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While the phrase deliberative pedagogy has been used only sparingly and in distinct ways in recent years (e.g. Dedrick, Grattan, & Dienstfrey, 2008; Doherty, 2012; Longo, 2013; Roth, 2008a, 2008b), the concept is situated in a growing literature that explores the experiences, possibilities, and promise of integrating deliberative democracy into educational settings, and specifically into higher education (Shaffer, 2014b; Thomas, 2010; Thomas & Carcasson, 2010; Thomas & Levine, 2011). It is not surprising that deliberation has often been aligned with the idea of educational settings as centers of collective learning, rather than as venues for transferring information from teacher to student—what Paulo Freire (2000) referred to as the “banking” model of education. But for higher education, deliberation has long-established but often-forgotten roots that trace to before the beginning of the twentieth century.

In both classroom and community settings, democratic—and often deliberative—practices have shaped teaching and learning in the United States since before the country’s inception, although these practices has often been overshadowed by a paradigmatic approach that positions teachers as disseminators of knowledge and students as passive recipients of their expertise. This chapter introduces some of the historical antecedents to today’s conceptualization of deliberation in higher education and community settings in order to provide context for current efforts. It does not explore the broader historical development of deliberative democracy (e.g. Gastil & Keith, 2005; Gustafson, 2011), although it is important to look to what preceded
the “deliberative turn” that emerged in political theory in recent decades in order to understand what helped to shape and inspire this turn (Barker, McAfee, & McIvor, 2012; Dryzek, 2000). While deliberative practices have historical roots in diverse cultural contexts (e.g. Marin, 2006), this chapter focuses on the development of deliberative pedagogy in the United States. A focused chapter on the historical development of the intersection of democracy and education through deliberation in a single context helps to illuminate the diverse wells from which today’s scholars and practitioners draw insight and inspiration—knowingly or not. A global survey of the historical development of deliberative pedagogy is something worthwhile to pursue, but it is beyond the scope of this chapter and project, more broadly.

In exploring deliberation in and through higher education, we must situate deliberative approaches to teaching and learning within their social and political settings. While most of this volume describes contemporary experiments with deliberative pedagogy, this chapter focuses on some of the earlier manifestations of deliberation and group discussion in educational settings. The chapter begins with an outline of the historical roots of deliberative pedagogy set down before the 1800s, continues with an overview of key initiatives from adult education in the 19th century, and then moves to a detailed account of the open forum movement and the spread of public forums in the first half of the 20th century. The second half of the chapter examines internal university dynamics as they relate to the teaching and research of group discussion, as well as a formative deliberative democracy initiative realized through a partnership between the federal government and land-grant universities. This discussion focuses most closely on the 1910s through the 1940s because the robust efforts of that era to democratize communities and institutions offer us insight and perspective today.
Historical Roots: Town Meetings, Adult Education, and Public Forums

Early Beginnings

The ideas of deliberative dialogue, public forums, and participatory democracy trace to the earliest days of European settlement of what would become the United States of America. In colonial America and later, deliberation was practiced in informal gatherings and town meetings, as well as in state capitals, and Congress, drawing on classic republican thought (Bailyn, 1967; Gustafson, 2011, pp. 15-29; Pangle, 1988). For example, in 1727 Benjamin Franklin founded the Junto, a “club for the discussion of scientific and other subjects,” a significant milestone for adult education in this early American period (Cartwright, 1945, p. 284). While Philadelphia’s urban population experienced the Junto—or as one scholar put it, “Ben Franklin’s Friday night discussion group”—rural communities also embraced the idea of discussion-based adult education as a means of educating people about the challenges of the day (Lang, 1975, p. 43).

In New England, town meetings had already been established before the 18th century. David Mathews (1988) calls the birth of the town meeting a story that “begins in 1633, not 1787”; this approach to local governance and problem solving grew out of the public issue of “how to decide” the best ways to protect public green spaces in the face of competing interests (Mathews, 1988, p. 1). While the New England town meeting did not survive as a principal means of governing, it shaped political discourse and, importantly, provided a way to think about and conceptualize education’s role in a democratic society. As Morse A. Cartwright (1945) put it, “the New England town meeting [was] a truly democratic educational agency for adults” (Cartwright, 1945, p. 284).
The intersection of adult education and democracy continued throughout the 1800s through efforts such as lyceums, the Chautauqua Institution (and the entire Chautauqua movement, described in the following section), and public lectures. To many, the New England town meeting of the 17th century, which “formed the initial adult education venture” in North America, was viewed as an ideal that was often evoked for engaging communities around important social and political issues (Cartwright, 1935, p. 8). This ideal has remained, as William Keith has noted, even though we know little about what actually went on at these meetings as (Keith, 2007, p. 222).

Lyceums and Chautauqua

The first lyceum, or early form of organized adult education, was in Massachusetts in 1826. It was formed as a voluntary association of farmers and mechanics “for the purpose of self-culture, community instruction and mutual discussion of common public interests” (Cartwright, 1935, p. 9). Lyceums were called by one commentator a “particularly American institution” that were first formed as “associations of local townsfolk for the mutual study and discussion of educational matters and public affairs” (Frank, 1919, pp. 405, 407). By 1839, more than 3,000 town lyceums were in existence. With the example of the lyceum movement as a model, Bishop John J. Vincent and colleagues established what would become the Chautauqua Institution, expanding a Sunday school association into a general adult education venture that resulted in the development of commercial and lyceum forums that expanded across the country. Chautauqua and the movement it spawned retained a strong religious feel, including “revival preaching, ...sing-alongs, [and] devotional reading,” although they outgrew their “Sunday-school mission” and the “mix of education and worship became weighted toward education” (Keith,
While not directly connected with policy decisions, the Chautauqua movement spurred informed discussion, reaching its crest of popularity in the late 19th and early 20th century (Lyman, 1915, p. 3; Orchard, 1923). Former President Theodore Roosevelt was quoted as saying that Chautauqua was “the most American thing in America” (Carlisle, 2009, p. 127). While the Chautauqua Institution remains active with programming continuing today in rural Western New York, the Chautauqua movement lost its prominence because of the rise of the automobile and increased mobility as well as the widespread use of radio for leisure and entertainment.

Adult education played a pivotal role in meeting the developing needs and interests of citizens as they sought to better understand issues they faced and, more broadly, to become enlightened about the world around them. An important transformation was taking place in the United States. Growing urban centers were overtaking the agrarian roots of America’s past. The 19th century had been a period of massive change during which “geographic, political, social, economic, and technological developments had affected every American citizen and every aspect of life” (Burt, 2004, p. 135). Between 1880 and 1910, the number of Americans living in cities rose from 15 million to 45 million (Gould, 1974, p. 3). Developments in transportation, communication, medicine, and industry were lauded as “the positive and inevitable progress of civilization” (Burt, 2004, p. 136). The modern world was changing how people lived, interacted, and learned. The need for an educated populace was even more critical for the country’s continued development. The growth of venues for public forums helped to meet this aspiration.

Public Forums: Teaching Democracy through Civic Engagement
In the midst of the technological and scientific transformations at the beginning of the 20th century, people were drawn to and demanding greater forms of democratic participation in their communities through both formal and informal channels. Local urban governments made efforts to establish ongoing and robust opportunities for men and women to deliberate with one another about various public issues (Mattson, 1998). Similarly, civic organizations cultivated spaces for deliberation. As John Gastil and William Keith (2005) put it, “Settlement houses and community centers sponsored debate clubs and forum series, and granges provided places where farmers could discuss the issues of the day” (Gastil & Keith, 2005, p. 10). The “open” forum movement (in contrast with private clubs) built on the model established by Chautauqua and the lyceum movement by having speakers present material to be followed up by discussion among attendees. These discussions did not directly affect legislation or policies, “but they embodied the spirit of deliberation in a public setting” (Gastil & Keith, 2005, p. 11).

One of the most popular examples of the open forum movement was the public lecture series, pioneered by the Ford Hall Forum in Boston, and the forums that developed across the United States in the style of talks that moved away from the religious topics of the Chautauqua and lyceum forums to more “intellectual” and “civic” topics. Arthur S. Meyers (2012) refers to the open forum movement as an “innovative direction in community learning” that was a “decentralized, locally planned, non-partisan, non-sectarian assembly of citizens discussing matters of public interest, always under the guidance of leaders but with full audience participation” (pp. 3-4). Because they addressed a broader slate of topics, open forums brought together diverse audiences comprising “recent immigrants, long-time residents, working people, union leaders, and business owners” (Meyers, 2012, pp. 4, 3, 6). As Maureen A. Flanagan (2007)

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1 See also (Carson, 1990; Levine, 2000; Longo, 2005).
writes, open forums were necessary because a “truer democracy requires places where ordinary people could gather together and discuss the problems of society, and such places were in short supply” (2007, p. 39).

Over the following decades, the use of forums would spread across the United States. As Rollo Lyman wrote in 1915, “The forum must find its place in the useful, the practical, the tool aspects of the educative process” (p. 5). Forums were, in his view, settings in which people could form “sound judgments on accurate data,” and not simply about a single issue: “It is the habit of forming sound judgment which we desire to foster” (Lyman, 1915, pp. 5, 6).

One of the most prominent examples of public forums being used for citizen engagement came about through the work of John W. Studebaker, an educator who became the U. S. Commissioner of Education from 1934 to 1948. Studebaker’s work led to the use of public schools as sites for forum-based adult education. In *The American Way* (1935a), Studebaker argued that the most important problem facing the United States was “to save the democracy of free learning and to make possible, through it, intelligent choices at the happy medium between the old democracy of rugged economic individualism and the new democracy of cooperative effort” (Studebaker, 1935a, p. 7). He observed that “our common problems have become so complex that the ordinary citizen begins to despair of his ability to understand them—and more important still, of his ability to retain, and adequately to discharge, responsibility for their solution,” noting that a possible solution was the use of public forums as a means of preserving democratic ideals (Studebaker, 1935a, p. 14). He believed that the interest in public discussion expressed through the forum movement was “neither a passing fad nor a temporary excrescence of political or economic unrest” (Studebaker, 1937, p. 393).
As an advocate for forums in urban neighborhoods, Studebaker championed group discussion because he believed that “good democratic action” was foundational to the capacity to engage “all issues and problems which affect our group life” (Studebaker, 1935b). His efforts to revive neighborhood discussions, as they were experienced in the previous decades, received national press coverage, but financial support was limited (Hill, 1935). Importantly, those who participated in these forums represented a highly educated demographic. Studebaker noted that “Almost 55 percent of the adults with more years of schooling than are required to complete college attended the forums” (Studebaker, 1935a, p. 104). He also found a similar issue to current challenges of reaching diverse audiences: “It is apparent that a much larger proportion of persons living in the better residential neighborhoods attended forums than was the case in inferior neighborhoods. In other words, forum attendance and socioeconomic status as indicated by residential areas are directly related” (Studebaker, 1935a, p. 105).

While superintendent of the Des Moines, Iowa, public school system, Studebaker used public schools as sites for forums where citizens could learn about problems through discussion with others. The response to these forums was hugely positive: in their first year (January 1933 to January 1934), 13,404 individuals attended, and in the second year attendance rose to 70,000 (Hilton, 1982, p. 5).

The interest in public forums continued and Studebaker, along with Chester Williams in 1939, published a handbook for educators and civic leaders interested in organizing local forums (Studebaker & Williams, 1939). Studebaker eventually secured funding to establish 10 federal forum demonstration sites—in cities and counties from Portland, Oregon, to Monongalia County,
West Virginia—beginning in 1936 and lasting until 1941. Building on the forums in Des Moines, the Federal Forum Project would expand into a national system of forums “touch[ing] the lives of millions of Americans” (Keith, 2007, p. 277).

The project established Cooperative Forum Centers and Forum Counseling Programs in partnership with state universities and departments of education. During a period when agricultural extension education was the primary vehicle for universities engaging citizens, the Federal Forum Project similarly tapped audiences that were otherwise disconnected from higher education. As Christopher Loss (2012) notes, however, the forum movement never achieved the hoped-for status of a “training ground for national citizenship” (p. 83). Nevertheless, it did encourage an estimated 2.5 million citizens who participated in one of the project’s 23,000 discussion sessions between 1936 and 1941 to think of citizenship as more than voting. As Loss explains further, the forum program was “eventually eclipsed by wartime exigencies and the availability of new mass communications” (Loss, 2012, pp. 83, 85). The emergence of television and the broadening reach of radio reduced the need for and interest in face-to-face communication.

Higher Education and Deliberative Pedagogy

Disciplines and Deliberation

In addition to hosting public forums, higher education has served as a hub for the intersection for education and democracy in a variety of ways. In the last quarter of the 19th century, disciplinary specialization took hold of American higher education, leading to the professionalization of fields of study and corresponding academic societies and journals. The
Modern Language Association, the American Historical Association, and the American Psychological Association started in 1883, 1884, 1892, respectively (Berelson, 1960; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006, pp. 25-26). In similar fashion, in 1914 a “group of ten members of the Public Speaking Section of the National Council of Teachers of English met for a day…and so founded their own professional education, the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking (NAATPS)” (Keith, 2008, p. 241).³ The emergence of a professional association put the academic field of speech communication on par with other disciplines, carving out its place and identity within the academy (Gehrke & Keith, 2015, pp. 3-7). Within a number of years the discipline saw the emergence of courses based on discussion rather than only debate, focusing on “cooperative small group problem solving” sometimes as an outgrowth from and sometimes as an alternative to courses in debate (Gastil & Keith, 2005, p. 11).⁴ Parallel to the expansion of group discussion in public and adult education settings, colleges and universities looked at their own institutions as sites ripe for teaching and research focused on group discussion and pedagogy rather than concentrating exclusively on debate as a way of addressing issues.⁵

Much of this shift to discussion was based on the philosophical and pedagogical writings of John Dewey. In 1897, Dewey published My Pedagogic Creed, a brief 17-page document outlining his beliefs about education, in which he states that “all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the [human] race” (Dewey, 1897, p. 3). Throughout his body of work, Dewey defines education as the opportunity for discovery and

³ For a more thorough account of the founding of what would become the National Communication Association, see (Gehrke & Keith, 2015).
⁴ Examples of texts from the period include (Fansler, 1938a, 1938b; Judson & Judson, 1938; McBurney & Hance, 1939; McCabe, 1938; Pellegrini & Stirling, 1936; Sanderson, 1938). The connection between group communication and democracy continued throughout the 20th century; see (Barge, 2002, p. 159). One particular example of how scholars saw the complementarity of discussion and debate as essential elements of democracy is (Ewbank & Auer, 1941).
⁵ William Keith (2007) offers the most extensive treatment of the development of discussion-based courses and programs as opposed to exclusively debate-oriented programs.
experience rather than the “traditional scheme” of education, described as the “imposition [of ideas] from above and outside” (Dewey, [1916] 1997, pp. 159-160; [1938] 1997, p. 18). Dewey’s prominent role at Columbia University’s Teachers College meant his sphere of influence reached across the country as students such as John Studebaker and others put into practice the democratic- and discussion-based approaches to understanding and addressing public problems he championed (Keith, 2007, pp. 100-101).

While Dewey was situated in the field of education, much of the early work related to dialogue and discussion emerged from the field of communication—tracing roots to departments of speech, public speaking, oratory, or rhetoric—in which students were trained and educated as speakers and as individuals capable of understanding, assessing, and criticizing the speech of others (Cohen, 1994; Keith, 2008, pp. 89-191). Early on, speech teachers drew on Dewey’s book *How We Think* (1910) because he “deftly wove the experimental method of science together with everyday practical concerns, and succeeded in moving ‘thinking’ out of peoples’ heads and into the predicaments in which they find themselves” (Keith, 2007, p. 93). This book would prove to be foundational for scholars concerned about teaching discussion (Gouran, 1999, pp. 4-5; Johnson, 1943, pp. 83-84).

The study of group communication and improving group discussion as a central tool in promoting democracy was introduced by A. D. Sheffield’s *Joining in Public Discussion* (1922) and expanded upon by others over the next decade and beyond (Barge, 2002, p. 159; Gouran, 1999, p. 4). Within the academy there was an acknowledgement of the need to connect course content with the growing national movement toward discussion. Significantly, this required a

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Dewey has remained a central figure at the intersection of study about democracy and education. See, for example, (Kadlec, 2007; Keith, 2007, pp. 89-110; Westbrook, 1991).
change in pedagogical approach; as Keith (2007) puts it, “educators understood that the form of speech pedagogy needed to be brought into line with a correct understanding of the political function of speech in a democracy” (Keith, 2007, pp. 151, 152).

Scholars in fields such as communication, political science, adult education, and sociology engaged questions about the role that groups and group discussion played in what Mary Parker Follett (1918, 1924) referred to as a “process of cooperating existence.” Dwight Sanderson, a rural sociologist, wrote extensively about communities and placed communication at the heart of social relations: “Without communication there would be no community and no civilization” (Sanderson, 1922, p. 37). Throughout the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s, disciplines explored groups and their interactions from multiple vantage points (Lindeman, 1924; Sanderson, 1938). In 1940, J. V. Garland and Charles F. Phillips of Colgate University published *Discussion Methods Explained and Illustrated*, an extensive collective of diverse group discussion methods intended to serve as a resource for those studying or group discussion. In their preface, the editors wrote about the goal of the book: “In the use of this book, as well as in the use of other aids, the student will do well to forgo the temptation to seek ready-made answers to all his problems, and to remember that discussion is a constantly changing and shifting field where the ‘rules’ are largely descriptions of practice” (Garland & Phillips, 1940, pp. 3–4). This publication, like others, emphasized the need to see discussion as a way to overcome the appeal of easy answers.

One of the few examples from that period of scholarship on group discussion and college students comes from a 1941 study by Karl F. Robinson, who defined group discussion as “the reflective deliberation of problems by persons thinking and conversing together cooperatively in
face-to-face or co-acting groups under the direction of a leader” (1941, p. 34). Robinson also drew explicitly on Dewey’s concept of reflective thinking and the idea that discussion is a cooperative activity meant to allow participants both to understand a problem and, if possible, “reach some consensus of opinion” (Robinson, 1941, pp. 34-35). For our concerns about deliberative pedagogy, it is worthwhile to include an extended quote from Robinson’s study of college students and group discussion:

Participants are urged to “consider the common good,” “assume their share of group responsibility,” “contribute objectively,” “listen to understand.” Whereas a debate is a competition between opposing or logically incompatible outcomes of thought on a given problem, discussion is a cooperative effort to solve such a problem. Its purpose is inquiry rather than advocacy.

The typical situation for discussion is the face-to-face group with the participants seated in a circle or at least arranged so that every person can readily see and hear every other person without moving to the front of the room (Robinson, 1941, p. 35).

Robinson (1941) found through a number of experiments that participants who engaged in discussions about public issues showed significant changes in attitude, in contrast to those who did not engage in discussion. William E. Utterback, a prolific author on group discussion, published *Group Thinking and Conference Leadership: Techniques of Discussion* in 1950 and included a chapter on discussion in the classroom. He noted how, “Though widely accepted on theoretical grounds, the use of genuine discussion in the classroom is rare” (Utterback, 1950a, p. 136). His rationale for this statement was that the literature on discussion in classrooms “stresses the philosophy of group thinking without suggesting procedures for its application” (Utterback, 1950a, p. 136). In the pages that followed, Utterback offered concrete examples for multiple disciplines to include discussion. He also warned against “simulated impartiality” on the part of a

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7 For other studies from this period, see (Utterback, 1963, p. 374 fn. 1).
teacher and how, “In the long run it is sounder to regard as frankly controversial any matter upon which difference of opinion actually exists” (Utterback, 1950a, p. 145). Noteworthy was Utterback’s interest in the relationship between discussion and debate and the importance to offer more opportunities for group discussion in educational and public settings (Utterback, 1950b, 1956, 1958).

While the study by Robinson, alongside a small number of other studies, had positive results, a community of research-oriented scholars focusing on this process did not begin to develop until the 1950s in the field of communication as highlighted by the work of Utterback (Gouran, 1999, pp. 3-4). Importantly, as Henry L. Ewbank and J. Jeffery Auer note at the beginning of their 524-page tome on the place and role of discussion and debate in democracy, “Discussion and debate are not simply courses in a college curriculum. They are the essential tools of a democratic society” (Ewbank & Auer, 1941, p. 3). It is with this in mind that we turn our attention to focus more explicitly on democratic society, with land-grant universities playing a critical role in this work.8

**Adult Education, Farmer Discussion Groups, and Schools of Philosophy**

Dewey, Follett, and others were critical figures in the development, maturation, and expansion of the idea that discussion was foundational of democratic society, influencing people like M. L. Wilson, who helped to create one of the most robust examples of higher education institutions engaging in deliberative democracy through adult education programs (Ansell, 2011, pp. 9-14; Gilbert, 2000, p. 169; 2015, p. 18). A major facet of this effort was a partnership

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8 While scholars have written about this period, the focus has been on Studebaker's forums. See (Goodman, 2004; Loss, 2012).
between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), land-grant universities, and the Cooperative Extension Service through which higher education played a critical role in creating and facilitating discussion groups. Cooperative Extension, established in 1914 as the outreach and engagement arm of land-grant universities, was traditionally based on a demonstration model of education to “aid in the diffusing among the people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics” (Smith and Wilson 1930, p. 365). This is a oversimplification of a highly complex and nuanced organization (see Peters, 2014), but it was against the backdrop of a model education that extended university expertise to communities that democratic discussion and adult education emerged as an important dimension that embraced not only the improvement of agricultural production, but also the “improved utilization of resources within the family, personal development, improved quality of life, and the improvement of the total community” (Warner and Christenson 1984, p. 126). Cooperative Extension played a critical role in community, offering education opportunities for men, women, and children that included expert knowledge as well as cultural and social experiences and opportunities.

While the use of public forums was expanding in cities across the country, leaders in the USDA were developing their own experiment with the use of discussion forums as a space for adult education alongside the USDA’s other efforts in rural communities. As Jess Gilbert (2015) puts it: “Probably the most unusual innovation in the New Deal USDA aimed to advance democracy through adult or continuing education” (Gilbert, 2015, p. 142). USDA Secretary Henry A. Wallace called for a “Forum on Forums” in order to look at the possibilities of using forums, panels, and group discussion in the agency’s educational work, complementing its existing action programs. Those in attendance at the first meeting on December 7, 1934, included
staff members from the USDA, John W. Studebaker (then U.S. Commissioner of Education), and representatives from various other agencies. After more meetings, the outcome was a decision to conduct an experiment in adult education during the winter and early spring months of 1935. To lead this effort, Wallace selected M. L. Wilson, who would later bring on Carl F. Taeusch to run the day-to-day operations of this initiative (Gilbert, 2015, p. 149).

This new “pillar” of the national agricultural policy was distinct from other programs within the USDA. Wilson and Wallace did not want the discussion groups to be “forums for the dissemination of the USDA’s propaganda”; instead, they were meant to “provide a means for the expressing of all points of view” (McDean, 1969, p. 415). The effort was designed to help rural communities exchange information and viewpoints while also testing and challenging positions by subjecting various topics to group discussion and analysis. According to Wilson (1941), the federal government made no attempt to control discussion, but it did have an interest in guaranteeing that the “facts [were] set forth correctly” (Wilson, 1941, p. 8). The role of the USDA in this setting was to prepare discussion guides and outlines. While the USDA would produce such documents and disseminate them widely, “the handling of the discussion programs [was] entirely up to the States,” meaning that local actors were critical to its success (Wilson, 1935b, p. 33). Wilson was emphatic that the USDA would not advocate for anything other than the opportunity for citizens to learn about the issues facing them during this time of transformation. The agency’s leaders “counted themselves among a ‘great democratic movement’ that had education at its core” (Gilbert, 2015, p. 143), as Wilson believed that “free and full discussion is the archstone of democracy” (Wilson, 1935a).

Over the next few years, discussion-based continuing education opportunities for men and women blossomed into two interrelated programs, overseen by a body called the Program
Study and Discussion (PSD) unit: first, discussion groups that were organized and facilitated by local Cooperative Extension agents from land-grant universities with rural men and women; and second, multi-day training and educational opportunities known as Schools of Philosophy for Extension Workers that were organized and facilitated by USDA staff and distinguished scholars (Gilbert, 2015; Jewett, 2013; Shaffer, 2013, 2014a; Tauesch, 1941). From 1935 until the PSD closed in 1946, these programs created discussion group materials for more than 40 wide-ranging topics, such as those used during the 1936-1937 and 1937-1938 seasons (Shaffer, 2014a, pp. 301-302):

- What Should Be the Farmers' Share in the National Income?
- How Do Farm People Live in Comparison with City People?
- Should Farm Ownership Be a Goal of Agriculture Policy?
- Exports and Imports—How Do They Affect the Farmer?
- Is Increased Efficiency in Farming Always a Good Thing?
- What Should Farmers Aim to Accomplish Through Organization?
- What Kind of Agriculture Policy Is Necessary to Save Our Soil?
- What Part Should Farmers in Your County Take in Making National Agriculture Policy?
- Taxes: Who Pays, What For?
- Rural Communities: What Do They Need Most?
- Soil Conservation: Who Gains By It?
- Co-ops: How Far Can They Go?
- Farm Finance: What Is a Sound System?
- Crop Insurance: Is It Practical?
- Reciprocal Trade Agreements: Hurting or Helping the Country?
- Farm Security: How Can Tenants Find It?

In addition to materials for these topics, the PSD created methodology pamphlets for group discussion leaders to utilize when planning and conducting forums, providing diagrams for encouraging discussion flow among diverse members of a group rather than having conversations take place between a select few (Bureau of Agricultural Economics, 1942; United States Department of Agriculture, The Extension Service, & Agricultural Adjustment Administration, 1935).
The PSD prepared and distributed millions of copies of these topic-based discussion guides. Participation figures, as complete as possible, suggest that more than 3 million rural men and women participated in discussion groups, 60,000 discussion leaders received training, and tens of thousands of extension workers and other rural community leaders attended more than 150 Schools of Philosophy (Gilbert, 2015, p. 142; Shaffer, 2014a, p. 264; Taeusch, 1952, p. 41; Vogt, 1940, p. 6). With a modest staff, it engaged communities across the entire nation—men, women, and children—in civic education that was based on deliberation about a range of issues facing rural communities.

In the end, those with a vested interest in large-scale agriculture who viewed this citizen-centered deliberation work as a deviation from the USDA’s more “traditional” work succeeded in shutting these programs. Other efforts within the agency faced a similar fate (Roberts, 2015). Obstructing actions beginning in 1942 and continuing for four years—led by the American Farm Bureau Federation, sympathetic supporters in Congress, and some within the land-grant colleges who felt the USDA should provide statistical information and not engage in the planning and educational work as had been done since the mid-1930s—brought this democratic initiative to an end.9 The rise of the research university after World War II and the establishment of the National Science Foundation helped to push these community-based educational opportunities to the back of institutional memories as basic research aimed at solving the world’s problems replaced the open-endedness of discussion about public problems (Vest, 2007, p. 24ff). The place for political ideals and principles, as well as a problem solving approach in the land-grant university (and the Cooperative Extension Service) was and is a

9 The most thorough overviews of this chapter of the USDA’s democratic efforts are (Gilbert, 2015; Kirkendall, 1966).
complicating factor when thinking about universities as primarily technocratic in their approach and purpose (Peters, 2010, pp. 19-62; 2015, p. 48).

Reclaiming Our Roots

Higher education has long-established but often-forgotten roots connecting previous deliberation and discussion initiatives with today’s efforts to cultivate opportunities for faculty and students to use deliberation in their classrooms and in communities. Education played a key role in shaping cultural and political narratives about the United States as a place where people could learn about public issues and determine what to do about them as civic actors. Through town meetings, adult education, and public forums, citizens had opportunities to learn alongside others about larger social issues that affected not only individual communities, but also entire regions and the country as a whole. These examples highlight the importance of the robust adult education programs that have shaped public deliberation in the United States. Often these forums and meetings did not bear titles that explicitly framed them as educational—but, in fact, they were.

The role of discussion and deliberation in and through higher education has also been essential to this history. In the early 20th century, the development of disciplines within the university created the space—and need—for departments to focus on the ways people interact and engage one another in group settings. The field of communication was a natural disciplinary home for many of the early efforts to engage in group discussion in higher education settings, but the idea that informed citizens should make decisions transcended disciplinary boundaries. Drawing from John Dewey, Mary Parker Follett, and others, scholars and practitioners from
political science, education, sociology, and other disciplines helped articulate the idea that while deliberation and discussion were topics for understanding in courses, they were also significant because of the critical role they play in democratic society. Finally, the UDSA’s deliberative democracy and adult education initiative, which existed because university faculty and Extension agents engaged citizens in communities as facilitators for community discussions, brought together millions of rural residents to deliberate about local and national issues.

These historical examples give scholars who are interested and engaged in deliberative pedagogy not only a strong precedent but also tangible models for using group discussion—in both institutional and community settings—as a basis for educating for democracy. These early manifestations of higher education as a catalyst for group discussion and cooperative decision-making processes point to the possibility of what can be done by colleges and universities for students and communities today. Educating for democracy is woven into our history. We would be served well to reclaim our past in moving toward and shaping our future.

References


Civil Discourse, Deliberation, and American Higher Education: Then and Now

Timothy J. Shaffer, PhD
Kansas State University & National Institute for Civil Discourse
Americans think political incivility is a big problem and getting worse*

- 95% say it’s a problem, 67% a major problem; 70% say its risen to crisis levels.

- 79% say its preventing action on important issues, 76% say it makes it hard to discuss controversial issues, 61% say its deterring people from public service.

- 83% of likely voters say they are paying close attention to national politics and 93% say a candidate’s tone or level of civility will be an important factor in how they vote in the 2016 Presidential election.

- Around 75% think uncivil behavior post-election will harm governance.

*online, representative poll of 1005 adults 18 years and older, Jan. 7-14, 2016, conducted by Weber-Shandwick and Powell Tate, with KRC Research.
Defining Political Incivility

Civil political discourse pertains to the “fundamental tone and practice of democracy.” (Herbst 2010)

Civil political discourse is the “free and respectful exchange of different ideas.” (Coe, Kenski and Rains 2014)

Research suggests perceptions of what is uncivil vary systematically by political partisanship, whether one is assessing the civility/incivility of a political ally or a political opponent, the status/authority/position of the person whose speech/behavior is being assessed (e.g., politician or elected official, media personality, member of the public), the situation in which the speech/behavior occurs, etc.
BOWLING ALONE

THE COLLAPSE AND REVIVAL OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Robert D. Putnam
• People live in enclave communities

• Interacting less and less with people of difference
  • Politically
  • SES
  • Religion
2004
Politics After the Sort

Presidential election results by county, John Kerry vs. George W. Bush

- Competitive counties (margin less than 20 percentage points)
- Republican landslide counties (Bush won by 20 percentage points or more)
- Democratic landslide counties (Kerry won by 20 percentage points or more)

(Democratic and Republican votes only)
What about higher education?
How do you think about incivility?
Your poll will show here

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Protecting freedoms
Cultivating deliberative democracy
Historical Examples

- Cooperative small group problem solving emerges in 1910s and 1920s drawing on scholars such as John Dewey and Mary Parker Follett
  - Outgrowth from/alternative to debate
- A. D. Sheffield, *Joining in Public Discussion* (1922)
- J. V. Garland and Charles F. Phillips, *Discussion Methods Explained and Illustrated* (1940)
Convening Conversations
Campus Carry

How will concealed carry on campus affect us?
What should be done?

Share your thoughts on the changes to the law regarding concealed weapons on campus.
Join your friends, neighbors, and colleagues in a democratic environment to deliberate on this issue.
You are welcome to participate, regardless of your position on the issue - even if you don't have one!
Safety

Group who don’t feel

Discriminated

New Student

Community
#ReviveCivility
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