ideological and political issues related to interest groups and the political process, the causes of poverty, different groups’ access to health care, or the fairness of different systems of taxation (even though two projects focused on issues related to health care and taxation). Students focused on particular programs and policies and aimed for technocratic/value neutral analysis.
Table 2. Madison County Youth In Public Service

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<tr>
<th>FACTORS (Chronbach’s Alpha pre, post)</th>
<th>SAMPLE</th>
<th>CHANGE</th>
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<th>POST-TEST</th>
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*p < .05; **p < .01
Table 3. Bayside Students for Justice

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*p < .05
Accordingly, survey data (see Table 2) did not indicate significant increases in measures related to justice oriented citizenship. The program did not appear to alter students’ stated interest in politics or political activity (voting, writing letters) or affect their stated commitment to work for justice. Nor did it alter their perspective on the degree to which structural factors are responsible for poverty.

These findings are consistent with the stated goals of those who run the program. When asked to list characteristics of a “good citizen,” program leaders cited qualities such as “honesty,” “civic participation,” “takes responsibility for others,” “becomes involved in solving public problems,” “active participant rather than passive,” “educated about democracy, makes decisions based on facts,” and “loyalty to God/Country.” To summarize, then, neither the goals of the teachers who developed and taught the Youth in Public Service curriculum nor the outcomes we measured included changes in students’ interest in politics, their perspective on structural roots of social problems or their commitment to social justice.

Developing Justice Oriented Citizens: Bayside Students For Justice

In a comprehensive urban high school on the West Coast, a group of teachers developed the Bayside Students for Justice curriculum as part of a multi-school program tying school-based academic work to educational experiences in the community. Inspired by the United Nations’ Declaration of Human Rights, these teachers implemented the Students for Justice curriculum with students diverse in ethnicity, language, and socioeconomic status, 40 percent of whom were living in public housing (see Methods section for complete demographics).

Bayside Students for Justice aimed to develop community activists. As one of the teachers for this program put it, “My goal is to turn students into activists [who are] empowered to focus on things that they care about in their own lives and to…show them avenues that they can use to achieve real social change, profound social change.” The program advanced a justice oriented vision of citizenship seeking to teach students how to address structural issues of inequity and injustice and bring about social change. A program developer explained that:

A good citizen actively organizes with other people [to address] causes of injustice and suffering…A good citizen understands the complexities of social issues, political issues, and economic issues, and how they are tied together, and is not always willing to accept the definition of a problem as presented to them by politicians.

Some students in Bayside Students for Justice studied whether SAT exams are biased and created a pamphlet pointing out the weaknesses of the test in adequately predicting future student success in college. They distributed the pamphlet to the school and surrounding community. Another group examined child labor practices worldwide and the social, political, and economic issues these practices raise. These students held school-wide forums on their findings in an effort to inform students—many of whom wear the designer clothes and shoes manufactured by the corporations that the group investigated—of the child labor practices of these corporations. They also called on school officials to be aware of the labor practices employed by manufacturers from which the school purchased T-shirts and athletic uniforms. Jason’s observation—typical of students interviewed about their experience—reflects the program’s emphasis on justice: “It’s amazing how all this exploitation is all around us and stuff; I mean we
are even wearing clothes and we don’t have [any] idea who makes them, how much they’re paid, or where they work.”

The teachers of the Bayside Students for Justice program believed that having students seek out and address areas of injustice in society would:

- sensitize students to recognize injustice;
- teach students to critically assess root causes of social problems; and
- provide students with an understanding of how to change established systems and structures.

The class that perhaps best illustrates Bayside Students for Justice's focus on critical analysis and social critique was the one led by Nadia Franciscono, one of the Bayside Students For Justice teachers. Ms. Franciscono, a veteran social studies teacher, had her students study a variety of manifestations of violence in their community, including domestic violence, child abuse, and gang violence. They arrived at this choice through a process in which the teacher had them "map" their communities (to gain a sense of what issues affected their own lives and the lives of others) and write about an issue that deeply angered or affected them. Using a weighted vote, students came up with violence as an issue they found both common across their lives and deplorable in its social consequences. Their work on this topic was combined with a domestic violence curriculum the teacher decided to use and a three-day retreat on violence prevention organized by the violence prevention group “Manalive/Womanalive.”

In class, they focused on the causes and consequences of violence in their lives and in their community. They began by sharing stories of their own experiences with violence (at home, in their neighborhood, at school). One student, for example, talked about a shooting incident she had witnessed several blocks from her house. Another wrote about his experience with domestic violence in his family. What made this teacher's approach relatively unique, however, was not the focus on violence; many teachers discuss violence with students in urban classrooms.1 What made the approach unique was the way this teacher engaged students in a discussion of social, political, and economic causes of violence.

In one classroom activity, students compared demographic data on per capita income broken down by neighborhood with data on the prevalence of violent crime also broken down by neighborhood. Students also explored different beliefs about violence expressed by politicians, writers, the media, and community groups and organizations. At virtually every stage of the curriculum, their own stories and incidents of violence reported in the media were examined in relation to broader social, political, and economic forces. Students used their own and their classmates’ experiences as a means for exploring ways to prevent violence and promote human rights and social justice. In another class session, for example, Ms. Franciscono asked “What does violence reveal about what else is going on and how can we fix it?” The class then created a reverse flow chart, starting at the bottom where an incident of domestic violence had occurred and connecting it to events and forces that might have provoked the violence. One student, Tameka, posited, “There must have been a lot of tension in the house.” The following exchange ensued:

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1 In fact, violence prevention lessons are often part of programs that might easily be characterized as developing personally responsible citizens rather than justice oriented citizens (see our section below on “How Might These Visions of Citizenship Overlap in Practice?”).
Teachers: And what might have led to that much tension?
Keri: Maybe Dad lost his job
Hector: And then he started drinking
Keri: Maybe there’s no money
Teacher: We can’t really know, right, but there could be a lot of pressure on these people right now.

Even before students started the research and service aspects of their projects, their teacher noted that, through the process of community mapping and choosing their topic, students had begun to think of themselves differently. They had begun to see themselves as part of a youth community with the potential to transform and improve society to make it more just. One student put it this way:

I can see through all of the veils that we wear. I know it and that is why I have so much anger…I ask why can’t it be another way? [How] can I make a difference? One person with good intentions in a bad world cannot make a difference. This is what the structure of our society makes me believe. Yet, I know that if I take the stand others will follow.

Another student said:

Before this experience, I thought school was just about passing this test or that test…Now I finally see what Malcolm X said: focusing on what matters can let you change yourself and then you can use your knowledge of history to make a better world.

Like their Madison County peers, the Bayside students roundly expressed a passion for the real-world connections to their academic studies. One Bayside Students for Justice class member reported that “I don’t like to learn just by reading because it goes in one ear and out the other; but in this class we can really make a difference [by] teaching others about [preventing] violence.” Others noted that: “This class was more exciting because it was more real,” “We were out there instead of just with our heads in the books,” and “I liked feeling like we could do something positive.” But these students appeared to take away different lessons as well.

Madison County students spoke extensively during interviews about the micro-politics and technical challenges associated with their projects. “I thought there was cooperation amongst the departments,” one Madison student told us, “but then the more we got into it the more I realized Person One is in charge of A, B, and C and Person Two is in charge of X, Y, and Z.” Students were frustrated that various departments did not work well together and with what they identified as “turf issues.” Many noted a poor working relationship between the County and the City. Students could also detail the skills they used (conducting polls, interviewing officials, making presentations, reading legislation) as well as the knowledge they gained about how government works. However, Madison students were not able to talk about how varied interests and power relationships or issues of race and social class might be related to the lack of consensus on priorities and the inability of these varied groups to work effectively together.

To a much greater degree, Bayside’s students talked about the need for forms of civic involvement that addressed issues of social justice and macro-level critique of society. When asked whether violence prevention programs like the Manalive retreat the students attended could eliminate violence, Desiree eagerly praised the program but then added:
There’s some things that you see out there, the struggle [when] people are trying to do their best but still they’re being brought down by society, and I think that’s very troublesome.

Other students also emphasized the need to address root causes of problems such as poverty, governmental neglect, and racism. After telling the class about his cousin who was arrested for carrying a weapon, Derrick wondered aloud to the class about how best to proceed:

It would be great if nobody had weapons but where does [the violence] begin? If the police are discriminating [and] if I can’t get a job…there’s going to be a lot of anger…The police aren’t going to act better because [I’m] trying to make my neighborhood better.”

And Tamika put it this way: “Lots of people want to be nice [but] if you don’t got food for your kids, how nice is that?”

Bayside Students for Justice also expressed skepticism of corporate-sponsored civic initiatives (Coca Cola’s sponsoring of Earth Day activities, for example, or Phillip Morris initiatives to “build our communities”). They felt that, in general, it was unwise to count on businesses to set the tone for improving communities or solving difficult problems that do not have “making money” or advertising as a goal.

In contrast to programs that seek to teach that "one person can make a difference," Bayside Students For Justice emphasized the need to address social problems collectively. In interviews and written assignments for class, students demonstrated their understanding of a collective rather than individual vision for effecting change. After listening in class to the song, "We Who Believe in Freedom" by Sweet Honey in the Rock, one young man wrote that "whether the struggle is big or small it should be everyone's responsibility together….Movements are not about me, they're about us." Another student observed that “In the classroom, it seems like everyone works as an individual to better themselves, but in this class, we’re working as a group to better everything around us.”

Survey results also reflected Bayside's emphasis on social change (see Table 3). Surveys of Bayside students revealed significant increases on items measuring interest in politics (+0.33) and structural explanations for poverty (+0.28) – scales on which Youth In Public Service students showed no change. Bayside students also indicated an increased sense of civic agency (+0.47) and an increased belief that government had a responsibility to help those in need (+0.29).

Unlike the Youth In Public Service students, however, Bayside students did not demonstrate much specific knowledge about particular community groups or about the technical challenges and possibilities associated with specific policies and initiatives.

While students who participated in Madison County Youth In Public Service reported statistically significant (p<.05) gains on survey items linked to leadership skills, vision, and knowledge related to civic participation (as well as in their sense of personal responsibility to help others), Bayside students did not.
The Political Importance of Recognizing Different Conceptions of Citizenship

Did Madison County Youth in Public Service do a better job than Bayside Students for Justice at educating citizens or was Bayside more effective? The goal of our paper is not to answer this question, but rather, to make clear that different democratic values were embedded in these efforts. Both programs were effective at achieving goals consistent with their respective underlying conceptions of citizenship. Yet our qualitative and quantitative data regarding these programs demonstrate important differences in impact. Youth in Public Service appeared to have a powerful impact on students’ capacities for and commitments to civic participation. Measures of students' sense of personal responsibility to help others, their vision of how to help, and their leadership efficacy show significant changes (see Table 4). Especially notable in both the survey and interview data was the change in students' confidence that they had the knowledge or "social capital" to make things happen in the community. Interviews, observations, and examples of student work all reinforced the survey finding of a dramatic (+.94) increase in students’ sense that they had knowledge of what resources were available to help with community projects and of how to contact and work effectively with community organizations to mobilize those resources. This confidence grew out of their involvement in substantive projects that required frequent interaction with multiple community actors and agencies.

We did not, however, see evidence that the Youth in Public Service program sparked interest in or conveyed knowledge of broad social critiques and systemic reform. Since such issues were not discussed as part of the curriculum, it is not surprising that students’ perspectives on the structural and individual causes of poverty, for example, did not change as a result of their participation. Nor did their interest in talking about or being involved in politics change.

In comparison, the Bayside Students For Justice curriculum appeared to emphasize social critique significantly more and technocratic skills associated with participation somewhat less. To the extent that Bayside students learned about participatory skills, they focused on extra-governmental social activism that challenged rather than reinforced existing norms (such as community organizing or protesting). For example, students were more likely at the end of the program than at the beginning to posit structural explanations for social problems (stating, for example, that the problem of poverty resulted from too few jobs that pay wages high enough to support a family rather than being a result of individuals being lazy and not wanting to work). They were more likely than their Madison County peers to be interested in and want to discuss politics and political issues, and they were more likely to seek redress of root causes of difficult social ills. As one student told us after several months in the Bayside program, “when the economy’s bad and people start blaming immigrants or whoever else they can blame, they’ve got to realize that there are big social, economic, and political issues tied together, that it’s not the immigrants, no it’s bigger than them.”

Evidence from observations, interviews, student work, and surveys of Bayside’s students did not, however, show an increase in students’ knowledge about particular community resources. Unlike their Madison County peers, Bayside students’ sense that they were effective community leaders (knowing how to run meetings, for example) remained unchanged. Nor was there any increase in students personal responsibility to help others (as opposed to their inclination for collective action for change that was frequently expressed during interviews).

The differing impact of these programs, of course, is likely due to factors that extend beyond the curriculum. As is generally the case in education, the broader social context helps to
shape both the choice of curricular approaches adopted by the teachers and the ways these 
approaches impact students. Bayside and Madison County are very different communities. It 
may well be that Bayside’s urban school environment exposed students to more forms of 
injustice and rhetoric related to injustice than Madison County students encountered in their 
largely homogeneous and middle-class community. This exposure, in turn, may have made it 
more likely that Bayside students would gravitate towards justice oriented themes than that 
students from Madison County would do so. Many other contextual factors may have mattered 
as well. Since the focus of our data collection emphasized curricular features and ways students’ 
experienced those features rather than on the broader social context, we cannot speak directly to 
these issues. Such issues are clearly worthy of extensive study.

Table 4. Educating for Different Kinds of Citizenship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTORS</th>
<th>MADISON CTY. YOUTH IN PUBLIC SERVICE</th>
<th>BAYSIDE STUDENTS FOR JUSTICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO HELP OTHERS</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE/SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td>.94**</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEADERSHIP EFFICACY</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTEREST IN POLITICS</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.33*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURAL/INDIVIDUAL EXPLANATIONS FOR POVERTY</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.28*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05;  **p < .01

The Politics of Pursuing Dual Goals

As noted earlier, those committed to educating social activists who practice justice 
oriented citizenship would ideally want to couple critical analysis of root causes of injustice with 
opportunities to develop capacities for participation. They want students to be able to both 
analyze and understand structural causes of deeply entrenched social problems and gain the 
skills and motivation to act by participating in local and national politics and community forums. 
But a focus on justice guarantees neither the motivation nor the capacity to participate in 
democratic change. Many—ourselves included—would applaud programs that manage to 
emphasize justice-oriented citizenship inextricably linked to a desire and capacity for 
participation. However, our findings indicate that the commitment to participation and the 
capacities it entails are not necessarily coupled with those related to the pursuit of social justice. 
Indeed, engaging in critical analysis does not necessarily foster the ability or the commitment to 
participate. The reverse is also true: students can learn to participate without engaging in critical
analysis that focuses on macro structural issues, the role of interest groups, power dynamics, and/or social justice. The ability to spot injustice is not organically linked to the inclination or the ability to take action.

The relative emphasis placed on these differing goals will likely depend on numerous factors. These include: the structure of the curriculum, the priorities of those designing and implementing the initiative, and the time available for such instruction. Moreover, the political constraints and value based priorities of both administrators and community members are also likely to affect the structure of the curriculum. The importance of community values was evident, for example, in the reaction of the Youth In Public Service Director to the social critique focus of Bayside Students For Justice and other groups (who met three times during our study to discuss their programs with each other). She told us: “If my superintendent or board heard me saying what you all are saying, I’d be fired.” As noted above, context matters.

Thus, answering the question "Which program better develops citizens?" necessarily engages the politics that surround varied conceptions of citizenship. The relationship between pedagogical choices and political positions is an important one. Those who view civic participation as of primary importance would likely view the Madison County Youth In Public Service program as extraordinarily effective. On the other hand, those who believe that the pursuit of social justice is of paramount importance might well be troubled that participants in the Madison County program did not talk about the need for structural change, about methods used historically to bring change about (those employed by various social movements, for example), or about social injustice. Educators who wish to teach students to support social change might therefore value the explicit attention and critiques students participating in Bayside Students for Justice developed. Bayside students learned ways that the interests of powerful groups are often supported by institutions and social structures. They also expanded their interest in following broader local and national political issues.

How Might These Visions of Citizenship Overlap in Practice?

To note the distinctions between personally responsible, participatory, and justice oriented citizenship is not to imply that multiple goals cannot be pursued simultaneously. In fact, some programs achieve varied combinations of these different priorities. Consider, for example, the goals of personal responsibility and social justice. Often, these two priorities conflict. For example, as noted earlier, a focus on the character traits “obedience” and “loyalty” work against the kind of critical reflection and action required of a justice oriented citizen. But personal responsibility and social justice are not always conflicting goals.

Making the Personal Political

The Bayside Students For Justice program, while placing primary emphasis on justice oriented citizenship, nonetheless incorporated a strong commitment to personal responsibility. The retreat that the Bayside Students For Justice attended on violence prevention taught students to work hard at controlling anger and stressed the need to always consider the consequences of their actions. Many character traits of a personally responsible citizen are important to Bayside’s enactment of the justice oriented citizen.

Unlike many programs that emphasize personal responsibility, however, Bayside’s approach does not merely exhort students to adopt certain values or behaviors such as self-control, honesty, punctuality, and caring for others; it also includes an implicit critique of the way society
is structured and examines the relationship between those structures and the way individuals behave. Approaches like those used by Nadia Franciscono challenge a conservative focus on personal responsibility without rejecting the basic premise that how children and adults behave is important. These approaches conclude that an individual’s character does matter, but that character can best be understood – and changed – through social analysis and attention to root causes of social injustices. The program seeks to enhance students’ understanding of society rather than simply giving students a list of values they are to embrace and behaviors they are magically to adopt.

Under the Manalive curriculum, Franciscono’s students discussed social, political, and economic factors that reinforce notions that men are superior to women and that they should enforce that superiority if it is challenged. As a result, some men turn violent and some women learn to tolerate their violence. Franciscono’s students talked about their own experiences with violence in order to better understand and develop strategies to change institutions, structures, or conditions that cause or encourage violent behavior.

Contrasting this curricular approach with the Character Counts! Coalition’s take on how to avoid violence, it becomes clear the ways Bayside Students for Justice incorporates important aspects of the personally responsible citizen into its emphasis on both understanding unjust social contexts and pursuing just ones. Recall that the Character Counts! coalition advocates respect, good manners, dealing peacefully with anger, and so on. Franciscono points out the limitations of this version of personal responsibility for teaching what she considers to be good citizenship by highlighting what she sees as the simplistic questions and answers that character education poses. She sees character educators making fallacious assumptions: “If I were individually responsible, the world would be a better place. There wouldn’t be racism. There wouldn’t be sexism…I think the authentic self is lovely [but] you get trained in these roles.”

If there is a lesson to be learned about personal responsibility for Franciscono, it is that the personal is political, that personal experiences and behavior both result from and are indicators of broader political forces. For Bayside Students For Justice, personal responsibility derives from studying and seeking to change these forces. With this recognition, Franciscono is able to structure curriculum that promotes citizens who are both personally responsible and justice oriented.

Conclusion
Proponents of the democratic purposes of education, especially advocates of participatory and justice oriented goals, frequently complain that they are fighting an uphill battle (Wood, 1993; Cuban & Shipps, 2000; Goodlad, 1979; Clark & Wasley, 1999). Traditional academic priorities and the current narrow emphasis on test scores crowd out other possibilities (Meier, 2000; Noddings, 1999; Ohanian, 2002). Given public schools’ central role in helping to shape citizens, this conflict clearly is worthy of attention.

But what kind of citizens are the schools trying to shape? As educators interested in schooling’s civic purposes, we maintain that it is not enough to argue that democratic values are as important as traditional academic priorities. We must also ask what kind of values. What political and ideological interests are embedded in varied conceptions of citizenship? Varied priorities—personal responsibility, participatory citizenship and justice oriented citizenship—embody significantly different beliefs regarding the capacities and commitments citizens need in order for democracy to flourish; and they carry significantly different implications for pedagogy,
curriculum, evaluation, and educational policy. Explicit attention to these issues can help educators focus and reflect more fully on developing and improving curriculum that promotes the democratic visions they endorse.

Our study of Madison County Youth in Public Service and of Bayside Students for Justice, for example, demonstrates the importance of distinguishing between programs that emphasize participatory citizenship and those that emphasize the pursuit of justice. While each program was effective in achieving its goals, qualitative and quantitative data regarding these programs demonstrated important differences in each program’s impact. The study indicates that programs that champion participation do not necessarily develop students’ abilities to analyze and critique root causes of social problems and visa versa. Although those committed to the democratic purposes of education may extol the value of linking priorities related to participation and justice, our study indicates that this outcome is not guaranteed. If both goals are priorities, those designing and implementing curriculum must give both explicit attention. Similarly, as noted earlier, related research has found that initiatives that support the development of personally responsible citizens may not be effective in increasing participation in local or national affairs. In fact, efforts to pursue some conceptions of personal responsibility can undermine efforts to prepare participatory injustice oriented citizens.

From the standpoint of research and evaluation, the implications for those interested in the development of democratic values and capacities are significant. Studies that fail to reflect the varied range of educational priorities in relation to democratic values and capacities will tell only part of the story. Moreover, there are not “right” answers or sometimes even “better” answers to many relevant questions. Knowing, for example, whether a student now places greater emphasis on recycling or on environmental regulation does not enable us to say that a program was effective. However, it does help us understand the program’s effects.

In acknowledging a lack of “right” answers, we do not mean to imply a sense of neutrality with respect to varied conceptions of democratic values. Instead, we mean to emphasize that politics and the interests of varied groups are often deeply embedded in the ways we conceptualize and study efforts to educate for democracy. Politics and the interests associated with the varied conceptions therefore require close attention. We can focus on whether a given curriculum changes students’ sense of personal responsibility, government responsibility, or employer responsibility, for example. If we ask only about personal responsibility (and if discussions of personal responsibility are disconnected from analysis of the social, economic, and political context), we may well be reinforcing a conservative and individualistic notion of citizenship, that of the *personally responsible citizen*. Yet this is the focus of many programs and of their associated evaluations. If citizenship also requires collective participation and critical analysis of social structures, then other lenses are needed as well.

Clearly, highlighting the political significance of different curricular choices must be done with care. Such dialogues may help clarify what is at stake, but raising these issues can also lead to dysfunctional stalemates and deepened differences rather than prompt more precise inquiry. Yet not all discord is problematic – when the stakes are high, conflict may be both likely and appropriate. Indeed, thoughtful analysis requires that those designing curriculum and those studying its impact are cognizant of and responsive to these important distinctions and their political implications. The choices we make have consequences for the kind of society we ultimately help to create.
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References


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In juxtaposition to the neo-liberal political agenda underlying many current public policies, the forces and tensions of globalization, and ever growing social needs and disparities (Mishra, 1999; Moffat et al., 1999; Teeple, 2000), both the left and the right are calling for government reform. Both groups seek improved government accountability and increased citizen participation in public policymaking. While citizen participation has a longstanding history in democratic systems, it enjoys renewed vitality today in response to the powerful and often conflicting trends mentioned above. In some cases, government initiated citizen participation strategies, such as consultation sessions and citizen advisory committees, are described as a means to realize citizen empowerment. This paper interrogates this claim.

In today’s sociopolitical context, responsive public policies are crucial if growing social and economic problems are to be effectively addressed. Such an outcome is theoretically possible when community empowerment occurs (Barr, 1995). This paper accepts this assertion and maintains that citizen participation and empowerment in public policymaking are necessary if community problems are to be resolved. To achieve this result, policymaking models must be reformed to be inclusive of all citizens and be truly committed to full participation (Pateman, 1970) and transformation (Woodford, 2003). However, is empowerment through participation possible in public policymaking today? Can participatory processes initiated by government realize empowerment outcomes?

In investigating these questions, this analysis explores the theoretical conceptualizations of empowerment and citizen participation. Particular attention is given to power and the system of representative government. To further understand the practice experiences of empowerment and participation, Newfoundland and Labrador’s Strategic Social Plan (http://www.gov.nf.ca/ssp/), namely the process that led to its creation is offered as a case example. These analyses though dealing with one province and one specific policy process provide insights for other governmental systems. Finally, this paper concludes with recommendations to be integrated into government initiated participation strategies if they are to move toward empowerment outcomes.

Empowerment
Empowerment continues as a buzzword today. It is used in many contexts, including government policymaking. Like other buzzwords, empowerment is rarely defined. The word is usually left vague in the policy domain, thus making its evaluation difficult (Perkins, 1995). While empowerment lacks a universally accepted definition and assumes various forms in different

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1 This paper was supported by a doctoral fellowship provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada.
2 The term public policymaking is used here to refer to both economic and social policymaking, which I see as being integrated rather than separate processes. Further, policymaking refers to the process of developing policy, the actual policies created as an output of the process, and their implementation.
contexts (Parsons, 1990; Rappaport, 1987; Staples, 1990), two definitions are offered here to provide conceptual clarity to the subsequent discussion.

Generally, empowerment is “a mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs” (Rappaport, 1987, p. 122) by “increasing personal, interpersonal, [and/]or political power” (Gutiérrez, 1994, p. 202). As such, empowerment is “a transforming process constructed through action” (Kieffer, 1984, p. 27), resulting in the ability to exercise interpersonal and group influence over matters affecting personal and community well-being (Rappaport, 1987). In the community setting, empowerment is “seen as the degree to which or process by which disadvantaged communities define their own needs and determine the response that is made to them” (Barr, 1995, pp. 122-123). The conceptual congruency between empowerment and citizen participation will become apparent below.

As seen in these definitions, empowerment theoretically links individual well-being with the larger social and political environments (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995), and thus is a suitable analytic framework for understanding participatory policymaking. Because of its emphasis on transformation, empowerment theory advocates social change and political action through individual and collective power for socially responsible ends (Gutiérrez et al., 1995). It also prioritizes inclusiveness, participation in one’s empowerment (Breton, 1994), dialogue, critical consciousness, the personal is political, and praxis (Parsons et al., 1998). In the community setting, citizen participation is central to empowerment (Lee 1999; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995). Despite the conceptual and theoretical clarity surrounding empowerment, contradictions and philosophical tensions characterize empowerment applied to governmental policymaking, which is elaborated upon below.

The centrality of power to empowerment is also apparent in the above definitions. Power in this context generally refers to “(1) the ability to influence the course of one’s life, (2) an expression of self-worth, (3) the capacity to work with others to control aspects of public life, and (4) access to the mechanisms of public decision making” (Parsons et al., 1998, p. 8). Therefore, in this theoretical framework, power is potentially liberating and democratizing, which is parallel to feminist views of power (Hyde, 1989). As such, power is not zero-sum (Barr, 1995) or a limited commodity to be held by some. Power rather is held by all parties, while latent in some cases (Checkoway, 1995), and through interactions with others power is shared and subsequently generated for liberatory purposes (Bricker-Jenkins & Hooyman, 1986; Pinderhughes, 1989; Solomon, 1976). Adopting this stance, definitions of empowerment that hold the construct of power as being something that is simply given to the powerless are disputed (Staples, 1990). This, however, appears to be the theoretical assumption underlying how participatory policymaking is practiced.

How does empowerment occur? Empowerment, as suggested above, evolves in the context of relationships. These relationships are characterized by dialogue with others leading to critical consciousness. Such relationships are a place for the sharing of power, which occurs as participants obtain a critical understanding of the social and political factors influencing their lives and begin to move toward action. Throughout the process, they begin to develop power at the personal, interpersonal, and environmental levels. Again, the critical question is: can citizen participation processes initiated by government be empowering?
Citizen Participation

Participation is viewed as a fundamental expression of one’s rights and responsibilities in democratic societies (Arnstein, 1969; Checkoway, 1995; Richardson, 1983) and is consistent with the principles of active citizenship (Turner, 1990 in Yuval-Davis, 1997). Citizen participation generally involves individuals taking part in “decision making in the institutions, programs, and environments that affect them” (Heller et al., 1984, p. 339), and it is founded on the “belief that problems in communities have solutions in communities, and that people should participate in matters that affect them” (Checkoway, 1995, p. 4). Citizen participation is consistent with the instrumental approach to policymaking, which suggests that “involving citizens in policymaking and implementation will make for the more effective achievement of policy goals” (Abers, 2000, p. 5, referencing Goulet). These viewpoints also underlie the political philosophy of participatory democracy, but their place and significance in liberal democracy is questionable (Cunningham, 2002; Pateman, 1970).3

Even though citizen participation has instrumental value to policymakers, participatory processes, particularly those initiated by government, are contested and viewed with suspicion by many (Smith, 1998). Some see them as “a clever ‘con,’ increasing the legitimacy of those making decisions without any concomitant diminution in their overall power” (Richardson, 1983, p. 5). Concerns that participation will mean co-optation and passive participation are also common. Additionally, “professional participants” can be created through participatory processes, thus excluding others or making them voiceless. This, I believe, is also a possible dynamic when individuals represent particular organizations, thus speaking on behalf of a number of potential voters, while others participate as private citizens.

Despite these issues, citizens can and do participate in policymaking. Some participate directly through personal or face-to-face interaction with policymakers, while others do so through indirect measures, such as voting (Richardson, 1983). Primary attention here is on direction participation initiated by government.

Sherry Arstein (1969) offers a classic conceptual model of citizen participation based on citizen power to influence decision-making. This framework is very useful for understanding government initiated participation in public policymaking. Her eight-rung ladder begins with forms of non-participation (i.e., manipulation and therapy), moves along to degrees of tokenism (i.e., informing, consultation, and placation), and concludes with degrees of citizen’s power (i.e., partnership, delegated power, and citizen control). Power in terms of the ability to affect decision-making is core to Arstein’s (1969) analysis. She maintains that only in circumstances of partnership, delegated power, and citizen control do citizens hold power – they are empowered.

Pateman (1970), also concerned with power in relation to decision-making, provides an alternate model. She distinguishes between full participation and partial participation. Full participation means that each member of a decision-making body has equal power to

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3 In terms of theories of democracy, the importance of participation is debated (see Pateman, 1970 for a thorough discussion). Citizen participation however is clearly consistent with participatory democracy, which holds citizen participation and control over community affairs central. In contrast, liberal democracy asserts that politics falls in the domain of government and interest group leaders (Cunningham, 2002), thus apathy among the body politic is valued (Pateman, 1970). For participatory democracy theorists, systems of representation are problematic, as are simple voting processes. Ideally, for these theorists, democracy involves “decision-making by discussion leading to consensus” (Cunningham, 2002, p. 123), which is similar to critical consciousness and dialogue within empowerment theory.
determine the outcome of decisions; whereas partial participation occurs when two or more parties influence one another, with the power to decide resting with one party. Current policymaking models used in our representative form of government generally reflect partial participation, and thus do not result in citizen power as espoused by Arstein (1969). Because responsibility for decision making rests with elected officials, citizens only hold formal decision making authority in policymaking and thus realize full participation when indirect strategies are used, such as referendums. This is infrequent as such processes are reserved for the most significant policy issues affecting a wide range of citizens. Under the representative form of government, political officials however receive citizen sanction for party platform when elected, and such mandates can change during time in office, yet party concern is given to ensuring re-election (i.e., the elected party avoids adopting policies that would be unpopular with the majority of voters).

In sum, although citizen involvement in policymaking is pragmatic and instrumental as those close to the problem are best to develop solutions and identify barriers to their implementation, participatory processes are highly complex and accompanied by inherent tensions. As will become obvious below, the situation becomes more complex and contradictory in nature when claims of empowerment are coupled with participation.

Empowering Participation: Ideals, Problems, and Tensions

Notwithstanding the inherent concerns with participatory practices discussed thus far, some policymakers have connected empowerment and participation. While theory suggests that the two are intricately linked (Lee, 1999; Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995), the relationship between the two is unclear (Itzhaky & York, 2000). Though it is beyond the scope of this analysis to determine the intent behind this application (for example, are policymakers simply applying a buzzword without understanding the underlying theory?) it is clear that many governments position participation as a means to empowerment. However, empowerment as an outcome is rarely achieved because participation remains partial. Additional problems and tensions are also apparent.

If participation is to be empowering, it must be meaningful. Meaningful participation facilitates the redistribution of power – power ideally meaning the ability and opportunity to make decisions leading to effective action, but it is traditionally understood in the participation discourse as the ability and opportunity to influence decision-making. When citizen participants have no degree of power over the outcome, participation is inauthentic, passive, and tokenistic (Arstein, 1969; Richardson, 1983; Smith, 1998). Moreover, pseudo-participation occurs when strategies are used to give the appearance of community or stakeholder involvement, but participants remain powerless and are “induced to agree to decisions already taken” (Richardson, 1983, p. 24). However, as explained below, the ability to affect decision-making is not the only concern. The relevance of the issue being considered and which members of the citizenry are involved are critical factors to examine when ‘power is shared.’

In the system of representative government, as discussed, participation in policymaking generally involves partial participation of the citizenry. Within partial participatory processes, power is treated as limited resource (i.e., one party has power to make decisions and the other does not), hence Michels’ iron law of oligarchy comes into effect. This hypothesis asserts, “the primary use of power is the maintenance of power” (Barr, 1995, p. 124); therefore, the powerful
will not generally transfer power to the powerless if it challenges or minimizes the power of the powerful: access to power is carefully controlled. The result: the powerful control the issues that are considered and who deliberates them (e.g., which stakeholder groups are invited to participate). In the circumstance of power as a limited resource, “the concept of empowerment is contradictory and difficult for the powerless to trust” (Barr, 1995, p. 128).

Furthermore, participatory strategies are not necessarily institutionalized (exception: some advisory committees dealing with specific issues are empowered through legislation). Concomitantly, decision-makers are not obligated to follow the recommendations given, even when there is legislation authorizing the group – the committee serves an advisory function and does not have policymaking authority.

Additionally, depending on the nature and scope of the policy item, decision-making authority may rest with Cabinet. Cabinet as a group is generally inaccessible. Cabinet also has to decide among numerous priorities, and because of the confidentiality of Cabinet deliberations, citizen participants are not privy to the range of issues before Cabinet and how decisions are reached. Therefore, the higher up the government hierarchy decision-making authority rests, the more removed citizens are, unless referendums and the like are undertaken.

In the context of empowerment and participation, Abers (2000) highlights several problems of participation. The following are relevant in public policy development. First, the structure, norms and culture of bureaucracy are “at odds with the flexibility necessary for participatory programs” (Abers, 2000, p. 8). Fung and Wright (1999) make a similar observation. They argue that liberal democracy and its expression through “representative democracy plus techno-bureaucratic administration” is harmful to empowerment goals (p. 1). Research has shown that depending on the structures put in place to facilitate participation and whether or not citizens possess the necessary competencies, participation can be disempowering. Specifically, in a study of participation based on two projects, one in the Province of Quebec and the other in Zambia, Brooks (1978) concluded that “while government avow their interest in participation, there are seldom structures for participation at the local level and if these are made available the structures of government and the channels of decision making are such that there is no opportunity for input from the local level of the populace” (p. 28). This is related to the techno-bureaucratic nature of democracy today (Fung & Wright, 1999). Similarly, Rich and Colleagues (1995), based on their study of a community’s experiences advocating for effective policy in response to a local environmental hazard, found that while government may establish participation mechanisms, these systems have to be within the reach of community members. That is, citizens have to possess the skills, knowledge, and self-confidence to engage in these processes. In other words, it was beyond the community’s capacity to either change the structures or build the needed capacity.

Second, related to the lack of institutionalization of participation, opposition from powerful groups, such as industry, who feel threatened when the community is advocating for policies that will challenge or cost the powerful stakeholder groups is a major barrier. For instance, industry may threaten to relocate operations to a more ‘industry-friendly’ locale when so-called ‘anti-industry’ policies are proposed. This is a significant issue given globalization (Woodford, in-review). Related to this barrier, Abers (2000) concludes, “institutionalizing participation in contexts where a small elite [such as industry] has traditionally controlled government requires transforming the state in ways that harm the powerful and benefit the powerless” (p. 11). Abers (2000) therefore stresses the need for bottom up social movements that will work to change the balance of power and assume participatory responsibilities.
Third, “even when government do give citizen forums real decisionmaking [sic] power, disadvantaged social groups are less likely to participate” (Abers, 2000, p. 28). Higgins (1999) reached the same conclusion in her ethnographic study of participation, empowerment and citizenship. Her investigation of citizen participation in health reform planning in British Columbia found that marginalized and disenfranchised groups, such as single mothers and Aboriginals, did not become involved in the planning process. These groups felt unwelcome and unsupported to participate (Higgins, 1999). Likewise, Lee (1999) argues that citizens have to see themselves as such in order to take part, and many oppressed groups do see themselves as such because of their acculturation into oppression.

Clearly, participation and empowerment encounter many dilemmas in practice. To make consultative processes more meaningful, Watt and Associates (2000) suggest the consulter be clear about the level of power that citizens will be given in the participation process. This is an uncommon, however. I support this idea, yet while attempting to be forthcoming about how stakeholder input would be utilized in the policy development process in my former policy practice, 4 a concern arose: would this lead to apathy among participants? Basically, Watt et al. (2000) assert that by notifying participants of the realities of the process, they will not establish unrealistic expectations, albeit, they may establish cynicism which may circumvent productive input and discussion. My earlier research into the empowerment of social workers in voluntary human service agencies nevertheless found that knowing the limits of one’s decision-making authority is a characteristic of empowering workplaces (Woodford, 1997).

Arstein (1969) argues that partnership is a much more effective route to empowerment than consultation or other lower forms of citizen participation. Watt et al. (2000) concur and suggest, “a move towards ‘partnerships’ is desired, since it is effective participation that empowers citizens” (p. 129). Partnership enables the participants “to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with traditional powerholders [sic]” (Arstein, 1969, p. 217). Therefore, it is necessary for empowering participation to involve extended engagement, open dialogue, and a continuous exchange of information among all stakeholders. It also requires mutual respect and a sense of trust, which can only be developed through prolonged engagement and attention to relationship and process issues. This clearly challenges common approaches to citizen participation. Furthermore, truly empowering participation occurs in systems that support full participation, such as co-governance or community governance models. In essence, partial participation will not facilitate true empowerment.

The preceding analysis is useful in critically understanding participation, and begins to highlight some of the tensions between the intent and practice of both empowerment and citizen participation. As observed by Abers: while citizen power and control is “what most democratic theorists have in mind when they propose that participation in public policy will empower those who are traditionally excluded from political decision making” it is sporadically realized (2000, p. 7).

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4 Prior to beginning PhD studies in 2001, I was employed as the Director of Policy and Strategic Planning, Department of Government Services and Lands, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.
Newfoundland and Labrador’s Strategic Social Plan

The Strategic Social Plan is a comprehensive social development plan for Newfoundland and Labrador. It specifies the Province’s vision, guiding values, and strategic priorities and directions in reference to social and economic development and wellbeing; it does not suggest particular changes to government programs and policies (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1998).

Government announced its intent to develop a strategic social plan in June of 1996. From the outset, government seemed determined to utilize a participatory planning process and followed up its announcement with the release of the Strategic Social Plan Consultation Paper. This document explains the purpose of a strategic social plan; outlines various changes occurring in the province and the challenges facing provincial services; and invites citizens to begin to think about principles for the future. In July of that year, the Social Policy Advisory Committee (SPAC) was appointed, which was responsible for conducting a public consultation or “dialogue” process to “consider key directions and broad approaches to social policy – to produce a “Road Map” to inform the strategic social plan (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1997, volume II, p. x). SPAC consisted of 14 volunteer part-time members and a full-time chairperson. The group “was instructed to prepare a report outlining the findings of the consultations and to make recommendations for Government to consider as it develops the strategic social plan” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 1997, volume II, p. ix, emphasis added).

SPAC supplemented government’s Strategic Social Plan Consultation Paper with its Strategic Social Plan Public Dialogue – Social Policy Workbook, which was intended to act a mechanism for SPAC and government to determine citizen’s views and ideas. Further, evaluation forms and “final thoughts” questionnaires were used at consultation sessions.

In its work, SPAC met with members of the general public, special interest groups, organizations, service providers, and government employees. Members participated in “private, one-on-one drop-in sessions; round-table discussions arranged with private individuals and representatives of a variety of groups; public meetings; gatherings organized by specific groups, such as women’s groups, literacy workers, social assistance recipients, rural development associations, child protection teams, family resource centres and consumer groups; and, formal presentations of briefs” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1997, p. x). SPAC members “participated in 100 meetings and met with more than 1,500 individuals from 130 communities. In addition, SPAC received more than 600 written briefs, workbooks, questionnaires, E-mails, letters and telephone comments” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1997, p. x).

Based on the consultation and dialogue process, and additional research, SPAC produced two public documents: What the People Said and Investing in People and Communities: A Framework for Social Development. As stated in the official plan, “government endorsed the Social Policy Advisory Committee’s recommendations in principle, and formed special ministerial and interdepartmental committees to develop the Strategic Social Plan” (1998, p. 4). The plan is currently being implemented by regional steering committees consisting of government representatives from the social (including education and health) and economic sectors. Plans to include representation from the voluntary sector are underway, and at least one regional planning group includes volunteer representation from the community. The Premier’s Council on Social Development, which replaces SPAC, is overseeing the plan’s overall implementation.
Before presenting an analysis of the above development process, it is worthwhile to briefly describe the context of the province at that time. In the mid-1990s, Newfoundland and Labrador faced significant challenges related to the cod moratorium (announced in 1993), economic recession, growing unemployment, increasing out-migration (especially among young persons), in-migration toward cities and towns, and decreasing birth rates and a ‘graying’ of the population. Further, changes in federal transfer agreements meant less provincial revenues. The creation of a social plan was meant to respond to these circumstances and proactively address future challenges. Fundamentally, given the significant threats and issues before the province, government needed to do things differently. That was the thinking of the day, and developing a comprehensive social plan was seen as a means to realize such an outcome.

Because of its financial state, government set out to get its finances in order. As SPAC was doing its consultative work, government was conducting an internal review of its programs and policies. Program Review ultimately aimed to improve government’s financial situation: “It [Program Review] will be a comprehensive look at every program of government, to determine if it meets the test of public interest, efficiency and affordability” (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 1996).

Analysis

Attention here is on the process surrounding the development of the Strategic Social Plan. I provide this assessment from an insider perspective. That is, I was an employee participant in the consultation process. Further, in my most recent employment I was involved with the Strategic Social Plan as all provincial departments were expected to use the plan as a guiding framework for policy and program development.

In assessing the process, I see many positive aspects. First, the Social Policy Advisory Committee consisted of 15 individuals with diverse backgrounds (e.g., Aboriginal person, social advocates, student) and interests (e.g., healthcare, education, persons with disabilities, violence against women). The chair was the head of the Community Services Council, an established social planning body. Other members came from voluntary organizations involved with social and economic issues, many of who were well-known, strong social advocates. One member was from academia and was also considered to be a strong social advocate. The diversity of its membership added credibility and facilitated trust in that members were generally seen to possess integrity and were committed to truly listening to participant’s ideas and comments. I assert that these are pivotal qualities to empowering participation. It was commonly known, however, that the chairperson was a strong supporter of the political party in power, yet she assumed the role of critic, at times.

Another asset of the process was that both public and government employees were consulted; both groups have an interest in public policy (Richardson, 1983). Also, as many of the planning documents note, consultation involved members of particular marginalized groups (such as social assistance recipients); albeit, it is impossible to confirm the exact profile of participants based on published reports. It is a concern, however, that while public sessions were held throughout the province, employee meetings were held in a select few locations.

In terms of the public input, another positive aspect is that input was welcomed via face-to-face meetings and in written format. Providing multiple means to give input is a strength in that those who struggle with literacy can provide verbal input. Nevertheless, to actively take part
in public meetings requires a certain amount of self-confidence and skill, which all persons may not possess. This speaks to the critical need for education and active citizenship.

The fact that two public documents were produced is also an asset. This provided a sense of transparency, but the reports are silent on how analysis proceeded, nor, as referenced, is a detailed profile of the consultation and dialogue participants given. Many at the time questioned if government approved the content of each report before publication. The Strategic Social Plan describes SPAC as an independent group; therefore, one is led to conclude the consultation reports are free from government ‘editing.’

In terms of power, it is evident that SPAC, being independent from government, had power, namely the power to make recommendations. Given the composition of the committee and the known social justice philosophies of certain members, it is assumed that government was willing to risk some recommendations challenging the status quo; but maybe that is what policymakers wanted at the time? As stated, this officially appointed advisory group was delegated power to make recommendations. Despite the delegation of this authority, this does not reflect Arstein’s (1969) delegated power because the group’s power was actually limited to making only recommendations; SPAC was not empowered to implement the corresponding changes. As suggested by Fung and Wright (1999), empowerment involves action. In this case, decision-making authority remained with elected officials – namely Cabinet. The implementation of the recommendations depended on government support, and then fell to the special ministerial and interdepartmental committees, a form of delegated power within the control of government. In brief, while SPAC had power, it was limited and essentially reflected the idea of consultation as described by Arstein (1969).

Turning to the citizen and employee participants, as described, they were provided opportunities to discuss issues with members of the Advisory Committee. They became consultants to the Committee. The Committee was not held responsible to integrate any or every element of input into the final report, however, given the reputations of individual members (particularly those aligned with social justice groups), it was assumed that the process was authentic. Consultations are a weak form of participation (Smith, 1998) and can be interpreted as tokenism (Arstein, 1969), but as stated, the publication of two public documents helped to reinforce the authenticity of the process. These reports can also facilitate accountability by government.

The nature of the consultation sessions was positive, as well. Specifically, each was a facilitated process and included members of the Advisory Committee. Based on my experience, the process was interactive, with Committee members entering into dialogue with participants as opposed to information flowing one way. This is a positive aspect and is in contrast to passive processes that resemble public relations strategies or “means of indoctrinating the public in the values and priorities of the planners [decision makers]” (Smith, 1998, p. 198).

Because of my secondary involvement in the Strategic Social Plan, I am not in the position to comment on the actual groups who were involved in the sessions, other than the breakdown of participants available in official documents. I assume that representatives of community groups (social and economic sector), community leaders (e.g., town/municipal mayor), industry stakeholders (especially those from the resource-based sector), and some persons directly impacted by government policies (e.g., employment generation, business tax, welfare recipients) took part, but again the reports do not provide a participant profile.

Although the focus here is the process of developing the plan, the final area to be considered is implementation. At this point, citizens are not directly involved in the
implementation of the Strategic Social Plan, with the exception of the Avalon Region, where volunteers have been recruited. It is my understanding, however, that representatives from the voluntary sector will be invited to join implementation committees in the near future. This is important if the full vision of the Strategic Social Plan is to be realized.

To conclude this case analysis, I turn to the question: was citizen participation in the strategic social plan process empowering? Albeit, there were positive elements to the process, namely efforts to (a) involve diverse stakeholders, including disenfranchised groups, (b) provide multiple ways to give input, and (c) create spaces for dialogue. Additionally, SPAC membership was diverse and summary reports were produced. Despite these strengths, government ultimately continued to hold power throughout the process since SPAC was ‘empowered’ only to make recommendations. Action is central to empowerment (Fung & Wright, 1999).

In this case however, I contend that government was not likely to reject SPAC’s recommendations. If it was to reject SPAC’s report, government would face a public relations nightmare (which it would not want to do given it was a new government). Basically, the government-appointed Advisory Committee held power to influence policymakers because of the significance given to the plan by elected officials and the synergy among community groups involved in its development. Albeit, SPAC could not directly effect change. Concerning the participants in the various consultation processes, they were not given power in the process, as Pateman’s (1970) full participation was not realized.

Where from Here
In theory, participation is “about increasing citizen control over the state and improving the capacity of ordinary people to understand and decide about issues affecting their lives more generally” (Abers, 2000, p. 5). Empowerment in the context of government-initiated citizen participation can be conceptualized as a process in which community members and/or groups are provided with real, meaningful opportunities to affect the decisions that impact them as individuals and as a collective community. By doing so, groups that are traditionally not part of the politic can influence decisions affecting them (Abers, 2000). But as described above, this assumption is not necessarily reality. Why is this? In brief, the nature of representative government and policymaking does not support full empowering participation.

This paper has provided an analysis of empowerment and citizen participation, and addressed the question if the two can be realized within governmental policy development. In the case example given, members of the government-appointed SPAC were ‘empowered’ to make recommendations to government based on an extensive public and stakeholder consultation and dialogue process. It is logical to conclude that such processes are tokenistic and passive. Under empowerment and citizen participation, if citizens are to assume an active role in policymaking, they must be given real power to make decisions leading to action. Clearly within an empowerment perspective, citizen participation involves the redistribution of power, which would require a complete reform of how many governments understand and practice citizen participation.

I contend that empowering participatory processes need to adopt a dialogic approach in which citizens and policymakers enter into an open, facilitated analysis of the issues and all parties engage in Pateman’s (1970) full participation. To do so means that current participatory processes need to be re-envisioned. Ideally, participatory processes will become legislated and institutionalized with appropriate administrative supports put in
place, and decision-making processes within them made transparent. This however, is in
tension with the current practices of representative government. Nevertheless, if a
governmental body is truly committed to participatory, empowering processes,
accountability mechanisms need to be established in which decision-making processes are
documented and become part of the public record. In addition, based on the principles of
empowerment, it is important to ensure that oppressed and marginalized groups are
enabled to participate in these processes. It is critical, therefore, that supports be
established (e.g., childcare, transportation, popular education sessions versus formal
meetings) to encourage participation by members of these groups.

The approach to participation that I begin to envision here essentially falls under co-
governance or participatory model of democracy in which citizens hold decision-making
authority in policymaking. This conceptualization of participation operationalizes
empowerment notions of power and is founded on the idea of collective responsibility for
decisions. Within this model, conflict is a concern. While it is beyond the scope of this
current analysis to explore conflict in detail, I maintain that conflict must be seen as
normal and productive, thus welcomed in any deliberatory process. Connected to conflict
is self interest: “if mobilizing local self-interest is seen as the primary mechanism for
empowerment [and participation], the consequence may simply reinforce territorial and
interest group inequalities and increase oppression of minorities” (Barr, 1995, p. 123).
Hence, it is essential that participatory structures to mediate differences be established.

Clearly, to move in the direction of citizen empowerment, participation needs to be re-
envisioned conceptually and in practice. With a concerted effort, nevertheless, policymaking can
become a shared responsibility, and therefore, the philosophy of ‘community problems have
community solutions’ can be realized.

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