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**THE PRIMACY OF PRINCIPLES: EXPLORING JOURNALISM EDUCATORS'
DEMOCRATIC IMPERATIVE TO DO GOOD WORK**

A Dissertation in

Mass Communication

by

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ABSTRACT

By engaging in an interdisciplinary examination of the democracy-education relationship, this humanistic inquiry will identify and explore the principles that define journalism educators' special obligation to do good work. My thesis is prefaced on the notion that determining the principles that guide what it means for educators to do good work in a democratic community requires an intersectional analysis in which an educator's professional responsibilities and special obligations as citizens are understood as mutually constitutive of each other. *Good work*, which stems from Harvard University's Good Work Project, is work that is excellent, personally engaging, and serves a broader social need. In this project, I position good work, education, and democratic citizenship as the conceptual framework of democracy. Each can be considered important elements of an enlightened democratic community. Each has been the object of considerable bodies of scholarship. Each carries assumptions and obligations for individuals and publics. Yet in many ways, good work, education, and democratic citizenship lie outside of a unified consideration of their interactive nature. By focusing on the role of the Enlightenment in defining the principles that are most cherished by modern democracy, I hope to stimulate deep reflection among citizens, journalists, and journalism educators about those principles that ought to guide our understandings of our roles and responsibilities as citizens and professionals. When good work can be leveraged in this way, journalists and educators are better able to fulfill their duty to build democratic capacity among citizens. This capacity includes the knowledge, skills, and moral judgment necessary to engage in substantive and, potentially transformative, political participation.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In a 2011 speech on the American Jobs Act, President Obama explained that educators in South Korea are extolled as “nation builders.” By examining the interplay of democracy and education, this dissertation considers how teachers in higher education might be considered “democracy builders.” Federico Mayor, the former Director General of UNESCO, captures the essential nature of education to a thriving democratic society when he insisted that “You cannot expect anything from uneducated citizens except unstable democracy.”¹ But, what kind of education does this idea refer to?

A student who becomes a scholarly mathematician, geologist, or philosopher has not necessarily acquired the knowledge, skills, or values necessary to engage productively or ethically in a democratic community. Germany developed briefly as a liberal constitutional democracy following World War I. It celebrated its scientists, philosophers, and artists into the 1930’s. Many were internationally renowned scholars. Yet some of these scholars took part in political atrocities before and during World War II that were the antithesis of democratic values. Nations need not reach the extreme practices of the Third Reich to justify interest in the interplay of democracy and education or to consider what we should be talking about when we discuss the education-and-democracy relationship.

¹ “Higher Education Without Democracy?” 45.

Conceptual Framework: Democracy, Education, and Good Work

This project analyzes and critiques the estuary of democracy and education by bringing together multiple bodies of literature –including, but not limited to, journalism studies, moral and political philosophy, education, democratic theory, and the scholarship of professions and institutions –to conceptualize the special obligations of the professional professoriate. This special obligation is generated by the convergence of their roles as citizens and teachers. Although this work is relevant for all educators, I argue that consideration of this special obligation is especially important for journalism and communication educators.

Democracy

Journalism is a fundamental element of a democratic society. Ideally, a free press enables the free flow of ideas in a society, provides citizens the information they need to engage in democratic self-governance, and performs a watchdog role by providing “a rigorous accounting” of powerful people and institutions.² Although journalism could exist without democracy, democracy could not exist over time without a free press because of the vital functions it performs.³ In his *Statement on the Future of Journalism Education*, current President of Columbia University and former journalist, Lee Bollinger, observed that “the quality of life within [democracy, civil society, and the free market] is closely tied to the quality of thought and discussion in our journalism.”⁴ Bollinger’s ideas offer a slightly different way to understand the

² McChesney, “The Rise and Fall of Professional Journalism,” 436.

³ Zelizer, “On the Shelf Life of Democracy in Journalism Scholarship”; Bollinger, Lee, “Statement on the Future of Journalism Education | Columbia University in the City of New York”; Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*.

importance of journalism. As journalist and author Jay Rosen noted, Bollinger's emphasis is not on the importance of journalism for supplying information.⁵ Instead, Bollinger emphasized "the quality of thought and discussion in... journalism" as being a key determinant of the quality of our shared democratic life. Because the press provides a forum for public debate and deliberation and frames public discussion, they have the power to either encourage or distract a democracy from critically engaging its problems.⁶ Unfortunately, journalistic practice and the institutional culture of professional journalism are increasingly being driven by corporate pressures.

Media corporatization, increasingly concentrated ownership of media outlets, and rapid technological changes are among commonly cited threats to journalism. While media scholars such as Greg Dickinson bemoan the increasingly ubiquitous trend for citizens to be regarded as consumers rather than participatory members of a democratic community, other scholars, such as Robert McChesney, argued that commercial journalism and its responsibility to serve the public good has disintegrated in the twenty-first century.⁷ Interestingly enough, these threats to journalism and democracy are not necessarily exclusively twenty-first century phenomena. In 1947, Robert Maynard Hutchins and the Commission for a Free and Responsible Press cited concentration of ownership, corporatization, and technological changes as threats to a free and responsible press.⁸ Even though the basic nature of these threats is not necessarily new, innovations in technology rapid globalization have drastically changed the impact. One major

⁴ Bollinger, Lee, "Statement on the Future of Journalism Education | Columbia University in the City of New York."

⁵ Rosen, Jay, "The Bollinger Thesis | Poynter."

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Dickinson, "SELLING DEMOCRACY"; McChesney and Nichols, *The Death and Life of American Journalism*.

⁸ *A Free and Responsible Press*.

impact of an increasingly globalized world is that journalism has the potential to reach nearly every part of the world in seconds. Bollinger argued that “more than at any time in human history the character of the press is a key determinant shaping and defining national and global society.”⁹ It seems, however, that people’s assessment of the character of the press is increasingly negative.

In the results of March 2013 opinion poll published by the Pew Research Center, 27 percent of Americans believe that journalists contribute “not very much” or “nothing at all” to society’s well-being.¹⁰ Alarming, this 2013 statistic on journalists’ perceived societal contribution reflects a decrease of 10 percentage points since 2009.¹¹ Out of all of the professions the public rated, journalism had the greatest decrease in public esteem between the 2009 and 2013 polls.¹² Some journalists seem to hold their colleagues in even less esteem. In an article published by the *Columbia School of Journalism Review*, Paul Starobin, for example, described journalists as “a generation of vipers.”¹³ These types of indictments on a profession should be, at the very least, cause for practitioners to engage in critical reflection. To be clear, I do not mean to suggest that there are no good journalists producing good journalism. My goal is to illustrate what I see as a renewed sense of urgency to find new ways to address the problems facing journalism, and, by extension, democracy.

⁹ Bollinger, Lee, “Statement on the Future of Journalism Education | Columbia University in the City of New York.”

¹⁰ *Public Esteem for Military Still High - Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work.*

Education

The crisis in journalism is essentially a crisis of democracy. Practicing journalists are not solely responsible for building the capacity to sustain democracy, nor should they be. While journalists are certainly not powerless to produce change, the threat to democracy is such that all hands are needed on deck. Higher education institutions are in a unique position to use their knowledge resources in collaboration with journalists to work together to reinvent journalism. With the mounting market pressures journalists must negotiate, it seems unreasonable that journalists alone can effectively address the issues confronting journalism and democracy. I contend that members of the professional professoriate have a unique obligation to provide the intellectual leadership necessary address these issues by virtue of their simultaneous membership as members of a professional community and as members of a democratic community.

Willard G “Daddy “ Bleyer, who is widely considered the founder of journalism education, “believed that U.S. democracy could be improved through a more responsible press, staffed by news people trained so that they not only knew how to write the news but also could understand the society whose events they were reporting.”¹⁴ Bleyer played a foundational role in making the academic study of journalism a legitimate university discipline.¹⁵ As a legitimate academic discipline, members of the professional professoriate began to delve deeply into the empirical and philosophical issues surrounding journalism, democracy, and the principles that guide professional practice.

The professional professoriate, in collaboration with journalists, can work to catalyze the growth of democratic capacity by engaging in critical reflection about how aspiring journalists

¹⁴ Rogers, *History Of Communication Study*, 20.

¹⁵ Rogers, *History Of Communication Study*.

are being prepared to enter the professional realm. Consider Bollinger’s powerful contention that the primary check on media corporatization is the individual journalist’s sense of professional identity.¹⁶ If this is the case, we must ask: Are universities in general and journalism programs in particular effectively transmitting the knowledge, skills, and values that provide aspiring journalists the sense of professional identity necessary to act as a check against corporate pressures? Even if most citizens do not actively produce mass media messages, democracy benefits from an informed citizenry that understands the role of journalism in society. Universities should adopt curricula and practices that support active liberty –or the capacity for citizens to participate in democratic governance.¹⁷ Given the importance of journalism to democracy, threats to a free press should be of particular concern for anyone interested in “building the capacity to sustain democracy.”¹⁸

Good Work

By engaging in an interdisciplinary examination of the democracy-education relationship, I hope to contribute to the ongoing conversation surrounding efforts to build democratic sustainability. As part of my contribution I will identify and explore the principles that establish professional educators’ special obligation to do *good work* as citizens. Work at Harvard University has focused on the idea of *good work* to explore the obligations that exist in professional communities. The notion of good work is useful in the consideration of democratic

¹⁶ Bollinger, Lee, “Statement on the Future of Journalism Education | Columbia University in the City of New York.”

¹⁷ Breyer, *Active Liberty*.

¹⁸ Cohen, “A Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy.”

communities. The academic construct of good work stems from Harvard University's Good Work Project. In this context, good work is "work of expert quality that has a larger societal benefit."¹⁹ The Harvard good work construct suggests that professionals can gauge the authentic fulfillment of good work by considering three criteria: mission, standards, and personal identity.²⁰ Good work is a useful and novel construct used here to consider how educators' professional roles and responsibilities and their special obligation as citizens to build the capacity to sustain democracy are mutually constitutive of each other. I know of no earlier scholarship that has employed "good work" as a central means of explicating the democracy and education relationship—especially as it pertains to journalism educators in the professional professoriate.

Goals of this Inquiry

Building a comprehensive understanding of the type of education that will sustain a democratic community requires a nuanced understanding of the special obligations educators have as professionals and as citizens in a democratic society. I will consider what it means when we claim that educators have a professional responsibility to do good work, and I will consider why. Scholars such as Louis Menand believe that the professional professoriate compose a distinct professional domain.²¹ Lee Shulman, an education scholar and past President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, suggested that educators have a professional responsibility to prepare their students for their future professions by seeking a professional pedagogy that "actively connects learning with service, with practice, with

¹⁹ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*, ix.

²⁰ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

²¹ Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas*.

application.”²² Shulman explained the purpose of such pedagogy when he wrote: “Through service, through application, through rendering their learning far more active, reflective, and collaborative, students would actually learn more liberally, understand what they have reamed more deeply, and develop the capacity to use what they have learned in the service of their communities.”²³ It is not a stretch to suggest that Shulman was describing a relationship between learning and democracy.

Educators have a special obligation to do good work as members of a democratic community and good work as teachers. Similar to what Shulman’s comments suggest above, many scholars contend that professional educators have an obligation to develop the capacity of citizens to understand their roles and responsibilities within a democratic community.²⁴ Political philosopher Alexander Meiklejohn, for example, said that educators, by virtue of their special abilities and training, “are commissioned to carry on for the people forms of intellectual activity which belong to them, are done in their interest, but which, in some specific forms, they cannot carry on for themselves.”²⁵ Educators engage in research and teaching as agents of the nation.²⁶ Cohen suggested that teachers can build “a capacity to sustain democracy” by helping students to understand the obligations, rationale, and practice of citizenship in a democratic community.²⁷ Cohen also explained that educators have an obligation to “teach students how to participate

²² Shulman, “Professing the Liberal Arts,” 172.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Colby et al., *Educating Citizens*; Kennedy, *Academic Duty*, 1997; Eberly and Cohen, *A Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy*; Brown and Witte, *Agent of Democracy*; Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 1930; Parker, *Educating the Democratic Mind*; Parker, *Teaching Democracy*; Becker, *Teaching Democracy by Being Democratic*; Colby, *Educating for Democracy*; Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*.

²⁵ Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*, 128.

²⁶ Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*.

²⁷ Cohen, “A Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy.”

effectively in the democratic community, as well as to impart instruction in democratic theory and normative rule-of-law practices.”²⁸ Because of the role of journalists in a democracy, those who teach journalists should prioritize the transmission of this knowledge.

Should the interactive properties of good work, education, and democratic citizenship be a conscious element of higher education? Especially in the case of journalism education, I contend that they should. By focusing on the role of the Enlightenment in defining the principles that are most cherished by modern democracy, I hope to stimulate deep reflection among citizens, journalists, and journalism educators about those principles that ought to guide our understandings of our roles and responsibilities as citizens and professionals. The Enlightenment confidence in the human capacity to engage in autonomous reasoning, for example, is one principle that will prove especially important because reason allows us to question reality and imagine new possibilities. Our capacity to reason grows with new knowledge, new experiences, and opportunities to engage different perspectives.

I seek to contribute to an ongoing conversation about the roles higher education faculty can –or in Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant’s domain, *should* –play in building the capacity to sustain democracy. I do this by considering the democracy-education relationship through the lens of several domains. They include communication and media, ethics and moral philosophy, the scholarship of professions and institutions, democratic theory, education, the Enlightenment-era construct of human ability, and the history of the American founding as a realization of Enlightenment principles. While the democracy-education relationship has been noted by many scholars, philosophers, and public intellectuals, an examination that considers the interactive relationship of the aforementioned domains is justified for four key reasons:

²⁸ Ibid., 9.

- A knowledge discovery, conservation, and dissemination paradigm;
- The critical-reflective discourse mandated by pragmatic fallibilism;
- The maintenance of democratic legitimacy; and
- The unique role of higher education institutions and, especially, their role in training journalists, mass media professionals, and mass media consumers.

The following section provides a brief examination of each of these justifications. Each key justification includes elements that represent key conceptual building blocks of the dissertation, and will receive expanded treatment in later chapters.

Rationale

Knowledge discovery, conservation, and diffusion

The Age of Enlightenment is significant to this project because it was during this period that confidence in the capacity for humans to reason independently became widespread. Scientific discoveries by people such as Galileo and Newton bolstered the growing belief that human beings could understand and control the world around them through observation and reason. Not only were traditional understandings about the natural world were challenged, moral and political philosophers began to challenge the dogmatic ideologies emanating from the church and monarch-ruled state. These crucial changes to the way we approached knowledge were central to the growth of a political system in which sovereignty ultimately rests with the people.

The Enlightenment's potential to be instructive to higher education should not be underestimated. Cohen explained that, "within higher education, the Enlightenment's paradigm

suggests a duty to discover what has come before, to learn to make new discoveries, to diffuse those discoveries as a public resource, and to conserve the Enlightenment's valuing of knowledge for the generations that will follow."²⁹ The process of knowledge discovery, knowledge diffusion, and knowledge conservation is necessary for the growth of an enlightened democratic community in which excellence and ethics meet in members' civic and professional relationships. While I offer a more in-depth discussion of democracy in Chapter Three, it is useful here to understand democracy as an arrangement of political institutions of multiple scale³⁰ in which the people, who consent to govern and be governed by a common set of principles and rule of law practices, live together, learn together, and communicate with each other.³¹ Democracy is far more than voting. It also involves principled and responsible behavior that governs the ways in which we relate to others.³²

My analysis of democracy interrogates three dimensions of democratic theory articulated by Robert Dahl: philosophy, empiricism (those elements relating to practice of democracy), and the historical context in which democracy is practiced.³³ Our current socio-political context is starkly different from the context surrounding the American founding, but this difference does not render knowledge of the founding useless for understanding our current democratic context. There is a sizable body of scholarship between the seventeenth and twenty-first centuries that has greatly impacted the ways in which democracy is currently understood and practiced –especially in Western nations. Enlightenment-era perspectives on natural rights, civil society, and liberalism

²⁹ Cohen, "Democracy's Education: Charting an Enlightenment Path for 21st Century Engagement."

³⁰ Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*.

³¹ Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*.

³² Dworkin, *Justice for Hedgehogs*; Dworkin, *Is Democracy Possible Here?*.

³³ Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*.

played a major role in how the founders framed the American approach to democratic governance. My analysis begins by conserving and diffusing this foundational knowledge in an effort to discover new ways that journalism educators might conceive their roles and responsibilities as members of a democratic community. The knowledge paradigm emphasizes the importance of interrogating the complex, yet, correlative nature of the democracy-and-education relationship.

A cursory analysis of the history of higher education reveals that curricular models, institutional type, and institutional mission have all been directly impacted by the socio-political moment in which they exist. Some scholars approach this relationship by examining how periods of war –such as WWI, WWII, and the Cold War that followed –impacted major developments in liberal education curricula and expansion of the higher education system.³⁴ Analysis of the education-democracy relationship likewise includes examinations of how major social movements –such as the resultant policies and social attitudes arising from the Civil Rights Movement –impacted the demographic make-up of students and faculty within higher education institutions or student choice in the curriculum.

Another point of entry into the democracy-education relationship has involved examination into how major decisions in American jurisprudence, such as *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, impacted attitudes and rationales on the role of diversity in higher education. The Bakke decision, which was a landmark decision eliminating race as a factor that could be used to exclude applicants from college admissions, did establish that race could be legally used as one factor to justify the benefits that flow from having diversity in the classroom. A further recognition underlined the 2003 University of Michigan cases, *Grutter v.*

³⁴ Grubb and Lazerson, “The Education Gospel and the Role of Vocationalism in American Education”; Lattuca and Stark, *Shaping the College Curriculum*, 2009.

Bollinger and Gratz v. Bollinger, which both dealt with affirmative action policies in admissions decisions. The point of these examples is that the development and manifestations of higher education have never existed outside of important external factors that reflect the philosophical, empirical, and historical contexts of the democratic community in which it exists. Education in this light is important just because education is a “good” thing, but also as the Michigan decisions suggested, because education is a fundamental component of democracy.

Pragmatic Fallibilism

Largely shaped by philosophers such as Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, pragmatism “stands for a hypothetical and revisable notion of truth, for a method of experimental inquiry that aims at resolving doubt and solving problems, and that takes both questions of fact and value as proper subjects for collaborative inquiry.”³⁵ The goal of pragmatic inquiry “is the discovery of reliable knowledge.”³⁶

Pragmatic fallibilism, a corollary of pragmatism, is a philosophical principle that rejects political and moral certainty.³⁷ Fallibilism is defined as “the view that one’s current beliefs could be in error or that there may be good reason to revise one’s current beliefs in the future.”³⁸

Charles Pierce, whose writings on pragmatism later informed James and Dewey, argued that “fallibilism is at the very heart of all human knowledge because it is at the very heart of all

³⁵ Orrill and Anderson, “Pragmatism, Idealism, and the Aims of Liberal Education,” 122.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 123.

³⁷ Bernstein, *Abuse of Evil*.

³⁸ Cooke, *Peirce’s Pragmatic Theory of Inquiry*, 1.

human inquiry.”³⁹ In his discussion of pragmatic fallibilism, Richard Bernstein suggested that fallibilistic practices such as critical reflection and deliberation address a central democratic dysfunction –the “uncritical or unreflective appeal to objective certainty, absolutes, and rigid dualisms.”⁴⁰ Bernstein framed his discussion of pragmatic fallibilism in the context of a post-September 11, 2001 society, but the democratic dysfunction he described has long been a concern for scholars.⁴¹

Despite Tocqueville’s advocacy of democracy, he was concerned about the survival of an enlightened democracy as he observed America growing into a mass democratic society. Dahl explained that when citizens have an enlightened understanding, “each citizen ought to have adequate and equal opportunities for discovering and validating (within the time permitted by the need for a decision) the choice on the matter to be decided that would best serve the citizens’ interests.”⁴² Not everyone has been as optimistic about the population’s innate abilities. Walter Lippmann feared the public incapable of the enlightened understanding necessary to self-govern.⁴³ Whether Lippmann was justified in his pessimism, the strength of the First Amendment to a democracy may be based in its potential to facilitate the enlightened understandings, critical reflection, and deliberation demanded by pragmatic fallibilism.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Bernstein, *Abuse of Evil*, 15.

⁴¹ Lippmann, *Public Opinion*; Price, *Public Opinion*; Jamieson and Cappella, *Echo Chamber*; Rogers, *History of Communication Study*.

⁴² Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, 112.

⁴³ Price, *Public Opinion*; Rogers, *History of Communication Study*.

The First Amendment is fundamental to the principles and practices that constitute the American approach to democratic self-governance.⁴⁴ In his concurring opinion on *Whitney v. California*, Justice Louis Brandeis provided justification for First Amendment protections of speech and the right to peaceably assemble rooted in democratic sustainability. Justice Brandeis contended that the public's ability to participate in unrestrained thought, discussion, and deliberation, is "indispensable to the discovery and spread of political truth." Justice Brandeis went on to explain that "free discussion affords ordinarily adequate protection against the dissemination of noxious doctrine; that the greatest menace to freedom is an inert people; that public discussion is a political duty, and that this should be a fundamental principle of the American government."⁴⁵ The principles Justice Brandeis presented in his 1927 opinion are the basis of Alexander Meiklejohn's ideas on democracy and education.

Alexander Meiklejohn was a political philosopher and legal scholar who detailed the relationship among the First Amendment, political freedom, and democratic self-governance. For Meiklejohn, the free flow of ideas concerning the common good and the ability to engage in public deliberation about such ideas is the essence of self-government by politically free citizens. Meiklejohn explained the behavior and habits of mind necessary for politically free citizens to effectively self-govern. "When a question of policy is 'before the house,' free men choose to meet it not with their eyes shut, but with their eyes open. To be afraid of ideas, any idea, is to be unfit for self-government," Meiklejohn said.⁴⁶ The First Amendment enables the press to provide citizens access to those ideas and information that enable democratic self-governance.

⁴⁴ Cohen, "A Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy"; Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*.

⁴⁵ "Whitney V. California/Concurrence Brandeis."

⁴⁶ Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*, 28.

The First Amendment guarantees that ensure the free flow of ideas –the freedom of speech and of the press –indicates that education is also a paramount consideration for guaranteeing democratic self-governance. Education is a key consideration for helping citizens to develop the behaviors and habits of mind necessary for self-governance. How journalists are educated is an equally important consideration.

Because journalists play such a vital role in a democracy, the First Amendment naturally calls attention to the importance of educating journalists who are well-prepared to fulfill their vital role in a democracy. Journalism educators can prepare future journalists in a way that is responsive and knowledgeable of an increasingly heterogeneous society.⁴⁷ In the rapidly changing world of journalism, journalism educators can also help aspiring journalists to negotiate journalistic ideals with changing journalistic practices.⁴⁸ Journalism educators can also work with practicing journalists and together devise strategies to prepare students to successfully integrate journalism’s civic mission with a holistic understanding of press functions in a changing social, economic, cultural, and technological context.⁴⁹ Educators can play a key role in influencing how journalism develops, and in doing so, educators can also play a role in either growing or stifling citizens’ political freedom.

⁴⁷ Deuze, “What Is Journalism?”

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

The Maintenance of Democratic Legitimacy

A government is legitimate when it conforms to a certain set of rules or laws and when citizens consent to its authority. While legitimacy can denote the lawfulness of a government, it also may suggest the popular acceptance of the system of government by those governed, or it may imply a government's adherence to a set of normative or moral principles. Enlightenment-era political philosopher John Locke understood the source of political legitimacy as being rooted in the tacit or explicit consent of those governed.⁵⁰ Similarly, the French philosophe Jean Jacques Rousseau argued that an individual should not be "required to obey laws that are not of his own making in some genuine sense."⁵¹

Meiklejohn contended that the American democracy is constituted of politically free citizens who are simultaneously rulers and ruled.⁵² In his discussion of political freedom, Meiklejohn explained that the legitimacy of the American democracy is rooted in the political compact codified by the Constitution and legitimized by citizens' political agreement that they "shall make and shall obey their own laws, shall be at once their own subjects and their own masters."⁵³ Both Locke and Meiklejohn suggested that legitimacy is also contingent on the capacity or competence of the people to govern. For Locke, the capacity for one to actively consent was dependent on the presence of reason. Armed with reason, one enacts his or her

⁵⁰ Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*; Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*.

⁵¹ Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, 122.

⁵² Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18.

liberty to enter civil society “by positive engagement, and express promise and compact.”⁵⁴

Meiklejohn wrote that self-governing citizens must use their minds to govern. As such, citizens should possess a certain intelligence of mind and have access to all available information related to self-governance.

Dworkin believed the question of political legitimacy was “the oldest question of political philosophy.”⁵⁵ The question asked: “What conditions must people with power meet in order to be entitled to act as governments act, so that those from whom they claim obedience are in fact morally obliged to obey?”⁵⁶ Dworkin's contention is that a democracy's legitimacy lies not in the consent of citizens, but rather on the government's fulfillment of principles of justice, equal concern, and dignity.⁵⁷ Dignity is a dual-pronged principle that first requires acknowledgement of the inherent value of all human life, and second requires the acknowledgement of the responsibility humans have to determine how they will live their own lives.⁵⁸ Citizens, according to Dworkin, “assume political obligations [to the democratic community] only and so long as the community's government respects their human dignity.”⁵⁹

In his active liberty doctrine, Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer contended that the basic democratic objective of the Constitution is the protection of citizens' active liberty.⁶⁰ Active liberty, according to Justice Breyer, “refers to a sharing of a nation's sovereign authority

⁵⁴ Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*.

⁵⁵ Dworkin, *Is Democracy Possible Here?*, 95.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁵⁷ Dworkin, *Is Democracy Possible Here?*.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁶⁰ Breyer, *Active Liberty*.

among its people.”⁶¹ This doctrine falls within the interpretive tradition of the Supreme Court and is consistent with the Constitution’s history.⁶² When active liberty is not secured, the legitimacy of the American system of government is directly threatened. Justice Breyer’s active liberty doctrine outlines three criteria for sustaining democratic legitimacy: responsibility, participation, and capacity.⁶³

Logically, Breyer’s criteria of responsibility, participation, and capacity must be understood as existing in a hierarchical relationship. Lacking capacity, citizens cannot successfully meet the criteria of responsibility or participation. Responsibility –that “it should be possible to trace without much difficulty a line of authority for the making of governmental decisions back to the people themselves” –is best fulfilled when citizens possess the capacity to fulfill their responsibilities. The participation criterion holds that “the people themselves should participate in government.”⁶⁴ Participation can be as weak as the “understanding that each individual belongs to the political community with the right to participate should he or she choose to do so.”⁶⁵ Likewise, participation cannot be fulfilled if citizens lack the capacity to do so. The fulfillment of the capacity criterion may so significantly impede or enhance the fulfillment of participation and responsibility, that capacity-building must be raised to a paramount level of concern for democratic legitimacy to be maintained.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶² Breyer, *Active Liberty*.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

The Unique Role of Higher Education Institutions

The sphere of higher education is a social, political, and pedagogical site of socialization and contestation.⁶⁶ Within this sphere, particular narratives about what it means to live morally and politically are cultivated and produced.⁶⁷ Critical pedagogy scholar Henry Giroux explained that higher education institutions not only reify and prioritize certain values over others, but they also “harbor in their social relations and teaching practices specific notions regarding what knowledge is of most worth, what it means to know something, and how one might construct representations of themselves, others, and the social environment.”⁶⁸ Citing examples from Darwinian biology to multicultural education, historian Lawrence Levine also noted the unique legitimizing force of education institutions when he asserted: “The fact is, of course, that teaching subjects in schools and colleges gives them cultural legitimacy.”⁶⁹ Reforming the curriculum to integrate democratic principles and civic concerns could have a significant impact on how members of a society privilege the knowledge and principles that underlie their roles and obligations as citizens.

Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, and Stephens, whose analysis on citizen education explored the civic and moral development of American undergraduates, recognized that the college experience only marks one point in students’ overall development. In fact, it is challenging to develop measures that can pinpoint the impact of the college experience on students’ lives – especially in regards to their moral and civic development. Regardless, the researchers

⁶⁶ Giroux, “Bare Pedagogy and the Scourge of Neoliberalism.”

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 91.

⁶⁹ Levine, *The Opening of the American Mind*, 98.

maintained that the undergraduate experience “can be pivotal, leading to new ways of understanding the world and one’s place in the world, providing new frameworks through which later experiences are interpreted, and equipping the individual with a wide array of capacities for moral and civic engagement.”⁷⁰ As Peter Levine’s research on trends in civic engagement among youth demonstrates, for schools to achieve civic outcomes for their students, they must be explicit both in naming civic goals and working toward civic development. Further illustrating Levine’s contention, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching cited numerous studies that offer credence to the argument that intentionality is a significant factor for schools and teachers seeking to achieve civic outcomes.⁷¹

The academy can work to orient citizens within and outside of the institution to their role as citizens and work to routinize citizenship.⁷² McAfee suggested that because of higher education institutions’ unique store of intellectual resources and community ties, that universities can play a crucial role in “public making.”⁷³ Public making involves a public working together to formulate “an understanding of itself, its challenges, alternatives, and possible directions.”⁷⁴ If deliberation is central to this process of public making, which McAfee suggested, then educators must be prepared to confront the troubling, perhaps counterintuitive possibility raised by Mutz, Sunstein, and others: Deliberation under some circumstances is dysfunctional to democratic participation.⁷⁵ Many models for democratic deliberation, which involves political talk among

⁷⁰ Colby et al., *Educating Citizens*, xii.

⁷¹ Levine, *The Future of Democracy*, 104.

⁷² Cohen, “A Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy.”

⁷³ Matthews, “Democracy’s Megachallenges Revisited,” 185.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 187.

non-likeminded others, fail to recognize important trends about the American public. First, Americans are uniquely conflict averse.⁷⁶ This tendency to avoid conflict can lead to avoidance of political talk all together, decreased political participation, and an increase in polarized political views and extremism.⁷⁷ The American public is also becoming increasingly fragmented and segmented, which has resulted in narrowed social networks and decreased opportunities for people to engage with non-likeminded others.⁷⁸ The potential for deliberation to be potentially dysfunctional to participation is further emphasized by Cass Sunstein's study of political talk among like-minded individuals.⁷⁹ After convening a group of individuals who held similar beliefs, but with varying degrees of commitment to those beliefs, Sunstein found that these individuals left their discussions having more extreme views that they held with a higher degree of commitment than they reported they did prior to the discussion.⁸⁰ These democratic paradoxes and potential pitfalls deserve serious considerations for any institution or individual committed to building democratic capacity.

Some higher education institutions have worked toward public scholarship efforts. Public scholarship can be understood as an "overarching philosophy with political overtones."⁸¹ Furthermore, public scholarship "commits academic and creative work ...to the practice of effective student and faculty engagement in public sovereignty and the democratic process. It

⁷⁵ Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*; Sunstein, *Going to Extremes*; Putnam, *Bowling Alone*.

⁷⁶ Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*.

⁷⁷ Ibid.; Sunstein, *Going to Extremes*.

⁷⁸ Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*.

⁷⁹ Sunstein, *Going to Extremes*.

⁸⁰ Sunstein, "The Daily We."

⁸¹ Cohen, "A Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy," 8.

aligns academic and civic goals to sustain the discovery and practice of democratic principles.”⁸²

Efforts to align democratic principles with professional practice in an institutional setting should be preceded with common knowledge and a shared understanding of the principles that guide the educational purpose.⁸³

Educators can work to transform democracy within higher education institutions by acquiring the knowledge and understandings necessary for practicing it themselves. Recognizing citizens’ propensity toward polarized public discourse, in which disagreeing citizens engage as adversaries (if they engage each other at all), Dworkin and democratic theorist Chantal Mouffe both argued that democracy is most effective when controversies about public concerns are seen as “disagreements... about the best interpretation of fundamental values they all share rather than simply as confrontations between two divergent worldviews –neither of which is comprehensible to the other.”⁸⁴ Rather than reifying or catalyzing the dysfunctions that impede democratic growth, those engaged in the ongoing conversations and practices concerning the role of higher education institutions in a democracy can direct its unique store of expertise and resources to developing understandings and pedagogical practices that may enable citizens to be active stakeholders in shaping democracy.

The challenges facing democracy cannot be understood solely through the narrow gaze of one’s academic expertise or institutional affiliation. The academy is not an island, and educators are part of a larger democratic community. Boyte offered a reminder of democracy’s collective

⁸² Ibid., 8–9.

⁸³ Shulman, “Professing the Liberal Arts.”

⁸⁴ Dworkin, *Is Democracy Possible Here?*, 22; Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*.

enterprise when he asserted, “Our fate is bound up with that of everyone else.”⁸⁵ This idea was understood by those in higher education long before Boyte. Historian Frederick Rudolph cited a 1989 inaugural address by the influential past president of Harvard University, Charles William Eliot, who said: “The university must accommodate itself promptly to significant changes in the character of the people for who it exists. The institutions of higher education... are always a faithful mirror in which are sharply reflected the national history and character.”⁸⁶

The public are stakeholders in any professional organization, and take on a special and multifaceted role in the higher education realm.⁸⁷ Lattuca and Stark, for example, positioned the socio-cultural environment as an important part of any higher education institution’s academic plan, which includes considerations of educational purpose, content, sequence, learners, instructional resources, instructional processes, and assessment and evaluation.⁸⁸ Higher education institutions have long had a pendulum-like relationship with the broader society. In the context of democracy, addressing the problems that impact communities requires the public work of citizens without college degrees and professional affiliations just as much as it requires the special attention of educators.

A widely influential Carnegie Report, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, published in 1990, re-affirmed and specified the role of the public as important stakeholders in higher education. Written by Ernest Boyer, past president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, former Chancellor of the State University of New

⁸⁵ “Public Work: Civic Populism Versus Technocracy in Higher Education,” 100.

⁸⁶ Rudolph, *Curriculum*, 7.

⁸⁷ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*; Lattuca and Stark, *Shaping the College Curriculum*, 2009.

⁸⁸ Lattuca and Stark, *Shaping the College Curriculum*, 2009.

York, and past U.S. Commissioner of Education, the report began a new conversation within American higher education communities about the nature of scholarship. Boyer rejected narrow conceptions of scholarship that exalt the basic research function as the scholar's paramount role in academic life. Moreover, Boyer contended that this predominant perception of scholarship not only fails to address the "realities of contemporary life," but also fails to recognize and fulfill "the great diversity of functions higher education must perform."⁸⁹ Thus, Boyer presented a new model for scholarship that highlights the dynamic flow of knowledge between theory and practice, creates space to bring "legitimacy to the full scope of academic work," encourages scholarly engagement with the larger community, and advances the role of teaching as both a scholarly activity and a dynamic, rigorous endeavor.⁹⁰

Boyer's model outlines four separate, yet overlapping functions of scholarship: The scholarship of discovery, the scholarship of integration, the scholarship of application, and the scholarship of teaching.⁹¹ In a 1995 address to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Boyer added the scholarship of engagement.⁹²

The scholarship of discovery emphasizes the advancement of knowledge through research process and outcomes.⁹³ Noting this function's multifaceted and expansive nature, Boyer wrote, "The intellectual excitement fueled by this quest enlivens faculty and invigorates

⁸⁹ Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, 16; *ibid.*, xii.

⁹⁰ Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, 16.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Boyer, *Ernest L. Boyer: Selected Speeches 1979-1995*.

⁹³ Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, 16.

higher learning institutions, and in our complicated, vulnerable world, the discovery of new knowledge is absolutely crucial.”⁹⁴

The scholarship of integration calls for scholars to pursue interdisciplinary work and to incorporate perspectives from individuals outside of academia.⁹⁵ It also calls for scholars to use critical analysis and interpretation to delve deeply into the *meaning* of findings and to synthesize findings into “larger intellectual patterns.”⁹⁶ This critical re-examination and search for connectedness enhances academia’s capability to respond to new questions and problems.⁹⁷

The scholarship of application encourages scholars to consider how they can direct their research and resources to investigate and address issues of social concern. Boyer drew the important distinction between doing scholarship and doing good in the pursuit of scholarly service, when he explained, “To be considered scholarship, service activities must be tied directly to one’s special field of knowledge and relate to, and flow directly out of, this professional activity.”⁹⁸ Boyer later noted that scholarly service necessarily requires the same “rigor and the accountability traditionally associated with research activities.”⁹⁹

According to Boyer, the scholarship of teaching does not end at the transmission of knowledge, but includes the transformation and extension of knowledge through the stimulation of active learning and critical thinking.¹⁰⁰ The scholarship of teaching requires exceptional levels

⁹⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 22.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered*.

of rigor, as it requires a deep intellectual engagement with one's field as well as a pedagogical style that stimulates a zeal for scholarship among students.

Boyer would later challenge institutions to heighten active engagement. He concluded that "it's simply impossible to have an island of excellence in a sea of indifference."¹⁰¹ The scholarship of engagement asks scholars to address social issues by collaborating with surrounding communities so that "campuses would be viewed by both students and professors not as isolated islands, but as staging grounds for action."¹⁰² For Boyer, the scholarship of engagement asks institutions to actively integrate a civic mission more prominently into academic life by fostering the growth of a public sphere that encourages and facilitates discourse among a diverse public.¹⁰³

Boyer's paradigm for academic scholarship pronounces the role that educators and the academy can play in building democratic capacity. If educators are to address complex social issues, Boyer suggested that educators must stretch their traditional disciplinary boundaries to that end. Further, Boyer's paradigm suggests that the academy has a responsibility to do good work in the wider role. In relation to the good work construct that defines good work as being excellent, personally engaging, and ethical, Boyer's paradigm begins to point to what good work might mean in the context of higher education.

Taken together, the literature suggests that if a university is to fulfill its civic mission to build democratic capacity, it must be intentional about practicing the civic habits it seeks to develop in students. Furthermore, the university must be intentional about discovering, diffusing,

¹⁰¹ Boyer, *Ernest L. Boyer: Selected Speeches 1979-1995*, 95.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

and conserving knowledge that will foster civic development. My research focus centers primarily on the role of journalism educators as agents of change. I contend that despite the institutional formation, the implications gleaned by this inquiry's primary purpose –to establish that educators have a special obligation as citizens to do good work –will hold relevance for all educators. Kennedy's discussion on the professional professoriate's academic duty affirms this contention.¹⁰⁴ Most professors are expected to teach, perform research, be good colleagues, and perform university service, but that does not describe the essence of academic duty. In addition to these traditional professional expectations, “all are looked upon, by students and others, as persons somehow responsible for advancing the capacities and potentialities of the next generation. That is a very large responsibility, and it is the essence of academic duty.”¹⁰⁵ Educators should be prepared to fulfill the responsibilities that are demanded by their simultaneous roles as professionals and as members of a democratic community. This duty has political, moral, and professional dimensions.

I make the argument with special focus on mass communication and journalism educators, who have an especially unique role by virtue of the fields in which they teach and the professions for which they prepare students. However, this dissertation should not only be of interest to mass communication educators or educators in general. In their book, *Take Back Higher Education*, Susan and Henry Giroux encourage educators, students, parents, and any other interested parties to:

reclaim higher education as a democratic public sphere, a place where teaching is not confused with either training or propaganda, a safe space where reason, understanding, dialogue, and critical engagement are available to all faculty and students. Higher education, in this reading, becomes a site of ongoing struggle to preserve and extend the

¹⁰⁴ Kennedy, *Academic Duty*, 1997.

¹⁰⁵ Kennedy, *Academic Duty*, 1997, 21–22.

conditions in which autonomy of judgment and freedom of action are informed by the democratic imperatives of equality, liberty, and justice. Higher education has always, though within damaged traditions and burdened forms, served as both a symbolic and concrete attempt to liberate humanity from the blind obedience to authority and as a reminder that individual and social agency gain meaning primarily through the freedoms guaranteed by the public sphere, where the autonomy of individuals only becomes meaningful under those conditions that guarantee the workings of a democratic society.¹⁰⁶

As Giroux and Giroux argued, higher education has served a unique role in working to build and sustain democratic capacity among citizens. Most higher education institutions, they asserted, have traditionally been committed to principles that promote human agency. Agency, or the “the control we have over the conditions of our own actions,” can be impacted by any number of external forces.¹⁰⁷ We negotiate our agency amid a range of factors in the broader social-cultural context. This is an important point—especially as corporate influences are becoming increasingly interwoven into the culture and curricula of many college campuses—but my concern here is centered upon those internal forces that can increase one’s sense of agency as a citizen and a professional. Among these internal forces are the capacity to engage in autonomous reason, knowledge, and one’s identity development. A sense of self-authorship or the personal satisfaction one might derive from doing good work, for example, are both key aspects of identity development. Because of the resources available to them, faculty in higher education institutions are in a unique position to engage those internal forces that can increase an individual’s or a community’s sense of agency.

In the pages that follow, I address a broad range of philosophical perspectives and bodies of literature in order to identify and explore key principles that should inform conversations on how we might work to reclaim higher education and reclaim our democracy.

¹⁰⁶ Giroux and Giroux, *Take Back Higher Education*, 11–12.

¹⁰⁷ Lachicotte, “Identity, Agency, and Social Practice,” 229.

Chapter Outline

Good work is ultimately the conceptual approach that guides this research. Defining the essence of good work for educators—and particularly journalism educators—requires an interdisciplinary examination that begins with a philosophical and historical analysis that contextualizes the foundation of this professional realm as it developed within a democracy. Good work researchers have noted the importance of approaching multi-dimensional phenomena with an interdisciplinary understanding.¹⁰⁸ An interdisciplinary understanding integrates knowledge and perspectives from multiple disciplines in order to advance knowledge surrounding complex questions.¹⁰⁹ As such, I will engage theoretical and philosophical lenses from journalism studies, political philosophy, Enlightenment-era history and thought, ethics and moral philosophy, the scholarship of professions and institutions, democratic theory, and educational theory.

Educating students to be critical thinkers in a democracy must involve “challenging the existences of rigid disciplinary boundaries.”¹¹⁰ Boyer’s paradigm for scholarship likewise suggests that approaching an intricate question such as how society should understand educators’ special obligation to do good work requires a complex explanation that is best produced by examining this issue with an interdisciplinary understanding. The interdisciplinary approach I use to examine this question not only reflects the interdisciplinary foundations of the mass communication discipline, but also rejects the traditional assumption that journalism education is simply a matter of vocational training. Instead, I contend that journalism education must also

¹⁰⁸ Mansilla, *Assessing Student Work at Disciplinary Crossroads*.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁰ Giroux and Polychroniou, “Higher Education Without Democracy?,” 44.

involve understanding and enacting a set of principles that I trace back to the revolutionary Age of Enlightenment. As educational scholar Lewis Menand wrote, “The aim of knowledge is not only to recognize limitations. The aim is also to transcend them.”¹¹¹ By intersecting the various fields of knowledge I engage here, I hope to meet both aims in the pursuit of building democratic sustainability. With this in mind, the roadmap for the dissertation is as follows:

Chapter Two is the first step in charting an intellectual roadmap of those ideas and ideals that would become fundamental aspects of modern democracy. In Chapter Two, I explore the works of major thinkers from the European Enlightenment, including Jacques Rousseau, John Locke, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Thomas Hobbes. The bulk of this chapter identifies and explores the principles embedded within these philosophical works, which would revolutionize the way human beings understood themselves and the world around them.

In Chapter Three, I continue to tell the story of modern democracy by examining the American founding as a continuation of the Age of Enlightenment. The American revolutionary generation applied Enlightenment principles in a way that forever changed the way the world would understand the idea of rights. The American founding firmly established that rights such as equality and freedom were natural, as opposed to privileges handed down by a monarch. This ideological and institutional transformation that emphasized the capacity for autonomous reason and the free flow of ideas is foundational for understanding why democracy needs a free press.

In Chapter Four, I explore the legacy of the ideas presented in the previous chapters by focusing on modern approaches to understanding the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. I examine how modern theorists address principles such as justice, equality, political freedom, and legitimacy. I emphasize the potentially transformative role of abstract principles

¹¹¹ Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas*, 120.

and ideals in our political talk. I argue that it is especially important for journalists and journalism educators to consider the ideal because they represent two professional realms obliged to foster the development of critically engaged citizens. I also examine the relationship between journalism and democracy, and the implications it has for educators and citizens. I conclude Chapter Four with a discussion of the public journalism movement, which draws upon key democratic principles to redefine the journalist's role in a democracy.

In Chapter Five, I address the democracy and education relationship. I place specific focus on good work as a useful analytic tool for understanding the work that journalists and journalism educators –are tasked to do in a democracy. Given the role of journalists in a democracy, what is the essence of good work for journalism educators? In this chapter, I also explore the unique qualities of journalism education by discussing the history of American journalism education, current trends in journalism education, and the principles that should guide notions of professionalism for journalism educators.

In Chapter Six, I address the implications of the analysis I presented in previous chapters. Although this dissertation is not meant to define a specific pedagogy or curriculum for journalism education, I will draw some initial conclusions about the type of education that might best achieve civic outcomes. In this final chapter of the dissertation, I conclude by discussing research limitations and directions for future research.

Chapter 2 The Philosophy of Democracy

The story of modern democracy is incomplete without discussion of the foundational role played by the Enlightenment generations. Enlightenment-era philosophers led an intellectual and social revolution that transformed democracy in a way that the ancient Greeks could not. The Enlightenment generation influenced the creation of a political doctrine that enabled democratic self-governance on an exponentially larger scale than the democracy practiced in the small Greek city-states.¹¹² Enlightenment philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, David Hume, and Jean Jacques Rousseau conceptualized principles of equality, political freedom, common good, individual rights, and others that now represent the framework of modern democracy.

The moral and political philosophy of the Enlightenment provides a means to consider modern democratic issues and problems. Unless we explore the intellectual roots of how people began to embrace modern democratic ideals, we have little more than platitudes on which to base democratic understanding and practice. For example, many consider social justice a good thing. Yet, it is clear that early notions of democracy expressed by the Greeks did not begin to embrace the intellectual constructs necessary to posit that “all men are created equal” or that democracy should “promote the blessings of liberty.” Whether we look to our past or present, it is no secret that citizens of modern democracies have not always succeeded in living up to these principles. This does not negate the value of democracy. It is *because* democracy is constituted on ideals

¹¹² Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, 29.

such as equality and liberty that groups denied basic human rights have been able to fight for and win political enfranchisement using these principles as their rallying cry.

The Enlightenment is a revolutionary era for considering modern democracy because thinkers during this period began to define principles and ways of knowing that emphasize humanity's capacity to use its intellectual ability, or reason, to shape its fate for both individuals and a collective civil society. Therefore, the first step in considering the necessities of modern democracy is to examine the philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment, as they became a major impetus for imagining a system of government constituted through compact by and for "We, the People." The Enlightenment's intellectual contributions provide an additional, yet crucial, lens for any effort to understand what roles and responsibilities may accompany membership in a democratic community in which citizens, by virtue of possessing certain individual and collective rights, are simultaneously the rulers and the ruled. This chapter, then, reviews the contributions of influential Enlightenment-era thinkers.

The Enlightenment

Modern democracies do not all share common rule of law or legal doctrines, but many, particularly in the West, share common intellectual lineage in the moral and political philosophies of the Age of Enlightenment. The Age of the Enlightenment was a cultural, artistic, and scientific movement in Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries. Where superstition and religious dogma once constituted the dominant political and social narrative, Enlightenment-era advancements in science and philosophy would challenge these old narratives with the newly introduced capability for understanding the physical world through systematic

observation, the application of these empirical methods to social and political questions, a heightened emphasis on literacy and education, and a growing tendency for thinkers of this age to use secular reasoning to contemplate ideals such as autonomy, reason, liberty, equality, and knowledge advancement.

The Enlightenment, for some, is notable as a time period characterized by hope in the ordinary human being. Having reflected on the meaning of Enlightenment, German philosopher Immanuel Kant wrote, “Enlightenment is man’s emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one’s own understanding without the guidance of another. This immaturity is self-incurred if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another.”¹¹³ Observing the proliferation of religious and political dogma, Kant did not believe that he lived in an enlightened age. He did, however, believe that he lived in an age of enlightenment. He explained this distinction, writing, “the obstacles to universal enlightenment, to man’s emergence from his self-incurred maturity, are gradually becoming fewer. In this respect our age is the age of enlightenment.”¹¹⁴ Consistent with the hope and idealism marking much of Enlightenment philosophy –especially among those philosophers whose theories put forward new possibilities for considering a more equitable life within civil society –Kant observed signposts of change in scientific innovation, tolerance to new ideas, and sometimes bloody battles for greater freedom emanating from citizens against their governments during this period. Although Kant believed that people were hesitant to rustle themselves awake from their dogmatic slumbers, he saw evidence to bolster his hope that reason would win over dogma. For Kant, reason was an expression of personal autonomy that was

¹¹³ Kant, “An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?,” 58.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 62.

universally attainable for those who had the fortitude to choose to do so. Published in 1784, Kant's evaluation of the Enlightenment might be seen as a retrospective of the Enlightenment, which scholars generally see as ending at the end of this century.¹¹⁵

The Enlightenment emphasis on reason began much earlier than Kant. French philosopher and mathematician Rene Descartes is often referred to as the "Father of Modern Philosophy."¹¹⁶ Descartes is a foundational Enlightenment figure whose work went on to influence great thinkers in both science and philosophy. Descartes is probably best known for developing a system of philosophy known as rationalism. Cartesian rationalism forwards the belief that one can gain knowledge about the mind, body, and physical world through reliance on first principles (such as the existence of God) combined with deductive reasoning.¹¹⁷ Cartesian rationalism was among the first to ring in the Enlightenment by emphasizing the individual as capable of autonomous reason. Because the individuals could find certainty on their own, Cartesian rationalism challenged the authority of God and the Church as the ultimate determiner of truth and certainty. Finally, Cartesian philosophy is significant because it challenged the dominance of Aristotelian thinking and raised important epistemological questions later answered by English empiricists such as Isaac Newton and John Locke.¹¹⁸ Although empiricism is heavily influenced by rationalism, Cartesian rationalism opposes empiricism because the rationalist belief that certainty can be gained from intuition is at odds with the empirical belief

¹¹⁵ Bristow, "Enlightenment."

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

that certainty can only be derived from what is observed through the senses.¹¹⁹ For empiricists, observation is what separates truth from belief.

Newton's *Principia*, published in 1687, steps far beyond Descartes's rationalism by employing an empirically sound, systematic scientific method to reach conclusions about the earth's gravitational pull. As noted scholar and scientist Timothy Ferris put it, "*Principia* put the teeth in reason, demonstrating with unprecedented power and scope that mathematical analysis combined with careful observations could expose an elegant simplicity underlying the complex motions of the planets across the sky."¹²⁰ Newton's writings about natural laws as they pertained to the natural sciences influenced his good friend John Locke in developing his own philosophy on the natural rights of men.¹²¹ Locke, who is considered a major contributor to the development of empiricism, believed that knowledge is gained through one's senses. This idea is often referred to as Lockean sensationalism.¹²² Because all people have these senses, Locke, by focusing on the sameness of humanity, reasoned that we must all be born equal. The Enlightenment represents a period in which political philosophy reflected a commitment to equality and freedom, if evidenced only in the recognition of the universal capacity for reason. Despite epistemological disagreements among rationalists and empiricists concerning the process by which an individual comes to understand knowledge as certain or true, the recognition of the universal capacity for reason empowered individuals to challenge the authority of the Church

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ferris, *The Science of Liberty*, 2011, 6.

¹²¹ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*.

¹²² Ibid.

and monarch, to decide for themselves the type of society and government was best, and to see themselves as self-determining political and moral agents.

Shifts in the intended audience of philosophy published during the Enlightenment also emphasized the new confidence in individuals to rely upon their own capacity for reason to shape their lives. Treatises published by thinkers like Hobbes and Locke, for example, were appeals to all members of society to consider their innate human nature and what that might mean for the kind of civil society that should be in place. Hobbes and Locke did not share very similar views about human nature. From these assumptions, however, each put forward a blueprint for forming versions of civil society that could be realized only through a social contract, or an agreement, made among members of that society. These social contracts entailed what rights one would possess, the form of governance, and what obligations might exist for members of the society. As modern political and moral philosopher John Rawls observed, all citizens are the audience to political philosophy because a “political view is a view about political justice and the common good, and about what institutions and policies best promote them. Citizens must somehow acquire and understand these ideas if they are to be capable of making judgments about basic rights and liberties.”¹²³ Enlightenment era innovations in natural science and philosophy encouraged individuals to think beyond their current or past situations and to consider what could be and what should be.

People were encouraged to see themselves as the architects of their own fate. However, the ability for people to use reason to self-determine is impacted by the knowledge they have acquired. Locke, for example, believed that humans were born a blank slate. Even Descartes, who believed that certain knowledge was a priori, or impressed on the mind at birth, believed

¹²³ Ibid., 5.

that the capacity for reason is increased with information. Recognizing that individuals' acquisition of knowledge directly impacts their capacity to use reason to self-determine, many Enlightenment thinkers included some discussion about education in their works, or like Rousseau, for example, published an entire volume dedicated to his educational theory. Although the Enlightenment could be considered an elite intellectual revolution, the dual recognition that 1) all humanity was capable of reason, and 2) should be confident in relying on this capacity to freely determine their personal, social, and political lives, came with the unavoidable creation of new obligations for those who possessed knowledge. Among these obligations is the duty to disseminate knowledge in ways accessible to those outside of the coffee houses, universities, academic journals, and volumes of literature that were largely available to the intellectual and economic elite. During the Enlightenment, these were the first manifestations of journalism.¹²⁴ There was also the practical matter of how to mobilize these philosophical principles to create social change and guide revolutions that would secure newly realized rights. As authors James Burns and Stewart Burns explained:

The people in city streets and country fields would not have recognized a Social Contract if it was posted in the marketplace by the Lord Deputy Mayor himself. What they needed was the securing of their rights, not philosophical abstractions. So what they further required was intellectual leadership that would recognize their political, social, and economic needs and make them conscious of rights that might meet those needs.¹²⁵

Through all the political strife that marked much of seventeenth-century Europe with the English Civil Wars, the Glorious Revolution, and other conflicts, the political rights of all men were

¹²⁴ Schudson, *The Power of News*.

¹²⁵ Burns and Burns, *A People's Charter*, 21.

often touted as the goal in pamphlets and other political rhetoric by anti-monarchists.¹²⁶ However, these men, who were seen as champions of the rights of commoners, “would press for the erasure of inequalities in political rights while leaving intact the economic and social inequalities that scarred English society.”¹²⁷ These enduring inequalities would be addressed during the eighteenth century (sometimes called the “century of the Enlightenment”) in the writings of egalitarian thinkers such as Rousseau and others. But there remained the questions of how to properly judge the validity and truth of the knowledge being disseminated as well as what motivations lay behind it. Recognizing that senses can be deceived and misled with falsehoods and appeals to sentiment, another strain of Enlightenment thought emerged that addressed how the human mind makes these types of judgments.

As people began questioning the dogma of religion, they also began questioning the validity of the ideas they encountered. Not only in politics, but in art, theater, and salons, the Enlightenment was also the age of skepticism.¹²⁸ Most prominently associated with English philosopher David Hume, skepticism encourages individuals to rely on facts and evidence gleaned from their own experience. Hume’s brand of skepticism challenged the intellectual supremacy of reason alone as a means for reaching ultimate conclusions. Skepticism, which played a natural role in the development of journalistic values and practice, creates an obligation for those receiving knowledge to take responsibility for critically engaging it with an understanding of how sentiment, popular opinion, and the nature of the human mind all interact

¹²⁶ Burns and Burns, *A People’s Charter*.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹²⁸ Gay, *The Enlightenment*.

with our understanding of virtue and truth.¹²⁹ It is no surprise, then, that satire in the arts and theater flourished during the eighteenth century. Historian Gordon S. Wood wrote that it “was the greatest era of satire in Western history.”¹³⁰ Perhaps it is not a stretch to suggest that the satirical comedic styles of Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert owe their own debt to the Enlightenment. The Age of the Enlightenment, for its revolutionary innovations in science, philosophy, and artistic expression, stands as a period of major transition in the western world which, unbeknownst to many, has impacted our lives from our entertainment, the ways in which we approach knowledge, to the ways in which we understand our citizenship in a modern democracy.

Enlightenment Era Philosophers of Democracy

The following section reviews the philosophical works of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant. Each of these thinkers represents key elements of Enlightenment thought that forged the path for modern democracy. Hobbes introduced us to social contract theory. Although there were certainly other social contract theories well before Hobbes wrote his seminal treatise, *Leviathan*, he used secular reasoning to present the idea that humankind possesses the intellectual capacity and autonomy to choose the type of government it wants. Locke’s writings carried on the social contract tradition, and forged the way for individuals to consider that all people are born with certain inalienable rights; in order for those individual rights to be secured, they must be provided to everyone. Locke’s assertions about the natural rights of men inspired the ideas that fueled the American and French

¹²⁹ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

¹³⁰ Wood, *The Idea of America*, 53.

Revolutions. Challenging the notions of human nature touted by Hobbes and Locke, Hume offered a political and moral philosophy guided by a psychoanalytic and skeptical approach to moral and political reasoning. Hume's works represent the critical impulse of the Enlightenment to not only question authority but for individuals to take personal responsibility for critically assessing the knowledge they encounter. Rousseau's political philosophy, which is heavily based in the belief of freedom, presented important ideas about the roles and responsibilities of citizens in securing and maintaining that freedom. The section ends with the contributions of the moral and political philosopher Immanuel Kant. Kant's work on moral reasoning, which was impacted by Hume, still stands as one of the most important works of the Enlightenment Era.

Thomas Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes is a foundational figure in the realm of political philosophy. Hobbes's most influential work was published in his 1651 treatise, *Leviathan*. *Leviathan* was the first work of its time to justify a political and moral system of ideas not based on theological premises. Instead, Hobbes's belief system was centered on the absolute power of the state. Rejecting the notion that the king's legitimacy rested in divine right, Hobbes grounded his treatise in his beliefs about human nature.

The context of Hobbes's life is important for understanding his philosophy on the relationship between an individual and the state and individuals to each other. Hobbes published *Leviathan* in 1651 amid the political transition that followed the English Civil War. The era was defined by a series of armed conflicts between the monarchy and royalists on one side and

parliamentary loyalists on the other.¹³¹ The parliamentary forces did not completely oppose monarchy as a system of government. They opposed an absolute monarchy in which Parliament, and by extension, the people, would be left with no legitimate power within the political state. Hobbes, a staunch royalist, composed a political philosophy that reflected his loyalty to the monarchy and the horror he experienced during this time of bloody armed conflict.

Hobbes justified his philosophy on the relationship between the state and individual by suggesting that in absence of the authoritarian rule of a sovereign ruler, humans would revert to a state of nature. The state of nature is a theoretical tool used to imagine how humankind would behave without the benefit of organized civil society. Hobbes's belief in humankind was not hopeful. He believed that human beings were naturally uncooperative, self-interested, competitive, and readily willing to take the life of another in order to secure self-preservation.¹³² Individuals within the Hobbesian state of nature are not irrational; instead, they are rational beings with equal mental capabilities, simply responding to the normal and permanent conditions of human life.¹³³ In Hobbes's vision of the state of nature, humans faced "continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."¹³⁴ The Hobbesian state of nature is a state of war.

For Hobbes, security and self-preservation could only be assured when individuals entered into a compact between themselves and a sovereign ruler. As part of this compact, the

¹³¹ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*; Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

¹³² Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

¹³³ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*.

¹³⁴ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*, 45–46; Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*.

sovereign ruler was obliged to stabilize civil life and ensure civil peace.¹³⁵ This compact is known as a social contract. The social contract is a philosophical tool in which abstraction is used to present a certain type of relationship among the rulers and the ruled in a civil society. Philosopher John Rawls identified the three parts of Enlightenment-era social contract theories – the state of nature, the creation of the contract itself, and the state formed as a result of that contract.

A central theme of Hobbes' social contract was self-preservation. Hobbes believed that self-preservation was best achieved under the rule of one sovereign ruler with absolute power. As noted by Burns and Burns, the social contract theory proposed by Hobbes was not malleable, simply because in Hobbes's purview, human nature was not. Unlike the Jeffersonian belief that a political compact –or Constitution –should be dynamic and reworked by succeeding generations to fit the needs and desires of the current context, there was no room for citizens to pursue further acquisition of rights. For Hobbes, the political rights guaranteed citizens in his conception of civil society were order and security.

Hobbes's "insistence that state power has a secular basis" was his "greatest contribution to modern political theory,"¹³⁶ wrote modern moral philosopher Susan Neiman. Hobbes was interested in transforming the horrendous conditions of his state of nature into a peaceful, well-ordered civil society.¹³⁷ Hobbes, after all, was concerned with the best political state that could impose order, civil peace, and concord on what he perceived as the "bloody madness" of the English Civil War.¹³⁸ Hobbes might have believed that humankind was naturally bad, but he did

¹³⁵ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 88.

¹³⁶ Neiman, *Moral Clarity*, 31.

¹³⁷ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 31.

not believe individuals to be incapable of reason. His treatise was a well-laid argument to appeal to people's intellectual capacity to reason and to consider their observable social conditions in that process. The Hobbesian social contract doctrine was not just Hobbes's attempt to demonstrate that "everyone has an overriding and fundamental interest in supporting an effective Sovereign," but to argue that a strong and effective sovereign ruler is the *only* remedy to bloody madness.¹³⁹ Hobbes's social contract doctrine was the catalyst for new thinking about human nature and empowered people to consider what type of civil society they wanted for themselves. Among those who were intellectually roused by Hobbesian thought was philosopher John Locke.

John Locke

In stark contrast to Hobbes, English philosopher John Locke's metaphysic might be considered one of well-reasoned hope. Locke, who was a younger contemporary of Hobbes,¹⁴⁰ wrote in the context of the Glorious Revolution. Unlike Hobbes, Locke sought to justify revolution and his view of civil society based on what he believed were the natural rights of individuals, which he justified using empirical reasoning.¹⁴¹ For Locke, natural rights are interminable rights granted by God that all equally possess. Locke's philosophical perspective – most notably his social contract theory based in the ideas of individual and collective liberty, as

¹³⁸ Neiman, *Moral Clarity*, 30.

¹³⁹ Neiman, *Moral Clarity*.

¹⁴⁰ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

¹⁴¹ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*; Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

well as his doctrine of the right to revolution –provided a conceptual blueprint for revolution in both France and America.¹⁴²

Central to Locke’s metaphysic is the notion of liberalism. Although liberalism is most prominently associated with Locke, philosophers such as Hume, Rousseau, and Mill are also important historical figures whose work has shaped a modern conception of political liberalism. Broadly, liberalism expresses three main ideas –that individuals are guaranteed equal rights and liberties, that these liberties cannot be infringed upon to ensure some collective good, and that members of the society have access to the means to fully realize their rights and liberties.¹⁴³

Liberalism is often misunderstood as promoting only individual rights of life, liberty, and property. Some scholars frame liberalism as presenting a central democratic paradox in which individual liberty is in tension with the collective good.¹⁴⁴ To the contrary, realizing Locke’s ideal society in which individual rights were protected was contingent upon a civil society that provided for the collective good that may, in fact, oblige some individuals to serve the interests of the collective in a distinctive manner.

Because political liberalism requires individuals to have access to the means to fully realize their liberties, universal education is a good that liberal democracy naturally embraces. Education helps to ensure that individuals would possess the knowledge necessary to fully understand the rights guaranteed them. Education is also significant for political liberalism because it develops one’s capacity for reason, which is a basic requirement for participation in a legitimate political regime rooted in political equality. The idea that members of a democratic

¹⁴² Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

¹⁴³ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 12.

¹⁴⁴ Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*; Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

community enter into a compact that binds them to certain roles, responsibilities, and obligations is a central tenant of the American liberal democracy in which citizens are bound in compact by the Constitution of the United States and guided by the principles that lie within both its spirit and pages. Locke's social contract doctrine uses the notion of the original compact to explain the conditions under which free individuals unite as a collective body and to explain how a political regime becomes legitimate.¹⁴⁵

Political legitimacy –achieving it and maintaining it –is a major motivator for Locke. Legitimacy in this sense generally refers to the acceptance of a political regime's power or authority. Locke explained that a government can only be legitimate when it is founded on the consent of the people. The content of the political regime also determines legitimacy. For example, rights cannot be terminated, and security must be provided to all citizens. Locke explained his approach to legitimacy, writing:

Men being, as has been said, by Nature, all free, equal and independent, no one can be put out of this Estate, and subjected to the Political Power of another, without his own *Consent*. The only way whereby any one divests himself of his Natural Liberty, and *puts on the bonds of Civil Society* is by agreeing with other Men to join and unite into a Community for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living one among another, in a secure Enjoyment of their Properties, and a greater Security against any that are not of it. This any number of Men may do, because it injures not the Freedom of the rest... When any number of men have so *consented to make one Community* or Government, they are thereby presently incorporated, and make *one Body Politic*, wherein the *Majority* have a Right to act and conclude the rest.¹⁴⁶

Locke's view of legitimacy deals heavily in the ideal. Contrasted to the Hobbesian state of nature that was nasty, brutish, and short, Locke's state of nature was an ideal history –as Rawls referred to it –in which all individuals are equal, act rationally to secure their legitimate interests of life,

¹⁴⁵ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 122.

¹⁴⁶ Locke, para. 95, as Cited in Rawls and Freeman, 124.

liberty, and property, and act in accordance to the duties obliged by natural law.¹⁴⁷ In the state of nature, individuals –upon reaching an age of reason –have legitimate and sovereign authority over themselves. This is an important point, because individuals cannot consent to enter into any political association deemed legitimate unless those consenting have “equal jurisdiction over themselves.”¹⁴⁸

For Locke, individuals have no obligations to an unjust or illegitimate regime. The principles within Locke’s political philosophy as it concerns legitimacy leverage the notion that a government can only be considered legitimate via the consent of the people, but also that certain conditions must be met before an individual can legitimately issue consent. Citizens must possess certain knowledge if they are to fully understand the range of choices available to them. Locke believed it was the natural right of individuals to create the civil society they saw fit, but he did not end there. The society and the principles upon which it is built must also be sustained by those who create it. Locke’s political philosophy begs consideration of the idea that democratic legitimacy can only be achieved when individuals have the knowledge, the capacity for reason, and the freedom to consent.

Jean Jacques Rousseau

Jean Jacques Rousseau’s work represents a strain of French philosophy that was markedly different from the perspectives presented by individualist British philosophers such as Hobbes and Locke. Rousseau was motivated by a concern for human happiness. Rousseau’s work –especially his 1762 *On the Social Contract* –heavily influenced the French Revolution. In

¹⁴⁷ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 129.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

Rousseau's envisage of the state of nature, human beings were naturally good.¹⁴⁹ This natural state, according to Rousseau, is compromised by social institutions, which create inequality. Because of his lack of faith in social institutions, Rousseau advocated for direct, or pure, democracy, which he saw as the only means to realize human freedom. Rousseau's famous introduction to his *Social Contract* reads, "Man was born free, but is everywhere in chains."¹⁵⁰

The purpose of Rousseau's social contract is not to establish just any government, but to establish a good government in which political and social institutions are formed through the general will, which constitutes the public interest.¹⁵¹ Philosopher John Rawls offered one way for understanding Rousseau's general will, when he explained that it is a "form of deliberative reason shared and exercised by each citizen as a member of the corporate body, or the public person (the body politic), that comes into being with the social compact."¹⁵² Rousseau distinguished the general will from the will of all, which he saw as the "sum total of individual wills and desires," Altschull explained.¹⁵³ The will of all reflects private interests and associations, which are outside consideration of the common good. Unlike the will of all, Rousseau explained that the general will is "always in the right, but the judgment which guides it is not always enlightened... Public enlightenment leads to the union of understanding and will in the social body. It is therefore necessary to make the people see things as they are... to guide them from the seducing voice of private wills." Because Rousseau believed each citizen should be actively engaged in societal governance, he was a strong advocate for education and argued

¹⁴⁹ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*.

¹⁵⁰ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*, 87; Rousseau and Cole, *The Social Contract*.

¹⁵¹ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*, 88.

¹⁵² Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 227.

¹⁵³ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*, 88.

for the necessity of a knowledgeable public. Rousseau's philosophy of education, most notably published in *Emile: A Treatise on Education*, viewed education as necessary for individual freedom.

David Hume

David Hume was a British political and moral philosopher. Similar to Locke, Hume was an empiricist, and largely criticized Locke and other social contract theorists for their heavy reliance on abstraction and the ideal. The state of nature, after all, is a fictional state that has never occurred in human history. Born seven years after Locke's death, Hume's most influential work, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, was published in 1739.¹⁵⁴ Hume is highly regarded for his notion of skepticism, his contributions cognitive psychology, and his theory of cause and effect.¹⁵⁵

Hume rejected absolutes and asserted that human knowledge is based on a collection of perceptions. As an empiricist, Hume believed that ideas were "inferences, verbal or symbolic, existing only through habit and general acceptance."¹⁵⁶ This utilitarian perspective on ideas is also reflected in his criticisms of social contract theory. Philosopher John Rawls explained that "Hume regards Locke's social compact view... as an unnecessary shuffle, and moreover, one that tends to conceal that the justification for all duties must appeal to the general necessities of society, or what Hume in other contexts calls 'utility.'"¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 60.

¹⁵⁵ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 61.

Much like Hobbes, Hume's view of human nature suggested that individuals are naturally self-interested. However, Hume diverged from the Hobbesian view in that he believed humans possess sympathy, which gives them the capacity to think outside of their own self-interest and to work toward the collective good.¹⁵⁸ Hume argued that the capacity for sympathy is made possible through the human imagination. Historian and journalist J. Herbert Altschull explained Hume's view on the role of imagination when he wrote that "imagination helps human beings to be aware both of their selfish self-interests and of their altruistic sympathy, and thus to recognize that a government is necessary to curb those selfish impulses and to enable those sympathetic qualities to work for the benefit of all."¹⁵⁹

As an empiricist, Hume's philosophical perspective offers an account of how and why people are motivated to make moral judgments based on the way in which they encounter ideas. This account, expressed in his idea of the "judicious spectator," suggests that people make moral judgments based on sentiment felt toward a common point of view or general perspective. Hume explained, "When I am convinced of any principle, 'tis only an idea, which strikes more strongly upon me. When I give the preference to one set of arguments above another, I do nothing but decide from my feeling concerning the superiority of their influence."¹⁶⁰ When individuals make claims about situations that do not involve their own immediate interests, they do so based on their capacity for sympathy, or what Hume calls the "principle of humanity."¹⁶¹ Consistent with Enlightenment thought, Hume attempted to explain the essence of human nature and concluded

¹⁵⁷ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 169–170.

¹⁵⁸ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*.

that all events in human history are causally related to the motives of the actors. Actions are preceded by accepted principles, according to Hume. Hume's perspective was a welcomed one that helped to reconcile morality and science in an increasingly mechanistic society, and also laid the foundation of modern behavioral science.¹⁶² Hume's work is also credited by Immanuel Kant as having a major impact on his own philosophical perspective, articulated in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.

Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant, who wrote extensively on reason in the domains of practical and moral philosophy, is considered one of the greatest Enlightenment philosophers.¹⁶³ Kant's metaphysical perspective, which reflects his belief that people are both moral and rational beings, placed heavy emphasis on notions such as human autonomy, reason, and universal moral principles. Kant's most influential works, which include his 1781 *Critique of Pure Reason*, were published following a seven-year period of scholarly inactivity. Kant re-emerged as the Enlightenment drew to a close to respond to what he identified as a crisis of the Enlightenment.

The prevailing Enlightenment logic was that one's personal freedom is increased by relying on the capacity for human reason. However, this logic was not enough for Kant to reconcile the new science's mechanistic view of a world governed by unchangeable laws of nature with his belief that the human capacity for reason frees individuals to determine their own lives, or to be autonomous. Autonomy is the hall-mark of Kant's philosophical work and is a prerequisite for seeing humans as moral beings because morality requires the ability to choose.

¹⁶² Wood, *The Idea of America*.

¹⁶³ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

For Kant, modern science's adherence to the claim that all of nature could be understood using scientific and mathematical laws undermined the belief that humans could be autonomous, moral actors who could shape their own destiny.

Kant's solution for reconciling the crisis caused by scientific determinism was largely influenced by Hume. In *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant departs from the prevailing empirical view by conceding that some concepts do exist a priori, such as the laws that govern the universe or the way the human mind is structured. Kant concluded that there are things in themselves –or things that exist outside of our understanding or our ability to perceive the phenomenon at all.¹⁶⁴ Answering the empirical claim that all knowledge is gained from sensory experience, Kant responds that the human mind cannot have sensory experience of phenomena existing outside of the realm of one's experience. The human mind's inability to have sensory experience of certain phenomena does not preclude its existence. For Kant, an individual's capacity to reason is determined not only by one's perceptual experience, but also by how those a priori concepts order one's experiences.

Kant understood laws of physics or mathematical principles, then, as existing in this world of appearances because he saw them as instruments the human mind creates to order and categorize phenomena that cannot be experienced. Kant reconciles the crisis of the Enlightenment by concluding that the scientific determinism of the Enlightenment does not and cannot conflict with human autonomy because it is the human mind itself that creates these categories and labels. Kant's metaphysics balances the ideal and the real by distinguishing what *is* and what *ought* to be. Kant calls a philosophical perspective that attempts to understand the way the world is, "theoretical philosophy." In contrast to theoretical philosophy, Kant coined the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

term practical philosophy to describe the philosophical realm addressing the way the world ought to be.

Kant's moral philosophy is located in the realm of practical philosophy because it concerns the way the world ought to be. For Kant, morality is an a priori concept not based upon a sensory experience that might not hold true from person to person. Just as in theoretical philosophy where there are laws of physics that govern our understanding of the world around us, Kant claims that there are moral laws that ought to govern human behavior. These principles, or maxims, can only be considered moral law if they are universally applicable.

Kant's view of morality emphasizes reason, equality, and human autonomy because he understood moral reasoning as an internal process that enhanced freedom because it relies on one's will to act according to moral principles or not. Personal autonomy is an important aspect of Kant's conception of reason. Reason entails the freedom to act in accordance to one's beliefs and freedom from being controlled by others.¹⁶⁵ The human capacity for reason and rationality was important for Kant because he believed that individuals have the power to shape their reality—including understandings of one's freedom and how to behave toward others. In Kant's perspective, reason is universally attainable and facilitates our ability to determine our own lives.

Kant's moral philosophy also emphasizes the notion of duty, or obligation. Kant reasoned that every human being recognizes that morality exists. He argued that because we have a shared recognition of morality and because moral law must be universal if it is to be considered moral at all, that people have a duty to uphold the universality of moral law. This type of duty is called a perfect duty.¹⁶⁶ Kant also identified a second set of duties that are less

¹⁶⁵ Neiman, *Moral Clarity*, 196.

¹⁶⁶ Rohlf, "Immanuel Kant."

objective. He explained that all people were obliged to uphold the highest good in a society.¹⁶⁷ Actions stemming from this type of moral duty may look different from person to person, but the obligation is universally shared. The universality of moral principle and moral duty is the first step in Kant's categorical imperative, which is a method for guiding and determining the morality of our behavior.¹⁶⁸ The categorical imperative dictated that humans should never be treated as a means to an end, but as ends in themselves. Kant argued that we all have a moral duty to act not because of any potential benefit or gain we might receive for acting morally, but simply because the action is the right thing to do.¹⁶⁹ This is the second premise of Kant's categorical imperative. The final premise of Kant's categorical imperative obliges people to create a world that not only enables the treatment of others as ends in themselves, but also a world in which the universality of moral law can be maintained.¹⁷⁰ Kant's categorical imperative offers an important deliberative tool for members of a democratic community by emphasizing dignity, duty, and principled action.

Conclusion

Kant, in his 1794 writings on progress in history, discussed the importance of finding signposts that progress has occurred in order to reason that progress can still be achieved. Each of the philosophers discussed here expressed their hopes for civil society within their work. Kant,

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

having witnessed the French Revolution, concluded that there are historical signposts that allow individuals to reason that if progress has occurred once, it can be achieved again.

The contributions from the Enlightenment figures discussed above heavily contributed to the formation of our modern democracy. Each of these perspectives can be treated as data that can be used to understand the place of principles in the making of modern democracy.

Democracy is not good because of what it might produce. Democracy is a good in itself because it is based on principles that create duty for each citizen to work toward the highest good for themselves and all members of society, to treat people as ends in themselves, and to recognize the inherent equality and value of human life.

Chapter 3
Revolutionary Ideas: How America's Revolutionary Generation Animated Enlightenment Principles in the Pursuit of Rights

*Here social man a second birth shall find,
 And a new range of reason lift his mind,
 Feed his strong intellect with purer light,
 A nobler sense of duty –and of right.
 -Joel Barlow*

Introduction

In this chapter I examine the American Revolutionary generation's pursuit of rights as an outgrowth and continuation of the scientific and humanistic European Enlightenment. The Enlightenment, which is best characterized by a confidence in the human capacity to reason, had a considerable impact on how the American Revolutionary Generation understood the nature of rights and political freedom. Bernard Bailyn, who is one of the foremost historians on the American founding, reflected upon what he saw as the genius and creativity of the American founders, when he wrote, We know, because they had the imagination to perceive it, that there is a sense, mysterious as it may be, in which human rights can be seen to exist independent of privileges, gifts, and donations of the powerful, and that these rights can somehow be defined and protected by the force of law.¹⁷¹ The American framers' ability to imagine a government in which citizens, and not a monarch, were the legitimate center of state power can be largely

¹⁷¹ Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew*, 4–5.

attributed to their knowledge of the philosophical and scientific principles produced during the European Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment is often characterized as a uniquely European phenomenon. Historians such as Henry Steele Commager, Donald H. Meyer, and Jose Torre, however, argued that the period surrounding the American Revolution and subsequent founding are part of a distinct American Enlightenment. It is true that the literature and scientific discoveries commonly associated with Enlightenment thought were produced by Scottish, English, and French Enlightenment thinkers, but the Enlightenment was not exclusively European. There were various national or regional Enlightenments –each with unique political, economic, social and cultural ramifications. The American Enlightenment was especially distinctive. Historian Donald H. Meyer pointed to the distinctions among the various European Enlightenments and the American Enlightenment, when he wrote: “In Europe the Enlightenment meant the appeal for a more tolerable life. In America it meant the good life. The Americans did not merely raise the cry for liberty: America became, in James Madison’s phrase, the ‘workshop for liberty.’”¹⁷²

The framers did more than stage a revolution and form a new nation; they institutionalized a set of core Enlightenment principles, and in doing so, forever changed the way that people around the world would understand the nature of rights, themselves as human beings, and the roles and responsibilities associated with democratic citizenship. This inquiry focuses on how the American Framers changed how much of the world conceives the idea of rights and notions of political legitimacy. Understanding the relationship between legitimacy and the idea of rights is significant to this inquiry if we consider that the American Revolution was a rejection of the British Crown as a legitimate source of state power and distributor of rights based on

¹⁷² Meyer, *The Democratic Enlightenment*, vii.

arbitrary measures. The American Revolutionary Generation declared that a government is legitimate only when it protects individuals' inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Enlightenment philosopher John Locke would have described these as natural rights.

I begin this chapter with an introduction to the American Enlightenment and go on to situate the period surrounding the American Revolution and subsequent founding as a distinctive expression and continuation of the larger Age of Enlightenment. What follows is a brief discussion of the ongoing relevance of the American Enlightenment. In the next section, I explore the idea of rights and its relationship to political legitimacy. I conclude by exploring how the American Framers understood and animated principles from the European Enlightenment. This discussion is not organized by specific principles, per se, because in the context of the American Enlightenment, we find that many of these principles overlap. For example, how can one discuss the importance of reason without discussing how liberty, equality, and knowledge truly pronounce the significance of reason? After all, Enlightenment confidence in reason was not only based on the notion that all people are capable of reason (equality), but that the capacity to reason freely and unbound from the chains of political or religious dogma (liberty) grows with knowledge. So, this essay attempts to tell a story about how the European Enlightenment directly and indirectly influenced the Revolutionary Generation, and, subsequently, our current understanding of the idea of human rights.

The American Enlightenment

The pursuit of rights in America during the late eighteenth century represents a period known as the American Enlightenment. The American Framers were well studied in the moral

and political philosophy of the European Enlightenment. Having studied European Enlightenment figures such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, David Hume, and Immanuel Kant, the Revolutionary Generation applied Enlightenment principles, their own ingenuity, and their provincial values to build a political system for and by the people. Thomas Jefferson, the primary author of the Declaration of Independence, described the document and the principles therein as “...an expression of the American mind.”¹⁷³ The American mind represented the joining of Enlightenment philosophy and a uniquely American form of conduct and practice, which reflected a combination of American provincialism and the value the revolutionary generation associated with cosmopolitanism.

The Revolutionary Generation did not publish works like Hobbes’s *Leviathan* or Kant’s *Critiques*, but the American framers are firmly a part of the Enlightenment tradition. Historian Henry Steele Commager explained that “...each nation had its special version of the Enlightenment. The young United States was part of that Western world, and the American Enlightenment was deeply indebted, philosophically, to the European.”¹⁷⁴ The unique character of the American Enlightenment, however, is that the American Framers used the philosophical perspectives of the European Enlightenment to do what their European counterparts might have only dreamed of—to apply Enlightenment ideals to form a large scale representative democracy by the people and for the people. “The Old World imagined the Enlightenment and the New World realized it. The Old World invented it, formulated, and agitated it; America absorbed it, reflected it, and institutionalized it.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Commager, *Jefferson, Nationalism, and the Enlightenment*, 80.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, xv.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

Commager is among a handful of historians and historiographers who emphasized the point that there was a distinct American Enlightenment. One way Commager did so is by referring to the founders as the American *philosophes*. The term *philosophes* references those Enlightenment figures in the late eighteenth century who are best described as public intellectuals dedicated to applying values common to the Enlightenment to address issues of public concern.¹⁷⁶

The American *philosophes* institutionalized a core set of Enlightenment principles by creating a political system and corresponding constitution. Commager explained that the *philosophes* “turned to the enduring problem of the origin and authority of government and announced that government derived its just powers from the consent of the governed, who had the right, when they wished, to institute new governments. And they proceeded to institutionalize that great principle in the constitutional convention...”¹⁷⁷ Although there were many special qualities associated with the American Enlightenment –such as the creation of a constitutional convention to build a representative federation of seemingly disparate states –Commager argued that there are four basic ideals common to all of the Western Enlightenment: faith in science and reason, the pursuit of order, the belief that the mind was ultimately free from the tyranny of prevailing religious dogma and political control, and what we might describe as the Enlightenment’s humanitarian cause –to advance the happiness and wellbeing of the people.¹⁷⁸

In an 1826 letter, Thomas Jefferson reflected on how Enlightenment principles and discoveries impacted the pursuit of rights:

¹⁷⁶ Commager, *Jefferson, Nationalism, and the Enlightenment*.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁷⁸ Commager, *Jefferson, Nationalism, and the Enlightenment*.

All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God. These are grounds of hope for others. For ourselves, let the annual return of this day forever refresh our recollections of these rights, and an undiminished devotion to them.¹⁷⁹

Jefferson's statement not only reflected an acknowledgement of the Enlightenment's impact on how people see the world and themselves, but also a notion of well-reasoned hope. Similar to philosopher Immanuel Kant's contention that hope can be based in reason rather than sentiment, Jefferson pointed to observable signposts of change in order to put forward an argument for hope based in moral principle and empirical reason.¹⁸⁰

The Ongoing Significance of the American Enlightenment

The American Enlightenment's ongoing significance and potential to be instructive is especially clear when considering many of the issues confronting modern democracy and democratic citizenship. David Matthews and others described such issues as democracy's wicked problems.¹⁸¹ Matthews, who is a former Secretary of Education, past president of the University of Alabama, and current president of the Kettering Foundation, explained that "a problem is wicked when the diagnosis or definition is unclear, the location or cause is uncertain, and any effective action to deal with it requires narrowing the gap between what is and what ought to be—in the face of disagreement about the latter."¹⁸² Wicked problems are facts of citizenship in

¹⁷⁹ Jefferson, "Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Roger C. Weightman, June 24, 1826."

¹⁸⁰ Neiman, *Moral Clarity*.

¹⁸¹ Matthews, "Democracy's Megachallenges Revisited."

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 211–212.

democratic communities and require citizens to create a shared understanding of the problem and to possess the capacity to exercise sound judgment.¹⁸³

There exists a common set of moral and intellectual ideals embedded in the very fabric of the American democracy, which Commager argued that, to our own detriment, we have lost. Among these ideals is the Enlightenment's confidence in the human capacity to apply reason to address difficult problems. The Enlightenment faith in human reason underlies the Revolutionary generation's audacity to create a political system based on the premise that people, because of their capacity to reason, could freely enter into a political compact and create a system of government in which citizens are simultaneously the rulers and the ruled.

The ability to critique and reason is increasingly necessary as the media and politics create echo chambers that circulate endless feedback loops of disinformation.¹⁸⁴ Further, when people have knowledge of their natural rights as human beings, their civil rights as members of a democratic community, and/or their political rights as citizens, they are in a much better position to judge whether the government meant to secure those rights is actually doing so. George Washington wrote, "The foundation of our empire was not laid in the gloomy age of ignorance, but in an epoch when the rights of mankind were better understood and more clearly defined than at any period."¹⁸⁵ Washington's words appear to extol a type of citizenship that is purposeful, enlightened, and bound by a degree of obligation. Washington's words are also indicative of the role of journalism during the American Enlightenment.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 212.

¹⁸⁴ Jamieson and Cappella, *Echo Chamber*.

¹⁸⁵ Commager, *Jefferson, Nationalism, and the Enlightenment*.

The level of literacy held by the American philosophes was not widely shared with ordinary colonists.¹⁸⁶ If the colonists were literate and owned a book, it was typically the Bible.¹⁸⁷ However, there was a significant press presence in the mid-eighteenth century. In 1734, an anonymous reader of the *Weekly Journal* in New York wrote the journal to praise and defend the idea of a free press as being necessary for preserving all other freedoms.¹⁸⁸ This reader likely wrote in response to the paper's printer, John Peter Zenger, being arrested on the grounds of libel for using the paper to speak against the "unpopular royal governor," which the British saw as a criminal act.¹⁸⁹ When Zenger's attorney argued that Zenger's actions were not criminal because they were true, the prosecutor countered by telling the jury that "their being true is an aggravation of the crime."¹⁹⁰ The jury of American colonists acquitted Mr. Zenger. In 1720, two men who wrote under the name Cato unsuccessfully argued to the English Crown that printing the truth should not be a criminal offense.¹⁹¹ This was the first iteration of a theory for a free press. However, when the defiant colonial jury acquitted Zenger, "the meaning of a free press in America began to take formal shape."¹⁹²

Those who represented the press were printers by trade, who used their printing presses to disseminate ideas through "pamphlets, broadsides, sermons, speeches, and resolutions."¹⁹³

¹⁸⁶ Schudson, *The Power of News*.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Burns and Burns, *A People's Charter*.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 32–33.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁹¹ Burns and Burns, *A People's Charter*; Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*.

¹⁹² Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*, 17.

¹⁹³ Burns and Burns, *A People's Charter*, 33.

Regular newspapers were expensive, dangerous for printers and editors, and therefore short-lived. In the years preceding the Revolution, committees of correspondence wrote accurate accounts of local efforts to mobilize against Britain and secretly disseminated them among other dissenting colonies.¹⁹⁴ However, it would be Thomas Paine's famous pamphlet *Common Sense* that would become the "most auspicious entrance in American Journalistic history."¹⁹⁵ More than any other Revolutionary figure, Paine was responsible for influencing ordinary colonists to separate from Britain. Paine used common vernacular and biblical references to express the views of John Locke, which largely inspired the rhetoric and reasoning behind the American Revolution.¹⁹⁶ Thomas Paine explained complex philosophical ideas using a direct and accessible writing style that appealed to the colonists' reason and their emotion. But, more importantly, Paine's pamphlet, which sold 150,000 copies over three months, allowed ordinary people to participate in the Revolutionary discourse, which had largely been exclusive to elite classes.¹⁹⁷

After the Revolution was won, there was still the matter of forming government. John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison wrote a series of essays in support of a federal constitution, which they published in a newspaper under the pen name, Publius.¹⁹⁸ The conflict that followed prompted the 1788 Constitutional Convention. While many Anti-Federalists opposed a federal constitution, others just wanted a Bill of Rights to be included. Anti-federalist, Patrick Henry, who feared that the pre-Revolution rhetoric of liberty would be nothing more than

¹⁹⁴ Ellis, *American Creation*.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁹⁶ Ellis, *American Creation*; Burns and Burns, *A People's Charter*; Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

¹⁹⁷ Ellis, *American Creation*.

¹⁹⁸ Burns and Burns, *A People's Charter*.

rhetoric debated James Madison intensely.¹⁹⁹ The federal Constitution was ratified, with the promise that it would be amended to include a Bill of Rights. Madison, who did a political 180, eventually saw the merit of a Bill of Rights –especially one that included freedom of the press.²⁰⁰ The Bill of Rights would not be adopted until 1791, but Madison became known as the “Father of the Bill of Rights.”²⁰¹

Another guiding premise that can be instructive in confronting today’s wicked problems is an understanding of the principles inherent to the American liberal democracy. Take Locke, for example, whose philosophical perspective struggled to negotiate individual liberty and the collective needs of a civil society.²⁰² Classical liberalism’s tension between the individual and society is not only a political issue; it also involves moral precepts that direct people to consider the dignity and worth of their fellow human beings, the common good, equality, freedom, tolerance, and right courses of human behavior. When people act based on commonly accepted principles or ideas, they have a common ground on which to judge their own actions and the actions of others. This is true in the context of professions and also in the context of membership in a democratic community.

The Nature of Rights: From Ideas to Legitimate Political Claims

The thesis of this chapter is that the American philosophes, informed by the European Enlightenment, forever changed the way that the world would understand the nature of rights.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 61.

²⁰² Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*; Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*; Rawls and Herman, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*; Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*.

But what are rights? A very basic definition that the Merriam-Webster Dictionary offers tells us that a right is “something (as a power of privilege) to which one has a just or lawful claim.” In their book, *A People’s Charter: The Pursuit of Rights in America*, James MacGregor Burns and Stewart Burns explained the concept of rights through an example of a newborn baby. The infant, they explained, has basic wants.²⁰³ The mother responds to these wants based on two factors: her judgment about what is necessary for the child and the resources the mother has to meet the child’s needs.²⁰⁴ According to Burns and Burns, “this is the recognition of needs, defined as legitimated wants. Needs entail rights, however, only when articulated and justified as such. If needs are legitimated wants, rights are justifiable moral claims to those protections or resources that fulfill human needs.”²⁰⁵

A definition of rights will also vary by a number of other variables, such as social context, the dominant ideology, shifting wants and needs, and the nature of authority.²⁰⁶ Rights will also vary depending on the role of the individual or group seeking rights. So, we might discuss rights in the sense of individual rights and collective rights. The Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution provides another way to look at rights; this amendment, which prevents states from –among other things –depriving “any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the law,” speaks to the civil rights of members of the democratic community, but not necessarily the political and voting rights of citizens. Although the Fourteenth Amendment was important in defining citizenship in the United States, it was not explicit in “mandating black (or woman)

²⁰³ Burns and Burns, *A People’s Charter*.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 11.

²⁰⁶ Burns and Burns, *A People’s Charter*.

suffrage in every state.”²⁰⁷ One might also refer to broad natural rights or human rights, which Enlightenment figures such as Locke argued were granted by God at birth. Relying on the notion of natural rights, the American Revolutionary Generation declared that because the British Monarchy did not secure its basic inalienable rights, the Monarchy no longer had legitimate moral or legal authority to dictate the colonists’ rights or just claims to power or privilege.

Enlightenment-era political philosopher John Locke understood the source of political legitimacy as being rooted in the tacit or explicit consent of those governed, which is a central idea that the Americans employed to justify the Revolution.²⁰⁸ Similarly, the French philosophe Jean Jacques Rousseau argued that an individual should not be “required to obey laws that are not of his own making in some genuine sense.”²⁰⁹ For Rousseau, rights must have the force of law behind them to be legitimate:

Instead of destroying the natural equality of mankind, the fundamental compact substitutes... a moral and legal equality for that physical inequality which nature placed among men, and that, let men be ever so unequal in strength or in genius, they are all equalized by convention and legal rights.²¹⁰

For these Enlightenment thinkers, a government was only legitimate when it conforms to a certain set of rules or laws and when citizens consent to its authority. While legitimacy can denote the lawfulness of a government, it may also suggest the popular acceptance of the system of government by those governed, or it may imply a government’s adherence to a set of normative or moral principles.

²⁰⁷ Amar, *America’s Constitution*, 392.

²⁰⁸ Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*; Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*.

²⁰⁹ Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, 122.

²¹⁰ Hutchins, *Great Books of the Western World*, 394.

Another guiding premise that can be instructive in confronting today's wicked problems is an understanding of the principles inherent to the American liberal democracy. Take Locke, for example, whose philosophical perspective struggled to negotiate individual liberty and the collective needs of a civil society.²¹¹ Classical liberalism's tension between the individual and society is not only a political issue; it also involves moral precepts that direct people to consider the dignity and worth of their fellow human beings, the common good, equality, freedom, tolerance, and right courses of human behavior. When people act based on commonly accepted principles, they have a common ground on which to judge their own actions and the actions of others. This is true in the context of professions and also in the context of membership in a democratic community.

The American framers understood the nature of rights, legitimacy, and liberty in such great depth because of their knowledge of these principles from Enlightenment literature. Ultimately, the impetus to the American Revolution was knowledge. "The Americans were fortunate in being born at a time when the principles of government and freedom were better known than at any time in history."²¹² The American Revolutionaries deemed the British monarchy illegitimate because they possessed the knowledge to "discover and resist the forces of tyranny before they could be applied."²¹³ In this sense, the American Revolution was truly an intellectual revolution in which new ideas and principles were being applied in a way the world had never before seen. Historiographer Gordon S. Wood offered helpful context for understanding the Revolution:

²¹¹ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*; Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*; Rawls and Herman, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*; Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*.

²¹² Wood, *The Idea of America*, 27.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 28.

There was none of the legendary tyranny that had so often driven desperate peoples into revolution. The Americans were not an oppressed people; they had no crushing imperial shackles to throw off. In fact, the Americans knew they were probably freer and less burdened with cumbersome feudal and monarchical restraints than any part of mankind in the eighteenth century.²¹⁴

The Americans also understood that certain political rights came with certain political responsibilities, which is another way that the idea of rights was so dramatically transformed.²¹⁵

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the framers was the creation of a government that viewed citizens as the legitimate center of state power. This idea is clear in the Preamble to the United States Constitution:

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

We know now in hindsight that the American framers' conceptualization of "We the people" and of rights was incomplete and would have to be remodeled. In the late eighteenth century, the idea of rights and the preamble's notion of the People then reflected the intolerance, cruelty, bias, and exceptionalism characteristic of that era's thinking about women, Blacks, Native Americans, and scores of other disenfranchised groups.

When the words, "We the People" were first written, the people constituted an exclusive group of white males. Women were routinely denied rights enjoyed by their male counterparts. The continued institution of Black slavery, which is one of the most profound tragedies of the American Revolution and subsequent founding, not only denied the rights of Blacks in America, but it also denied their basic personhood. For the thousands of slaves left objectified as mere

²¹⁴ Ibid., 27.

²¹⁵ Amar, *America's Constitution*.

property at the time of the founding, there was no foreseeable ladder of opportunity leading to their full socio-political enfranchisement.

Despite the glaring hypocrisies that would be institutionally imbedded in the fledgling government, America was built upon principles such as equality, natural rights, liberty, and popular governance. One of the most prolific and progressive American Framers, James Wilson, wrote in 1774 that all men “are, by nature, equal and free,” and continued on to explain that no one “has a right to any authority over another without his consent.”²¹⁶ Of course these claims to liberty, equality and freedom were not fully recognized then. Today’s preamble is inclusive of previously disenfranchised groups because the Constitution was designed to be a living, breathing document that each generation could and did change:

Even if an adventurous historian takes the constitutional story up through the Bill of Rights or the entire Washington Administration, the curtain then typically comes down. What happened later is ‘not my period,’ the historian tells himself. But what happened later is the reason many people today look to the Founding with reverence rather than revulsion. What happened later is that We the People eventually abolished slavery and promised equal rights to blacks and, later, women.²¹⁷

“We the People” could only ignore the actions that those core Enlightenment principles demanded all along. Amar explains that “later generations of the American people have surged through the Preamble’s portal and widened its gate. Like Constitutions, amendments are not just words, but deeds –flesh and blood struggles to redeem America’s promise while making amends for some of the sins of our fathers.”²¹⁸ From the Thirteenth Amendment that abolished slavery to the Twenty-Sixth Amendment that secured voting rights for young people, later generations of

²¹⁶ Burns and Burns, *A People’s Charter*, 37.

²¹⁷ Amar, *America’s Constitution*, 468.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

We the People have made thorough use of the principles undergirding American democratic governance in the pursuit of rights for all.

The American Revolution and subsequent founding forever changed the way the world would understand the nature of rights. The American philosophes based the American project on Enlightenment principles that would inspire the American colonists, Blacks, people with disabilities, women, Native Americans, young people, and sexual minorities to fight for the civil rights and political rights associated with full citizenship. The Constitutional rights shared by members of the American democracy bind us together as a political community.

The Rhetoric and Reasoning behind the Idea of Rights

John Locke, the British Enlightenment thinker, provided a good deal of the rhetoric and reasoning for the Revolutionary Generation's pursuit of rights in his 1690 *Two Treatises of Government*. As discussed in the previous chapter, Locke's social contract theory begins with a theoretical state of nature. The state of nature exists before the formation of civil or political society. Furthermore, Locke's state of nature presumed that all human beings are equal, free, and guaranteed certain natural rights by the law of nature. Locke wrote, "The state of Nature has a law of nature to govern it which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions."²¹⁹ Locke's contention that the law of reason and the law of nature are one in the same is an important idea that was used in formulating the American project.

²¹⁹ Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 130.

The Revolutionary Generation began its pursuit of rights with the foundational assumption that all people are naturally capable of reason, which they are free to use to decide upon the best type of political society that will best protect their natural rights. Even if we consider the Hobbesian social contract model, which is diametrically opposed to the type of society Locke imagined in that Hobbes advocated for a civil society that provided for the security of the people by allowing the legitimate center of state power to rest with a strong sovereign ruler, the Hobbesian model is still contingent on the assumption that people will use their natural capacity to engage in autonomous reasoning to accept his fear-based argument and choose to enter into a social contract allowing for state controlled by a sovereign ruler. Locke's social contract model, in contrast, suggested that people will not likely choose to remain in a state of nature because everyone has "executive power."²²⁰

Locke explained why the state of nature cannot endure in a state of unrestrained liberty, when he wrote:

It is unreasonable for men to be judges in their own cases, that self-love will make men partial to themselves and their friends: and on the other side, that ill-nature, passion, and revenge will carry them too far in punishing others; and hence nothing but confusion and disorder will follow.²²¹

The American framers believed that the formation of civil society not only promoted reason, but it also suppressed emotions through the force of law; created an independent judiciary; encouraged a free press; and promoted the much-valued order that comes with a well-organized political system. By employing Locke's theoretical framework and rhetoric, the American framers had a basis to justify the necessity of government –especially one designed with checks and balances aimed at preserving natural rights –founded upon the consent of the governed.

²²⁰ Ibid., 137.

²²¹ Ibid.

The very notion of popular sovereignty is entirely predicated on the Enlightenment confidence in the human capacity to engage in autonomous reasoning. Kant, for example, argued that reason was universally attainable, and furthermore, facilitates our ability for self-determination. The human capacity to reason was important for Kant, because he believed that individuals have the power to shape their reality –including understandings of one’s freedom and how to behave toward others. Philosopher Susan Neiman explained that Kant’s “conception of reason... promote [s] both the internal freedom to control your own actions, and freedom from other people’s attempts to control you.”²²² The first glimmers of the Enlightenment faith in reason can be largely attributed to discoveries by scientists such as Isaac Newton and Francis Bacon. Both men demonstrated that there are universal truths in the physical world, which were discoverable by following a scientific method based in empiricism. These discoveries concerning the physical world eventually led to new insights on how similar reasoning might be employed to shape the social world. Historian and Pulitzer Prize winner Gordon S. Wood offered an eloquent explanation of the scientific Enlightenment’s significance to secular thinking, the place of man in the world, and the impact such discoveries had on social thinkers when he wrote:

To posit the independence of the natural world was exciting enough; to conceive of a human world without God’s judgments and providences was simply breathtaking: it was in fact what centrally defined the Enlightenment. The work of John Locke and other philosophers opened reflective minds to the startling supposition that society, though no doubt ordained in principle by God, was man’s own creation –formed and sustained, and thus alterable, by human beings acting autonomously and purposefully.

Individuals saw themselves as being able to shape the social world, instead of simply accepting the conditions imposed by the British Monarchy. Empowered with the knowledge that they could shape the social world, the American framers began the task of creating their world anew.

²²² Neiman, *Moral Clarity*, 196.

Locke, who is often noted as the first to apply empirical reasoning to the social and political sciences, offered the American framers a new way to approach morality and notions of social justice in their rhetoric and practice. Scottish Enlightenment thinker David Hume also had a significant influence on these new ways of thinking about social life. Although Hume is often accused of offering overly simplistic explanations,²²³ he wrote that “mankind are so much the same, in all times and places, that history informs us of nothing new or strange in this particular. Its chief use is only to discover the constant and universal principles in human nature.”²²⁴ Hume’s point should not be read as simplistic. First, Hume’s statement references the notion of universal principles—an idea that later inspired Immanuel Kant to formulate the categorical imperative, which in part, claims that for an action to be moral, it must be moral regardless of the situation. . . . Second, this statement reflects Hume’s true skeptical nature. Hume was not so much concerned with virtue or the universality of principles. Instead, he was skeptical of those in political power and of the ideology used to win the support of a regime or nation.²²⁵ It is no surprise that Hume is credited with being a significant influence on the journalistic ideal.²²⁶ There was reason and utility behind the rhetoric of universal principles such as the guarantee that all men were created equal. The framers needed to appeal to ordinary colonists who were being asked to risk their comfort, protection, and lives to separate from the British Crown.

The American framers did not fully institutionalize all the ideas put forward by Locke or other Enlightenment figures, but they used the rhetoric to advance the cause of the Revolution.

²²³ Meyer, *The Democratic Enlightenment*.

²²⁴ Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 86.

²²⁵ Goldsmith, “Faction Detected: Ideological Consequences of Robert Walpole’s Decline and Fall.”

²²⁶ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

Wood explained that “ideas by themselves are never by themselves determinative of thought. Eighteenth-century-Americans selected and used what they found relevant and appropriate in [classical] ideas...and in the process fit what they read into their circumstances.”²²⁷ Americans saw the utility in not only the reasoning behind the social contract theories, but also the rhetoric. The Revolutionary Generation used the “language of natural rights, natural law, and the social contract to...broaden the moral perspective on political actions so that the actors themselves could come to terms with events that seemed to shatter all existing structures of explanation.”²²⁸ By invoking Locke’s ideas concerning natural law, natural rights, and social contract, the American philosophes were able to reassure worried colonists that proceeding with the Revolution was ultimately about securing their dignity and worth as human beings.²²⁹ The framers used the rhetoric of the universality of principles throughout America’s founding documents.

The Declaration of Independence reflected Enlightenment thinking in both its rhetoric and its reasoning. The Preamble to the Declaration, for example, “presided over the argument for the Revolution, the creation of a new political system, and the vindication of the rights of man.”²³⁰ The Preamble connects the American pursuit of rights with “the experience of men everywhere, not at a moment of history, but in every era.”²³¹ The Preamble expresses that the Americans were not just after the pursuit of rights for themselves, but by invoking the laws of

²²⁷ Wood, *The Idea of America*, 78.

²²⁸ Meyer, *The Democratic Enlightenment*, 105.

²²⁹ Meyer, *The Democratic Enlightenment*.

²³⁰ Commager, *Jefferson, Nationalism, and the Enlightenment*, 81.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

nature and the reference to all of mankind, declared principles and rights that were universal to all of humanity. When the Declaration of Independence declared certain truths to be self-evident, it reflected the Enlightenment confidence in human reason to discover and interpret ultimate truths about nature and the metaphysics of morals. Those truths that the Declaration lists as self-evident were all drawn from principles embedded in the literature of the European Enlightenment. The equality of man, the notion of unalienable rights, that power is derived from the consent of the governed, the right to revolution, that action and institutions should follow from principles, the desire for order, and the pursuit of happiness are all principles that largely represent the core assumptions of the Enlightenment's most profound thinkers. However, the American project was so unique because "it was only in America, for the first time, that it was formalized and written into constitutional guarantees," Commager explained.²³²

In many ways, the American project might be seen as Locke's social contract theory come to life. Thomas Paine, the American revolutionary and philosopher of progress best known for writing widely accessible pamphlets that ultimately persuaded ordinary colonists to declare their independence from Britain, observed with awe in his 1791 *The Rights of Man*, that:

The case and circumstances of America, present themselves as in the beginning of a world; and our inquiry into the origin of government is shortened, by referring to the facts that have arisen in our day. We have no occasion to roam for information into the obscure field of antiquity, nor hazard ourselves upon conjecture. We are brought at once to the point of seeing government begin, as if we had lived in the beginning of time. The real volume, not of history, but of facts, is directly before us, unmutilated by contrivance, or the errors of tradition.²³³

To be clear, Paine was not eschewing the impact and influence of the great thinkers from Enlightenment. Rather, this passage celebrates the singularity and exceptional nature of the

²³² Ibid., 85.

²³³ Paine, *Rights of Man*, 100.

American project, which had never before been accomplished. When the Revolutionary Generation declared independence from the British Crown, their goal was to replace a government that infringed on the basic rights of the American colonists with a better one of their own making. Commager explained that the American Revolutionary Generation “put on the road to solution almost all those great problems which had bemused and perplexed political thinkers from ancient times.”²³⁴

The American Revolution and the principles upon which it was based propelled the birth of a new nation and a new federal Constitution to guide it. Although the framers of the Constitution were initially split about the creation of a federal government, the ultimate success of the federalists was that a decade after the Revolution, they removed revolutionary ideology from being just a poetic remembrance or an allegory. The framers took revolutionary ideology, placed it in the real world, and updated it “in ways that would make it consistent with the inescapable necessity of creating an effective national power.”²³⁵ Jefferson expressed his hope for the ongoing impact of the American Revolution and Founding, when he wrote:

A just and solid republican government maintained here, will be a standing monument and example for the aim of imitation of the people of other countries [who] will see from our example that free government is, of all others, the most energetic...that the inquiry which has been excited by our revolution and its consequences will ameliorate the condition of man over a great portion of the globe.”²³⁶

Jefferson’s statement reflects that Enlightenment-born confidence in individuals’ ability to use reason to free themselves from the bondage of a government that does not promote freedom, dignity, and the general well-being of the people. According to Bailyn, the creation of a federal

²³⁴ Commager, *Jefferson, Nationalism, and the Enlightenment.*, 20.

²³⁵ Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew.*

²³⁶ Jefferson, “Thomas Jefferson, Letter to John Dickinson Washington, March 6, 1801.”

government fulfilled the radical aspirations for political freedom “by creating the power necessary to guarantee both the nation’s survival and the preservation of the people’s and the state’s rights.”²³⁷

While the story of the Constitution goes on to illustrate how rights continued to develop over the next 200 years, my inquiry focuses on the American Revolutionary Generation’s pursuit of rights and the principles upon which that pursuit was based. Although the framers’ social and political context limited who could who could enjoy full political enfranchisement, it is important to keep in mind that they based a new system of government on principles that would, indeed, forever change the way that the world would understand the nature of rights.

²³⁷ Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew*, 122.

Chapter 4

The Legacy of Ideas: Modern Perspectives on the Roles and Responsibilities of Citizens in a Democracy

The Enlightenment gave the world a new way of understanding science, the significance of the human capacity to reason, and the nature of human rights. In doing so, thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Hume, and others paved the way for the American founders to institutionalize principles that are commonly accepted as hallmarks of a democratic society. Although twenty-first-century democracy looks quite different from the early democratic system built by the American Framers, many of those differences reflect a wider embrace of cherished democratic principles such as equality, freedom, justice, and autonomy. Having explored the contributions of thinkers from the European Enlightenment and the impact of their thought on the American Framers, I now turn to perspectives that inform current understandings democracy and democratic citizenship.

I begin Chapter Four by explaining why I have chosen to discuss the press in my discussion of the roles and responsibilities of citizens. I move on to discuss the ongoing usefulness of moral and political philosophy. Both of these philosophical realms involve principles, which serve an important function in a democracy. Given the importance of principles to this project, I briefly discuss the nature principles and the important role they play in helping us to understand democracy and democratic citizenship. From this discussion, I go on to explore the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. In this section, I examine scholarship produced by post-Enlightenment thinkers who present important ideas and ideals that suggest

certain roles and responsibilities citizens are obliged to fulfill in order to sustain democracy. The importance of an informed citizenry is an idea referenced by many of the modern theorists and philosophers who ground their work in Enlightenment principles. In this discussion, I emphasize the value of the ideal and the importance of knowledge attainment. If educators and journalists are obliged to build democratic capacity by facilitating the development of an enlightened citizenry, then their efforts ought to be guided by the roles and responsibilities that citizens must fulfill in a democracy. In this chapter, I also discuss issues related to the roles and responsibilities of a free press in a democracy.

Why Discuss the Press?

The fact that journalism flourishes across the globe in non-democratic states demonstrates that journalism does not need democracy to function.²³⁸ However, democracy does need a free press to function. This will become increasingly evident in my discussion of the roles and responsibilities of democratic citizens. The primary contention of the dissertation as a whole is that educators –particularly journalism educators –are obliged to do good work because of their simultaneous roles as citizens and professionals. Like educators, journalists also provide information to citizens. Like education, many see journalism as falling short of fulfilling its roles. But, before we can understand the of journalism educators’ unique roles and responsibilities in a democracy, we must first explore the role of journalists in a democracy.

My discussion of journalism will discuss the role(s) of a free press, the changing context in which journalism is practiced, and the problems and principles related to journalists’ pursuit of

²³⁸ Zelizer, “On the Shelf Life of Democracy in Journalism Scholarship.”

good work. I continue by reintroducing the academic concept of good work, which is a useful lens for exploring not only the nature of professional obligation for journalists, but also the institutional and individual challenges that professionals face. I also discuss the limitations and possibilities presented by the good work paradigm. I conclude my discussion of journalism by considering ways that good work in journalism might be leveraged. The public, or civic, journalism movement is one way that journalists have attempted to leverage good work. Educators are also a part of the public journalism movement and, constitute another crucial professional realm that has an obligation to do good work in a democracy by virtue of their simultaneous roles as citizens and professionals.

Why Political Philosophy and Moral Philosophy Still Matter

The ongoing significance of philosophy –especially those philosophical ideas from the Enlightenment Era –is often overlooked by members of professional communities and citizens in general. The Enlightenment’s confidence in the human capacity to reason is the basis for the claim that an educated citizenry is necessary for a democracy. When journalists and educators understand the intellectual history of the principles that guide their practice as professionals and citizens, these groups are better equipped to make “enlightened philosophical judgments” that foster an enlightened democratic community.²³⁹

John Rawls, a leading twentieth-century moral and political philosopher, distinguished political philosophy as a distinct philosophical realm. Political philosophy, Rawls explained, deals with issues concerning “political justice and the common good, and about what institutions

²³⁹ Cohen, *Philosophical Issues in Journalism*, 254.

and policies best promote them.”²⁴⁰ In the democratic tradition of political philosophy, citizens are considered the benefactors of these ideas because they help citizens understand their roles, responsibilities, and their basic rights and freedoms.²⁴¹ Rawls outlined four functions that political philosophy can serve in a society.

First, political philosophy can help citizens to deliberate. If disagreeing citizens can find common ground based on agreement about underlying principles, they may be more inclined to deliberate rather than relate to each other as adversaries.²⁴² Second, political philosophy orients people to their roles as citizens and members of a society, which are distinct from their roles as “individuals, or as members of families and associations.”²⁴³ Third, political philosophy offers an alternative perspective through which to understand the rational and historic role of institutions when our practical dealings with these institutions inflame frustrations and anger.²⁴⁴ Fourth, political philosophy, Rawls said, offers the imaginative space to consider, given what is “historically practicable,” what a just democratic society might look like.²⁴⁵ Political philosophy does address questions of political value and political morality. Moral philosophy, however, is a qualitatively distinct realm that extends beyond questions of political action.

Moral philosophy, or *ethics*, is a wide-ranging branch of philosophy that addresses questions of right and wrong, good and evil, and other moral judgments. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* offers two definitions for morality. First, morality can be defined as

²⁴⁰ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*, 5.

²⁴¹ Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

referring to “some codes of conduct put forward by a society or, some other group, such as a religion, or accepted by an individual for her own behavior.”²⁴⁶ Second, morality is used “normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons.”²⁴⁷

Inquiry into moral concepts is not about finding truth, but about discovering what ought to be.²⁴⁸ Moral philosophy is also in a unique position to answer questions such as: “How do we deliberate –rationally and morally? What is the connection between principles of beliefs and motives? What are the first principles, and how do we come to desire to act on them?”²⁴⁹ For this line of inquiry, moral philosophy offers a unique lens that guides considerations of what ought to be expected of citizens –and particularly the unique set of obligations some citizens have within a democracy –when working to build the capacity to sustain democracy.

Political philosophy and moral philosophy provide useful principles for understanding issues in our current democratic context by facilitating individuals’ capacity to critically engage with public ideas. Given the complex issues citizens face in a democracy, political philosophy and moral philosophy –whether it is contemporary scholarship or work produced during the Age of the Enlightenment –have proven to be useful lenses for understanding and critically engaging these ideas and the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a modern democracy.

²⁴⁶ Gert, “The Definition of Morality.”

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Neiman, *Moral Clarity*, 19.

²⁴⁹ Rawls and Herman, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, XII.

On the Importance of Principles

Understood as a democratic state or democratic community, democracy requires more than a right to vote. It requires “an equal voice and equal stake in the result,” Dworkin explained.²⁵⁰ The most basic definition of democracy is rule by the people.²⁵¹ Rooted in the Greek word *demokratia*, in which *demos* means people and *kratia* means rule or authority, manifestations of modern democracy vary by historical context, philosophical assumptions, and the empirical practice of democracy.²⁵² Although I focus primarily on the American democracy, the underlying principles are relevant to any modern democratic society. It is important to note, however, that the prevailing definitions of core democratic principles will not be the same across all contexts.

The American democratic system is a representative democracy, which runs counter to a majoritarian system of democracy in which the majority rules. When Tocqueville expressed concern about the tyranny of the majority, he was correct to worry because in a majoritarian democracy, there is no guarantee that the majority will act in a way that is fair or just.²⁵³ In a majoritarian system, dialogue and deliberation is a secondary concern because the interests of a dissenting minority have no political value. The American democratic republic, in contrast, is built on a set of principles that require citizens to fulfill certain roles and responsibilities related to their citizenship. Some of these principles include equal concern, liberty, self-determination, reason, political freedom, and justice. Although we often mimic majoritarian democracy when

²⁵⁰ Dworkin, *Is Democracy Possible Here?*, 5.

²⁵¹ Parker, *Educating the Democratic Mind*, 5.

²⁵² Price, *Public Opinion*.

²⁵³ Dworkin, *Is Democracy Possible Here?*.

making decisions like what restaurant to go to or what movie to see, when applied to democratic governance, the majoritarian conception of democracy places weak value on those principles that guide citizens' sense of political morality. The majoritarian perspective is independent of such concerns. Under the majoritarian perspective of democracy, there are no safeguards that prevent the majority from trampling the will and dignity of the minority. The American founders' commitment to individual rights and other principles made the majoritarian concept of democracy an untenable possibility for the American democracy that depends on deliberation, principled action, and reason to sustain itself.

Common understandings of democratic principles are not static. Eric Foner's book *The Story of American Freedom*, for example, struggles to define freedom by documenting how the meaning of freedom –as both a reality and as an ideal –has been defined and redefined through the course of American history. The meanings behind core democratic principles such as freedom are constantly in flux as the political culture shifts, as people engage ideas with greater depth, and as the public becomes increasingly diverse, for instance. As political scientist Robert Reich suggested in his book, *The Power of Public Ideas*, it is difficult to speak of a single, unifying public interest because we live in “a heterogeneous society comprising a multiplicity of values and viewpoints.”²⁵⁴ Certainly some public ideas prevail over others, but even the prevailing view can change with time, increased understanding, and changing social context. Women's suffrage, the Civil Rights movement, and certain states permitting same-sex marriage are perfect examples of how the prevailing view can change to impact not only policy, but also the prevailing definitions of the underlying principles behind those changes.

²⁵⁴ Reich, *The Power of the Public Ideas*.

Equality, liberty, dignity, and other core principles typically broaden in scope and inclusivity as policies change. Principles, however, are public ideas. Changes to the prevailing views can restrict rights just as they have extended rights. For example, some citizens choose not fully participate, while some citizens cannot participate. Others might accept ideas and policies without engaging in critical thought or deliberation. Changes to the prevailing views might also be impacted when citizens and governments fail to recognize the inherent dignity of all human beings. The processes by which public ideas are freely aggregated, discussed, and debated among a diverse public represent the big picture of what makes the US democracy such a suitable form of government for a pluralistic society. Attention to the democratic principles that demand that citizens engage in some level of critical moral and political reasoning, however, is the true boon of the US democracy. But, citizens, journalists, and educators alike should possess a deep understanding of their democratic and professional principles –if they hope to build the capacity to sustain a self-governing democracy.

The Roles and Responsibilities of Citizens in a Citizen-Centered Democracy

Many would agree that a citizen-centered approach to the challenges facing democracy would be an appropriate point-of-entry. As such, I consider how citizens might move toward enlightened citizenship within a *strong democracy*, which Benjamin Barber describes as a form of participatory democracy that “rests on the idea of a self-governing community of citizens who are united less by homogenous interests than by civic education and who are made capable of common purpose and mutual action by virtue of their civic attitudes and participatory institutions

rather than their altruism or their good nature.”²⁵⁵ The participatory democracy Barber describes embraces difference while emphasizing the necessity of community so members form common understandings of principles such as equality, autonomy, freedom, and justice.

Whether we accept Barber’s argument for politics within a strong democracy or politics within other typologies of democratic regimes, we will still find that even in those formulations that only require weak participation, the regime still needs a knowledgeable and informed citizenry in order to be considered legitimate, which is a point emphasized by Justice Breyer’s Active Liberty doctrine.²⁵⁶ Even in Barber’s theory of strong democracy, the emphasis is to “revive citizenship” so that democracy becomes such that “all of the people govern themselves in at least some public matters at least some of the time.”²⁵⁷

In the following section, I draw upon the work of modern democratic theorists to define the roles and responsibilities of citizens. Each of the roles and responsibilities speak to the importance of attending to principles that support the development of enlightened democratic citizenship.

Citizens Must Be a Sentinel over Their Rights

For Madison, a good citizen is “a sentinel over the rights of the people.”²⁵⁸ Citizens must understand the meaning and nature of the rights they have in a democracy. According to recent Annenberg research, however, Americans are more likely to correctly identify judges on the

²⁵⁵ Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 117.

²⁵⁶ Breyer, *Active Liberty*.

²⁵⁷ Barber, *Strong Democracy*, xiv.

²⁵⁸ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*, 113.

televised singing competition *American Idol* than they are to correctly identify the three branches of government or the chief justice of the Supreme Court. Further, only about half of the states require civics education as a prerequisite for high school graduation. When citizens are not informed about their basic rights, they are in no position to act as a sentinel over those rights, to make claims about the legitimacy of their government, or effectively self-govern. The idea that citizens need to be informed is not new. Thomas Jefferson, for example, is often quoted as writing, “I know of no safe depository of the ultimate power of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.”²⁵⁹ In our current democratic context, journalists and educators are primarily tasked with informing the discretion of citizens by enabling the free flow of ideas, determining the quality of political discussion, and transmitting knowledge and values about our shared democratic life.

Lee Shulman, philosopher of education and past President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching pointed to a phenomenon that impedes the formation of an enlightened citizenry –illusory understanding. Shulman, who framed illusory understanding as an enemy to liberal learning, explained that it is simply “the kind of understanding where you think you do remember and understand, but you don’t.” Illusory understanding is particularly dangerous because democracy thrives when citizens understand issues of common concern –not simply think that they understand them. Journalism and education are two professional realms obliged to aid in the development of truly informed citizens. Among the traditional roles of the press in a democratic society, according to a 1947 report by the Commission on the Freedom of

²⁵⁹ *The New Public Service*, 54.

the Press, is the duty to direct its work toward creating “a world community by giving men everywhere knowledge of the world and of one another.”²⁶⁰

This goal becomes problematic, however, if journalists and educators are not equipped with this knowledge themselves. A brief look back at the President’s 1968 Commission on Civil Disorders illustrates my point. The Commission, which was convened to investigate a riot, challenged what author Tom Goldstein described as “journalistic conceit.” This conceit was reflected in journalists’ belief that “they were generalists who could absorb any new material quickly and efficiently.”²⁶¹ The Commission concluded that journalistic conceit too often came from a perspective that reflected white, male privilege.²⁶² Their solution was to diversify the newsroom. Journalism, education, and democracy benefit from efforts to build cognitive diversity by hiring members from outside of the majority. The recommendation from the President’s 1968 Commission on Civil Disorders seems to affirm that the health and vigor of a democracy is tied to the quality of discussion and thought in journalism. They sought to catalyze change in journalism and democracy by looking to the knowledge and range of perspectives held by the journalists themselves.

While it is important to consider the role that institutions play in a democracy, people catalyze change. After all, institutions and structures do not do the work necessary to build democratic capacity—people do. Harry Boyte, whose research and practice focuses on public work, offered the important reminder that “structures and institutions are neither the solution to

²⁶⁰ *A Free and Responsible Press*, 4.

²⁶¹ Goldstein, *Killing the Messenger*, 234.

²⁶² Goldstein, *Killing the Messenger*.

complex public problems nor our enemies, but rather our tools.”²⁶³ Ultimately, institutional change will involve the efforts of people –citizens, journalists, and educators –who can think creatively about how to further democratic self-governance despite institutional impediments.

Citizens Must Pursue Political Freedom

Alexander Meiklejohn, who was only briefly discussed in the introductory chapter, was a twentieth-century First Amendment scholar and philosopher of democracy and education.

Influenced heavily by social contract theory, Meiklejohn contended that citizens of a democratic state enter into a political compact with one another to form a body politic in which citizens are simultaneously rulers and ruled. Meiklejohn’s 1965 publication *Political Freedom* explores why the legitimacy of American system of self-government is in danger. A government only has just power when given the consent of the governed. Meiklejohn lamented, however, that:

To an unforgiveable degree, citizens of the United States are still subjected to decisions in the making of which they have had no effective share. So as far as that is true, we are not self-governed; we are not politically free. We are governed by others. And perhaps worse, we are, without their consent, the governors of others.²⁶⁴

Meiklejohn believed that education precedes political freedom.²⁶⁵ I agree that the degree to which citizens are able to critically engage knowledge and information impacts the degree to which they are able to express their political freedom. Meiklejohn specified that the problems he identified concerning democratic legitimacy were directly correlated to how citizens were

²⁶³ Boyte, “Public Work: Civic Populism Versus Technocracy in Higher Education,” 94.

²⁶⁴ Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*, 10.

²⁶⁵ Nelson, *Education and Democracy*, 2009.

intellectually prepared to use their minds to self-govern. Meiklejohn was an ardent believer in the special role education has in a democracy, and advocated the position “that liberal education, properly conceived, could actually *create* an ideal liberal democratic society.”²⁶⁶

Citizens Should Strive For Political Equality

Political theorists such as Ronald Dworkin, Robert Dahl, and John Rawls emphasized equality as a necessary component of a just, democratic society. As discussed in the introductory chapter, Dworkin believed that achieving dignity is the paramount goal of democratic life. To recap, Dworkin explained that dignity involved two principles: equal concern for the lives of all citizens and personal responsibility for deciding the course of one’s life. Dworkin argued that the two principles of human dignity can provide common ground for disagreeing citizens, so that “they came to see their continuing disagreements as controversies about the best interpretation of fundamental values they all share rather than simply as confrontations between two divergent worldviews neither of which is comprehensible to the other.”²⁶⁷

Dahl, who wrote extensively on the subject of political equality, explained that “the only political system for governing a state that derives its legitimacy and its political institutions from the idea of political equality is a democracy.”²⁶⁸ Dahl made a similar claim to Dworkin by positioning “equal consideration of interests” and the presumption of “personal autonomy and

²⁶⁶ Nelson, *Education and Democracy*, 2009, xiii.

²⁶⁷ Dworkin, *Is Democracy Possible Here?*, 22.

²⁶⁸ Dahl, *On Political Equality*, 6.

self-determination” as justifications for the Strong Principle of Equality, the logic of which he outlined as follows:

If the good or interests of everyone should be weighed equally, and if each adult person is in general the best judge of his or her good or interests, then every adult member of an association is sufficiently well qualified, taken all around, to participate in making binding collective decisions that affect his or her good or interests, that is, to be a full citizen of the demos. More specifically, when binding decisions are made, the claims of each citizen as to the laws, rules, policies, etc. to be adopted must be counted as valid and equally valid. Moreover, no adult members are so definitely better qualified than the others that they should be entrusted with making binding and collective decisions. More specifically, when binding decisions are made, no citizen’s claims as to the laws, rules, and policies to be adopted are to be counted as superior to the claims of any other citizen.²⁶⁹

Dahl suggested that political equality identifies obligations for citizens. He argued that citizens’ obligation to struggle for greater political equality is rooted in reason, moral judgment, and emotion. Further, Dahl suggested that some citizens have special obligations, in a democracy. He argued that those in privileged strata should use their power to strive for greater political equality.²⁷⁰

Citizens –Especially Journalists and Educators -Should Consider the Ideal

Susan Neiman is a contemporary moral philosopher whose most recent publication, *Moral Clarity: A Guide for Grown-Up Idealists*, draws upon the metaphysics of Enlightenment philosophers as a guide for understanding the moral principles that can be used to fully understand and address today’s most pressing social and political issues. In her book, Neiman argued that while many on America’s political right misuse moral concepts or use them as an

²⁶⁹ Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*, 105.

²⁷⁰ Dahl, *On Political Equality*.

empty appeal to voters, America's political left has abandoned its use of moral vocabulary.

Neiman's goal is to offer a way to discuss values and principles such as hope, happiness, reverence, dignity, good, evil, and reason in order to provide a new lens for understanding them. Although her book's primary audience is America's political left, Neiman's call to consider principles is salient despite one's political orientation.

Another modern philosopher who asks citizens to consider the ideal by focusing on principles is John Rawls, who was a leading twentieth-century political and moral philosopher. His 1971 publication, *A Theory of Justice*, is among one of the most influential philosophical works in the last hundred years.²⁷¹ Rawls identified the three parts of Enlightenment-era social contract theories: the state of nature, the creation of the contract itself, and the state formed as a result of that contract. From this analysis, he attempted to imagine how individuals might come together to agree upon a set of principles that guide a notion of justice. Rawls presented a doctrine for a moral contract among citizens based on agreed upon moral principles, which he explained were "the principles of social justice: they provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and they define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation."²⁷²

Rawls's theory, which he termed *justice as fairness*, presents a conception of justice entered into by people who are presupposed to be free and rational, and therefore equal. Much like the state of nature described by earlier social contract theorists, Rawls's theory begins with what he calls the original position. Because individuals are rational, free, and equal, they enter into deliberation about the principles that determine a guiding conception of justice. To further

²⁷¹ Graham, *Rawls*.

²⁷² Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 4.

situate the original position in a context of fairness, Rawls explained that “no one should be advantaged or disadvantaged by natural fortune or social circumstances in the choice of principles.”²⁷³ So, if a person knew that he would be rich, his deliberations on justice could be impacted by a type of self-interest allowing a utility-based notion of justice that would reject social aid to those less fortunate. To ameliorate this potential problem, Rawls proposed the concept of the *veil of ignorance*. Individuals deliberate about principles of justice in the original position having no knowledge of what their social status or conditions might be. Ultimately, Rawls was interested in addressing the problems of social inequality among citizens within a domestic regime.

Rawls favored a notion of justice that was democratic in nature. The democratic conception of justice has two parts: First, everyone has an equal claim to basic liberties.²⁷⁴ Second, “social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: they are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and they are to be the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society.”²⁷⁵

Both Neiman and Rawls encouraged their readers to engage in conversations and decision-making based on moral principles. Such conversations are especially salient for journalists and journalism educators engaging in collaborative work to address the growing democratic crisis I outlined in the introduction to Chapter One. I believe that the success of these efforts will depend on journalists’ and journalism educators’ ability and/or willingness to engage

²⁷³ Ibid., 16.

²⁷⁴ Graham, *Rawls*.

²⁷⁵ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 42–43; Graham, *Rawls*, 48.

in conversations about how core journalistic principles might be leveraged in their pursuit of democratic sustainability.

Citizens Must Engage in the Free Flow of Ideas

The First Amendment is fundamental to the principles and practices that constitute the American approach to democratic self-governance.²⁷⁶ In his concurring opinion on *Whitney v California*, Justice Brandeis provided justification for First Amendment protections of speech and the right to peaceably assemble rooted in democratic sustainability. Justice Brandeis contended that the public's ability to participate in unrestrained thought, discussion, and deliberation is "indispensable to the discovery and spread of political truth." He explained that "free discussion affords ordinarily adequate protection against the dissemination of noxious doctrine; that the greatest menace to freedom is an inert people; that public discussion is a political duty, and that this should be a fundamental principle of the American government."²⁷⁷

The principles Justice Brandeis presented in his 1927 opinion are, Cohen suggested, the basis of Meiklejohn's ideas on democracy and education. Meiklejohn explained that "the primary purpose of the First Amendment is, then, that all the citizens shall, so far as possible, understand the issues which bear upon our common life. That is why no idea, no opinion, no doubt, no belief, no counterbelief, no relevant information, may be kept from them."²⁷⁸ This is not simply the function of the press, but the responsibility of all citizens. For Meiklejohn, the flow of ideas

²⁷⁶ Cohen, "A Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy"; Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*.

²⁷⁷ "Whitney V. California/Concurrence Brandeis."

²⁷⁸ Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*, 75.

concerning the common good and the ability to engage in public deliberation was the essence of government by politically free citizens. Meiklejohn explained the habits of mind necessary for citizens to self-govern. “When a question of policy is ‘before the house,’ free men choose to meet it not with their eyes shut, but with their eyes open. To be afraid of ideas, any idea, is to be unfit for self-government,” Meiklejohn said.²⁷⁹

One of the major feats by the American Framers was that they designed a political system meant for mass public participation. French political scientist Alexis de Tocqueville admired the American project and published extensive analysis of the new democratic order in his 1835 book, *Democracy in America*, but Tocqueville was wary of the consequences of a broadening public.²⁸⁰ In England, philosopher John Stuart Mill expressed similar concern. Mill, who is most notable for his *Principle of Liberty*, published in 1859, addressed the rightful power a society can exercise over an individual.²⁸¹ Mill was wary of democracy and its ability to protect the rights of those in a political minority from abuses by the political majority. Mill was less concerned with the threat a government may pose to citizens’ liberty and focused instead on how public opinion posed the greatest threat to individual liberty.²⁸² Of public opinion and its relationship to individual liberty, Mill wrote, “If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.”²⁸³ Mill rejected the

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 28.

²⁸⁰ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*.

²⁸¹ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid., 168.

idea of absolute truth and Kantian ethical rules, arguing that all available ideas must be given free expression.²⁸⁴

Citizens Must Resist Manipulation

Mill's ideas on freedom of expression are often referred to as the *marketplace of ideas*, a term coined by Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes.²⁸⁵ It is important to note that the marketplace metaphor is one that is often met with dissent because it positions political speech as an economic commodity rather than a means for facilitating democratic deliberation.²⁸⁶ Cases such as *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which extended First Amendment rights to corporations possessing the financial resources to flood the public sphere with speech in ways that ordinary citizens cannot, further fuels dissent to the marketplace metaphor. A primary concern surrounding the *Citizens United* case is that citizens will be more susceptible to manipulation by the economically elite. Under the protection of the First Amendment and under the cover of a corporate entity, the economically elite can use unlimited resources to engage in all the free expression they can buy.

Whether we refer to Mill's marketplace of ideas, Rousseau's General Will, Reich's public ideas, or public opinion, each of these terms refer to aggregations of individual interests. But corporations are not like people. For example, a corporation cannot be sentenced to a jail term. However, because of the resources available to them, these corporations have the ability to

²⁸⁴ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*; *ibid.*; Rawls and Freeman, *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy*.

²⁸⁵ Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*.

²⁸⁶ Stanley Fish, "Does Money Talk in the Marketplace of Ideas?"

be agenda setters in ways that citizens cannot. Further, because corporations now have First Amendment rights, they can use their immense store of resources to impact public opinion in the service of their own private interests in ways that ordinary citizens typically cannot. Some might suggest that the *Citizens United* case leaves too much room for citizens to be manipulated.

Meiklejohn explained that citizens should possess a certain intelligence and access to information related to self-governance to guard against “the manipulation of men,” which he wrote, is the “destruction of self-government.”²⁸⁷ Meiklejohn defined intelligence as:

The readiness for any human situation; it is the power, wherever one goes, to see in any set of circumstances, the best response which a human being can make to those circumstances. And the two constituents of that power would seem to be, first, a sense of human values, and second, a capacity for judging situations as furnishing possibilities for the realizing of those values.

When citizens possess intelligence as described above, they are better able to resist manipulation.²⁸⁸ Meiklejohn explained that the freedom of mind that befits self-governed citizens can be “increased and established by learning, by teaching, by the unhindered flow of accurate information, by giving [people] health and vigor and security, by bringing them together in activities of communication and mutual understanding.”²⁸⁹ Likewise, John Dewey held that “society exists not only by transmission, by communication, but it may be fairly said to exist in transmission, in communication.”²⁹⁰ However, Diana Mutz and Cass Sunstein presented interesting findings suggesting that opportunities for citizens to communicate with non-likeminded others are rapidly waning.

²⁸⁷ Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*, 13.

²⁸⁸ Meiklejohn, *Political Freedom*.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 16–17.

²⁹⁰ Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, 1916, 5.

Citizens Must Hear the Other Side

Understanding behaviors that currently reflect the quality of our democratic citizenship is the first step toward constructing *realistic* strategies that could increase the quality of our democratic citizenship. Both Diana Mutz and Cass Sunstein offered empirical and theoretical insight into the current behaviors that define our democratic citizenship in an increasingly pluralistic and diverse society.

The degree to which citizens engage in robust deliberative processes and exchanges of ideas is a vitally important aspect of our democratic process.²⁹¹ However, there are a myriad of constraints that impede the actualization of robust deliberation in an increasingly diverse and pluralistic democracy. Sunstein offered empirical and theoretical insight into the nature of extremism and polarization, which is a common result of engagement with like-minded people.²⁹² Sunstein's study of political talk among like-minded individuals demonstrates that even when there is great diversity among levels of commitment to a given political perspective, after the group engages in discussion, the group will not only be more homogenous in their beliefs, but group members' perspectives will be held more strongly and be more extreme after engaging in discussions with each other.

Extremism that results from polarization may sometimes threaten social stability, but it can also serve an important democratic function. According to Thomas Jefferson, such a threat to social stability "prevents the degeneracy of government, and nourishes a general attention to public affairs."²⁹³ Polarization and extremism are not inherently bad or dangerous, but insulation

²⁹¹ Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*.

²⁹² Sunstein, *Going to Extremes*.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 153.

from those with opposing views can breed extreme positions that lack merit.²⁹⁴ Mutz illustrated this point in her discussion of John Stuart Mill's one-eyed man.²⁹⁵ Although like-minded individuals, such as those with strong politically partisan positions, are more likely to be more knowledgeable about an issue, they are still vulnerable to a special brand of ignorance marked by an uncontested single-mindedness.²⁹⁶

Contestation of beliefs is one of the great merits of a deliberative democratic model,²⁹⁷ and is one of the great merits of a living in a public –as opposed to a community. Richard Sennett, bereaved the decline of a public in which citizens interact with strangers:

Modern community seems to be about fraternity in a dead, hostile world; it is in fact all too often an experience of fratricide. Furthermore, these terms of personality which govern face-to-face relationships in a community are likely to cut down the desire of people to experience those jolts which might occur in a more unfamiliar terrain. These jolts are necessary to a human being to give him that sense of tentativeness about his own beliefs which every civilized person must have.²⁹⁸

Mutz suggested that citizens' pursuit of interpersonal harmony overwhelms their desire to participate in a deliberative democracy, in which citizens engage in cross-cutting political talk with non-like-minded others.²⁹⁹ Sennett's commentary suggests that the first order diversity (within-group diversity) typical of a deliberative model is beneficial by providing opportunities for contestation.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁴ Sunstein, *Going to Extremes*.

²⁹⁵ Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, 296.

²⁹⁹ Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*.

³⁰⁰ Sunstein, *Going to Extremes*.

Theorists of deliberative democracy have contended that political deliberation allows citizens with diverse political perspectives to come together to weigh the wide array of positions pertaining to a particular issue of common concern. Citizens who deliberate provide reasons and rationales to argue their perspectives in an effort to persuade other citizens engaged in deliberation. In an ideal political deliberation, the immediate end result is that the group comes to some consensus. The sustained benefits of deliberation are that citizens will be exposed to political perspectives that they may not have otherwise encountered, that a citizen who disagrees with a particular perspective will begin to see that the perspective is legitimate, that deliberation will encourage citizens to engage in more deliberation, and that engaging in deliberation will teach citizens to be reflective, rational, and critical in their political decision-making.

If we imagine ourselves existing within a liberal, “We the people” democracy that presumes a political compact among citizens that obliges individuals to come together as a self-governing body politic that operates primarily through a range of communicative activity, then Mutz’s investigation into the nature of cross-cutting political talk (interactions in which individuals are exposed to oppositional political perspectives) within an individual’s social network is one crucial component in our efforts to build democratic capacity among citizens. Mutz limited her investigation by focusing on cross-cutting political talk that does not result in either discussant persuading the other to adopt their political perspective.³⁰¹ Mutz hypothesized that even when these discussants fail to persuade each other, the exposure to discussion across lines of difference will “enable citizens to perceive political controversies as legitimate differences of opinion” because we will be better able to recognize the value of alternatives and

³⁰¹ Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*.

form empathy for the disagreeable perspective.³⁰² But, this type of engagement is not without its consequences.

Mutz's analysis used the long-abandoned theory of cross-pressures, which is defined as "the presence of people of inconsistent political views within an individual's social environment."³⁰³ Mutz revisited the theory to explain why cross-pressured individuals' participation levels were negatively affected by social accountability and ambivalence.³⁰⁴ Cross-cutting political conversations negatively impact political participation in the context of social accountability because "people entrenched in politically heterogeneous social networks retreat from political activity mainly out of a desire to avoid putting their social relationships at risk."³⁰⁵ This effect is most present among individuals who tend to be conflict-avoidant. Both social accountability and ambivalence are social psychological mechanisms, but ambivalence is uniquely intrapersonal.³⁰⁶ Because cross-cutting political talk results in a greater awareness of other political perspectives, when an individual who cannot make up their minds very easily encounters cross-cutting political exposure, they will grow increasingly uncertain of their own positions when confronted with political decisions, leading to the paralysis and inaction alluded to earlier.

³⁰² Ibid., 14.

³⁰³ Ibid., 92.

³⁰⁴ Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 123.

³⁰⁶ Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*.

Compared to other countries, Americans are a uniquely conflict averse people.³⁰⁷ Many Americans are taught from an early age that politics, along with religion, are not polite or appropriate conversation pieces because of the potential for conflict. Compared to other nations, however, Americans talk politics quite frequently. The catch is that people tend to engage in political discussions with like-minded individuals within their social networks.³⁰⁸ Broadly speaking, we avoid engaging in conversations that might produce interpersonal conflict by maintaining proximity to those who are like us. We manifest the birds of a feather adage in our lifestyle choices, the social contexts we choose to inhabit, the people with whom we choose to engage in a conversation, the residential areas in which we choose to live, etc.³⁰⁹ Although this de facto selectivity is rarely based on an explicit desire to be surrounded by those who share our political preferences, our environmental choices, which are likely based on a desire to be around people who share our lifestyle, values, or market positions, are not politically neutral choices.

Mutz posed the question, “How can a political culture that depends on the notion of free and open debate realize the benefits of frank discussion if it is seen to be at odds with the achievement of community and the pursuit of social harmony?”³¹⁰ There is no easy answer to this question. Mutz suggested that citizens need to learn the social skills necessary to respectfully handle conflict within our informal discourses. Another possible consideration is to examine the way in which we talk politics. Mutz wrote, “In American political life, expertise and factoids have been elevated over opinion and passion as what is seen as the ‘appropriate’ currency for

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 141.

political communication.”³¹¹ This information-rich status quo of political engagement suggests that there is always a right answer for political questions. Cross-cutting political engagement in which political perspectives are right or wrong, black or white, win or lose will not likely to encourage citizens to engage in more cross-cutting political conversations in the future. Conversations that introduce discussion of abstract principles, however, might increase the potential for discussants to address those complex social issues with a broader perspective, engage in creative problem solving by considering what ought to be, and challenge the authority of a dualistic knowledge paradigm that excludes certain voices from the conversation.

Our informal politics conversations, like any other informal conversations should seek to locate some common ground on which the discussants can stand. The pursuit of common ground is essential within a democracy that is characterized by difference but simultaneously calls for collective decision making. However, the value of diversity does not rest in the difference itself, but, as Ang suggested, the true value of diversity rests in the meaning of the difference.³¹² A mode of politics that implies that cross-cutting political talk is about a search for the right answer or that is motivated by a win/lose philosophy makes it difficult for diverse citizens to hold on to (or even recognize) one source of common ground that all humans share – the value of human dignity based on the dual recognitions of the inherent value of all human life and that we are each responsible for our own lives.

Political discussion in which participants discuss facts at the exclusion broad principles and values is overly-narrow and fails to capture a full picture of our shared democratic life. Our democratic citizenship requires us to understand morality as being interdependent with reason,

³¹¹ Ibid., 143.

³¹² Ian Ang, “On the Politics of Empirical Audience Research.”

information, and action; we must understand that political morality is not fundamentally bound to religiosity, but instead reaches every area of our lives. Invoking moral principles such as liberty, justice, equality, dignity, etc. within our political talk will help to ensure that we weigh political issues not only based facts, but also based on the principles that serve as the foundation of our democracy. Political talk that consciously includes the principled facets of political issues helps us keep in mind the nature of our mutual accountability we have for to one another –not only in the context of our citizenship within an American democracy, but also in the global context of our shared humanity. If journalism and journalism educators actively privilege principles along with facts/information, I contend that citizens might be in a better position to recognize the complexities surrounding the most contentious issues of our day. Perhaps this might be facilitated by journalists and educators who validate the legitimacy and value of critical discussion based on common democratic principles and values.

Moving Forward

Critical discussion is a central feature of modern democracy, but it is arguably a tradition that has been subordinated to the uncritical acceptance of public ideas, the unwillingness and lack of opportunities to engage in cross-cutting political conversations, and a passive popular culture that facilitates passive consent and demagoguery. I agree with Lee Bollinger's claim that the quality and thought of journalism is directly tied to the quality and thought of democracy. My interest in journalism and journalism education is directly concerned with citizens' ability to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in a democracy. The challenges that face journalism are challenges to democracy.

If journalism educators are to fulfill their obligation to build the capacity to sustain democracy, they must first grasp the problems and principles of journalism and its role in a democracy. In the remainder of this chapter, I explore the role of journalism in a democracy. What challenges do journalists face in our current communication context? What principles direct journalists' efforts to do good work? This discussion will also introduce an in-depth discussion of the academic concept of good work and its application to journalism as a professional realm. The chapter concludes by exploring public journalism as one way that journalism might better serve the interests of democracy.

Understanding the Public Role of Journalism

The idea that journalists have an obligation emanating from their simultaneous membership in a democratic community and professional community is an idea that has been made explicit in the American democracy. James Madison, who journalism historian Herbert Altschull described as having the greatest influence on the "American belief system" because of his primary authorship of the Constitution and Bill of Rights, made the role of the press quite clear in his first draft of the Bill of Rights when he described the right to the press as "one of the great bulwarks of liberty."³¹³ Madison argued against the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 that jailed individuals whose published writing was deemed to be politically agitating. He argued that a free press was "the only effectual guardian of every other right."³¹⁴ The role of journalists as bastions of democracy was further solidified when the Supreme Court made the landmark

³¹³ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*, 119.

³¹⁴ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

decision in the 1971 case allowing *The New York Times* to publish the Pentagon Papers without punishment. In his concurring opinion, Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black wrote, “In the First Amendment the Founding Fathers gave the free press the protection it must have to fulfill its essential role in our democracy. The press was to serve the governed, not the governors.”³¹⁵

Justice Black’s words might serve as a useful reminder given the recent controversy in which the United States Justice Department under President Obama tapped the phones of Associated Press reporters in order to learn the identities of sources who leaked key White House information.³¹⁶ In May 2013, Congress will consider the proposed Free Flow of Information Act, which would create a federal shield law protecting journalists from revealing their sources unless the “information sought outweighs the journalist’s need to keep confidential information.”³¹⁷ Although many states have some version of a shield law, journalists are not yet fully protected from being held in contempt for not disclosing confidential sources. Journalists argue that the proposed act creates a chilling effect on speech because potential sources would fear coming forward under the potential threat of exposure. If one element of the importance of journalism is to inform citizens and serve its fourth estate role to act as a check on government power, the arguments raised by advocates of government shield laws should be taken into careful consideration. This conversation also raises important concerns about what journalism is and who counts as journalists. Would those who identify as citizen-journalists, for example, be held to the same laws? Democracy depends on the free flow of information, which journalism helps to facilitate, but what is journalism?

³¹⁵ Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*.

³¹⁶ “Justice Department, IRS Scandals Challenge Obama’s Civil Liberties Credibility.”

³¹⁷ “Society of Professional Journalists: Federal Shield Law.”

Defining Journalism

What is journalism? The answer to this question is difficult to answer, and might depend on what interpretive community provides the answer.³¹⁸ In Deuze's study of journalists' self-perceptions, he explained that journalism can be seen as a profession, an occupation, as an academic discipline, or as an object of study.³¹⁹ Zelizer noted that among the ways that one might define journalism, that some choose to define it as individuals who participate in a range of activities.³²⁰ These related activities might include "reporting, criticism, editorializing, and the conferral of judgment on the shape of things."³²¹

Others suggested that there has been a general neglect to define journalism. Bovee, for example, offered a few ways to understand the difficulty in defining journalism. He explained that some see the definitional issues as related to philosophical tensions in defining core journalistic functions such as truth, objectivity, or news.³²² Another difficulty in reaching a definition, Bovee argued, is that journalists are primarily responsible for defining the meanings of what they do. He added that this responsibility is complicated by the assertion that because most journalists are not "philosophically inclined," that they "give little attention to definition."³²³ On the other hand, some suggest that defining journalism is potentially dangerous

³¹⁸ Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously*.

³¹⁹ Deuze, "What Is Journalism?"

³²⁰ Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously*.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

³²² Bovée, *Discovering Journalism*.

³²³ Bovee, *Discovering Journalism*, 8.

—especially if the government creates that definition because it could leave those who do not operate under classical models of journalism unprotected.³²⁴

Journalism might also be defined by what it produces. In 1947, the Commission on the Freedom of the Press defined the press as “all means of communicating to the public news and opinions, emotions and beliefs, whether by newspapers, magazines, or books, by radio broadcasts, by television, or by films.”³²⁵ Schudson believed that journalism is best understood by focusing on the news it produces. News, Schudson explained, is a “cultural form” called “public knowledge.”³²⁶ As culture, news is much more than information—it is a reflection of the mutually constitutive character of what is “recognized or accepted as public knowledge given certain political structures and traditions.”³²⁷ Hackett and Zhao also described journalism in terms of what it provides, explaining that the news is “the most important form of public knowledge in contemporary society.”³²⁸

The Changing Role of Audiences in the Information Age

How journalists view their audiences is important. Journalists do not always view their audiences as citizens, however. American journalists operate within a capitalistic market model, which means that many professional journalists must balance their role to inform citizens with

³²⁴ Bovee, *Discovering Journalism*.

³²⁵ *A Free and Responsible Press*, 109.

³²⁶ Schudson, *The Power of News*, 3.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

³²⁸ Hackett and Zhao, *Sustaining Democracy?*.

the profit motives of their news organization.³²⁹ For those journalists working within this model, readers are related to not only as citizens, but as consumers. The growing corporatism surrounding journalism is arguably one of the most significant impediments to the press fulfilling its democratic purpose.³³⁰ Even if audiences are perceived as citizens, it is important to consider journalists' views of citizenship. Walter Lippmann, whose ideas on public opinion and democracy represent an important conversation in journalism and mass communication studies, did not believe that citizens were interested or capable of making informed decisions in a democracy.³³¹ Although the press provided information, Lippmann expressed little faith in the ability for citizens to use this information to self-govern.³³² Dewey responded to Lippmann in a series of academic exchanges in the 1920's, in which he offered a more optimistic and active view of citizens and their potential to participate in a democracy.³³³

Dewey envisioned democracy as “the idea of community life itself” and believed that people could only become prepared for the robust responsibilities of democratic citizenship through communication with others.³³⁴ Dewey hoped that newspapers could contribute to democratic survival by connecting disparate people with one another. Essentially, Dewey recognized the potential for the mass media to create what rhetorician Rosa Eberly might term

³²⁹ Schudson, *The Power of News*; Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*.

³³⁰ Schudson, *The Power of News*; McChesney and Nichols, *The Death and Life of American Journalism*.

³³¹ Schudson, *The Power of News*; Price, *Public Opinion*; Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*.

³³² Price, *Public Opinion*; Schudson, *The Power of News*.

³³³ Schudson, *The Power of News*.

³³⁴ Dewey, *Public & Its Problems*.

common places of democracy.³³⁵ Either implicitly or explicitly, the way in which the press conceptualizes its audience has important implications for journalists' thinking about the nature and potentials of democratic citizenship.

Today, anyone can take on the role of journalist. Journalism is already shifting in such a way that news is becoming more of “an open mike conversation” in which citizens who may not fall into the professional realm of institutional journalism fulfill journalistic functions.³³⁶ Ordinary citizens are not simply receiving information, they are reporting information, providing forums for discussion, and regularly commenting on current affairs.³³⁷ Citizen-produced blogs, for example, have played key roles in breaking scandals and providing news not initially covered by mainstream media outlets. Although the value of independent bloggers and online alternative news organizations is not held in high esteem by some members of the mainstream press,³³⁸ some argue that “journalism will be better for the scrutiny that the blogosphere offers.”³³⁹ Could it be that new technology that allows citizens to act as journalists has already “pulled and redefined” journalism such that the meaning of journalism has been lost?³⁴⁰ My answer is no.

The ability for citizens to operate in roles that have traditionally been reserved for professionals operating within the bounds of institutional journalism need not be seen as a threat to journalism or democracy. The growing phenomenon of the active “prosumer,” which is “a hybrid of consumer and producer” has been a source of contention for political economy

³³⁵ Cohen, “A Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy.”

³³⁶ Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*, xii.

³³⁷ Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*.

³³⁸ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

³³⁹ Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*, xii.

³⁴⁰ Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*.

scholars, but I believe there is democratic potential in this and other forms of citizen-produced journalism.³⁴¹ This phenomenon would likely find support in the literature if we only consider the Enlightenment-era faith in the capacity for people to engage in autonomous reasoning, Meiklejohn's belief that democratic citizens must participate in the free flow of ideas, or Mutz's concern that citizens are not hearing the other side. Perhaps it is best to look at the possibilities presented by the "prosumer" phenomenon. Citizens who take on journalistic roles may serve to pluralize democracy by providing a platform for perspectives and ideas that may have otherwise had a weak presence in the marketplace of ideas. Finally, the "prosumer" phenomenon presents journalists and journalism educators with the opportunity to preserve the journalistic value of verification by becoming "a force in empowering citizens to shape their own communities based on verified information."³⁴² Just as each generation defines what democracy will look like, so too will they decide what journalism will look like. Even if the form changes, the core democratic mission by which it should operate remains the same. If the function of the press is to change to fulfill its democratic purpose, then the work that journalists do must begin by recognizing "the primacy of principles."³⁴³

The Pursuit of Good Work: Problems and Principles of Journalism

What are the principles that define journalism and the good work that journalists do?

Among the traditional roles of the press in a democratic society, according to a 1947 report by

³⁴¹ Ibid., 20.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid., 8.

the Commission on the Freedom of the Press led by Robert Maynard Hutchins, is the duty to direct its work toward creating “a world community by giving men everywhere knowledge of the world and of one another.”³⁴⁴ The Commission, however, reported that the press was not appropriately fulfilling its obligations in a democratic society.³⁴⁵ Some of the problems the Commission identified dealt with the content and the structure of the news. They argued that the press model was becoming increasingly market-driven, included sensationalistic and entertainment-driven content, misrepresented minority groups, and decreased the diversity of media ownership.³⁴⁶ The ultimate problem underlying all of the other problems identified by the Commission was that journalists were failing to make principled choices based on the interdependent relationship between the political freedom of citizens and a free and responsible press, which is a claim I evaluate later in this chapter.³⁴⁷ But, the Commission also argued that citizens had a moral duty to exercise their freedom of expression. This moral duty, according to the Commission, was owed not only to one’s “conscience and the common good,” but also to the truth. For the Commission, freedom is the ultimate principle that should guide the press and citizens because “where freedom of expression exists, the beginnings of a free society and a means for every extension of liberty are already present.”³⁴⁸

³⁴⁴ *A Free and Responsible Press*, 4.

³⁴⁵ *A Free and Responsible Press*.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

Principles

Seen as the ultimate principle, freedom directs the press to meet five key requirements: First, the press must offer “a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day’s events in a context which gives them meaning;” second, the press must provide “a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism;” third, the press must resist stereotyping by ensuring “the projection of a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society;” fourth, the press must attend to “the presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society;” and finally, the press must “provide full access to the day’s intelligence.”³⁴⁹

More recent efforts have been launched to identify and define core journalistic principles. *The Elements of Journalism* has earned its place among the definitive texts on journalistic principles. The authors, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel are both seasoned newsmen. Bill Kovach is a past editor of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution and the former Washington bureau chief for the *New York Times*. Tom Rosenstiel is a former media critic for the *Los Angeles Times* and former chief congressional correspondent for *Newsweek*. Rosenstiel currently serves as director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism. Kovach currently serves as the chairman of the Committee of Concerned Journalists, a group comprised of about 25 leading journalists who have worked since 1997 to “organize the most sustained, systematic, and comprehensive examination ever conducted by journalists of news gathering and its responsibilities.”³⁵⁰ *The Elements of Journalism* is the product of the analysis.

Kovach and Rosenstiel explained that the principles that compose the elements of journalism flow from the primary purpose of journalism, which they explained is “to provide

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 21–28.

³⁵⁰ Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*, 4.

people with the information they need to be free and self-governing.”³⁵¹ The principles that compose the elements of journalism are as follow:

1) Journalism’s first obligation is to the truth; 2) Its first loyalty is to citizens; 3) Its essence is a discipline of verification; 4) Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover; 5) It must serve as an independent monitor of power; 6) It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise; 7) It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant; 8) It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional; 9) Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience; and 10) Citizens, too, have rights and responsibilities when it comes to the news.³⁵²

The principles described here and in the Commission’s 1947 report are many of the principles that journalists use to define good work.

Good work, however, does not always prevail. Madison clearly recognized problems with the press in his day, but believed the abuses of the press would never outweigh its necessity to a democracy.³⁵³ Even though the traditional press model is becoming increasingly market-driven, the content increasingly sensational, and the diversity of perspectives increasingly limited, journalism is indispensable to a democracy. Because of the indispensable nature of journalism to democracy, it is important to understand the problems journalists face. While I emphasize the ideal, knowledge about the current context in which journalism is practiced can be faced with cynicism or it can be used to increase one’s capacity to reason and their sense of agency.

³⁵¹ Ibid., 5.

³⁵² Ibid., 5–6.

³⁵³ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

External Challenges

Critical discussion is a central feature of critical democratic citizenship. Some scholars argue, however, that critical discussion is being threatened by a number of factors. Pragmatist scholar, Richard Bernstein has cited the growing propensity for citizens to accept public ideas without critically engaging them as a threat to a fallibilistic mindset.³⁵⁴ Diana Mutz offered evidence to suggest that individuals are increasingly unwilling to engage in political conversations with people whose views conflict with their own.³⁵⁵ Further complicating the situation, opportunities to engage in cross-cutting political conversations are rapidly waning as our social networks become more homogenous.³⁵⁶ Also consider communication scholar, Lee Artz's claims that power elites engage in demagoguery by using the abundant resources available to them –political influence, ownership of media conglomerates, and access to cultural institutions –to generate passive consent among citizens by directing a passive popular culture that encourages consumerism, spectatorship, acquiescence to authority, and a sense of political impotency.³⁵⁷

Now recall Lee Bollinger's claim that the quality of thought and discussion in journalism is directly tied to the quality of democracy, civil society, and the free market.³⁵⁸ Perhaps we can test his claim. We need not look back very far in our public memory to recall instances when news media failed to fulfill its duty to “practice ethical journalistic standards suitable for a

³⁵⁴ Bernstein, *Abuse of Evil*.

³⁵⁵ Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

³⁵⁷ Artz, “Political Legitimacy, Cultural Leadership, and Public Action,” 9.

³⁵⁸ Rosen, Jay, “The Bollinger Thesis | Poynter.”

participatory democracy and citizen action.”³⁵⁹ Just think back to the behavior of the news media surrounding the United States invasion of Iraq. Mainstream news media outlets consistently referred to the United States invasion of Iraq as the “War on Terror” or “Operation Iraqi Freedom;” the narrative presented by many mainstream news outlets constructed Muslims as the enemy and routinely excluded perspectives from moderate Muslims hoping to assuage the growing Islamophobia; and many news anchors reported the day’s news with American flags in the background.³⁶⁰ The pro-American bias expressed in mainstream news media surrounding the U.S. invasion of Iraq was not subtle.

American viewers were increasingly aware of news bias surrounding the war, but they still used mainstream media outlets to get their news. According to a 2005 study by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, a growing number of Americans perceived the mainstream news media to be increasingly biased.³⁶¹ Somewhat paradoxically, the poll also shows that even though the public was more critical of the press, most people expressed generally favorable opinions of news organizations.³⁶² So, whether people consumed daily newspapers, local television news, network television news, or cable news, the study shows that they use the news media to get “timely information and news coverage,” and, in the end, feel that they find exactly what they seek.³⁶³ This poll is important because it gives credence to the idea that the ability to identify media bias does not necessarily prevent people from obtaining

³⁵⁹ Artz, “Political Legitimacy, Cultural Leadership, and Public Action,” 12.

³⁶⁰ Steuter and Wills, “Discourses of Dehumanization.”

³⁶¹ *Public Esteem for Military Still High - Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life.*

³⁶² *Ibid.*

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

information from these news outlets, which may still impact the quality of conversation among the public and serve an important agenda-setting function in people's lives.

I agree with Lee Bollinger's claim that the pressures that threaten the quality of thought and discussion in journalism directly impact the quality of democracy. As an example of the political economic changes to the media landscape, consider the 2011 Federal Communication Commission decision to approve Comcast Corporation's move to become the majority shareholder for NBCUniversal, which was previously held by General Electric.³⁶⁴ Comcast is the largest provider of cable and Internet in the United States, and now it owns a controlling share of one of the major producers of television news and entertainment.³⁶⁵ The impact is monumental. According to Free Press, "Comcast's media holdings now reach almost every home in America. In addition to its vast NBC Universal holdings, Comcast has 23.6 million cable subscribers, 18 million digital cable subscribers, 15.9 million high-speed Internet subscribers and 7.6 million voice customers."³⁶⁶ With the potential for even more homogeneity in media content and little incentive to provide better, less expensive, or more expansive Internet access, this recent merger is only one example of how the Telecommunications Act of 1996 drastically changed the media landscape by largely deregulating cross-ownership, which allows one person or entity to own businesses across multiple media.³⁶⁷ Before 1996, Federal Communications Commission policy restricted cross-ownership to prevent media consolidation on the scale we experience today to

³⁶⁴ "Who Owns the Media?"

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Obar, "Beyond Cynicism."

offer a media platform for a diverse range of voices and perspectives.³⁶⁸ Now, television news and newspapers cater their content to increasingly narrow audiences rather than a broad public.³⁶⁹ Profit motives are increasingly impacting journalism. Within large conglomerates, news represents an ever-shrinking division.³⁷⁰ Further, these news divisions within large conglomerates must also serve the business interests of the larger organization.³⁷¹ Concentration of ownership poses a real threat to a free, independent press. Journalism, and therefore democracy, is facing a crisis. Although crisis is not new to journalism, the intensity and scope of the challenges facing journalism continue to grow such that “the longstanding theory and purpose of journalism are being challenged in ways not seen before.”³⁷²

Where Do We Go from Here?

If we consider Bollinger’s claim that journalists’ call to conscience and sense of professional identity represent the primary check on market pressures, then journalists and journalism educators must come together to engage in creative problem-solving about how to best prepare students to do good work amid the myriad of constraints.³⁷³ This might mean creating new visions for journalism and journalism education. Future journalists should certainly

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*.

³⁷⁰ Ibid.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Ibid., 13.

³⁷³ Bollinger, Lee, “Statement on the Future of Journalism Education | Columbia University in the City of New York.”

be knowledgeable about the constraints that might impede their ability to do good work. Many of the challenges facing journalism tend to arise from external forces that usurp a journalist's ability to do good work. However, the Commission on the Freedom of the Press also lamented that journalists were failing to make principled choices based on the interdependent relationship between the political freedom of citizens and a free and responsible press.³⁷⁴ The Commission's view, which was expressed in 1947, may not have imagined the scope and power of the obstacles journalists face today.

Perhaps the claim that journalists are simply failing to make principled choices is outdated and unhelpful in its simplicity. Corporate interests and profit motives are increasingly driving journalists' practice, but this does not mean that journalists have disposed of the values that led them into the profession in the first place. However, it is possible that some journalists lack the tools to address them. Many journalists are regularly confronted with complex ethical dilemmas in the workplace. While the problems facing journalists are complex and significant, our membership in a democratic community obliges journalists and journalism educators to work toward a solution that can positively impact the quality of conversation and thought of journalism –and, by extension, the quality of democracy. A solution may involve re-thinking commonly held ideas about professional identity.

Good Work

As noted in the introductory chapter, the academic approach to good work stems from Harvard University's Good Work Project, seated in the Graduate School of Education. The Good

³⁷⁴ *A Free and Responsible Press.*

Work Project's three principal investigators, Howard Gardner, William Damon, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, define good work as "work of expert quality that benefits larger society."³⁷⁵ Good work is the integration of excellence, engagement, and ethics.³⁷⁶ Good work is good when it is excellent, which occurs when practitioners are skilled craftspeople dedicated to constantly improving their craft.³⁷⁷ Good work is good when practitioners are personally engaged in their work such that they find personal fulfillment and can reach a state of flow.³⁷⁸ There is a natural ethical dimension of good work because good work is good when practitioners seek to serve the broader public good and carry out their work in a socially responsible manner.³⁷⁹

The Academic Study of Good Work

Good Work: Where Excellence and Ethics Meet is the first major publication to come out of the Good Work Project. The authors' major research question for this book was: What does it mean to carry out good work in difficult times? Gardner and his colleagues conducted a series of semi-structured, in-depth interviews with professional journalists and geneticists to glean how these professionals described their goals and values; seized opportunities; encountered obstacles, ethical dilemmas, and changes (both positive and negative); envisioned the profession's future; and strategized methods to carry out their work.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁵ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*, ix.

³⁷⁶ Howard Gardner, *GoodWork: Theory and Practice*.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

These studies of professionals helped principal investigators to understand levers for good work and the nature of deviant cases, which are cases in which professionals do work that is legal—yet fails to meet the standards set by the core values—or ethical dimension—of the professional mission.³⁸¹ Gardner and his colleagues offered a broad definition of mission. They explained that a mission reflects the “defining features of the profession” and expresses a “basic societal need which the practitioner should feel committed to realizing.”³⁸² For journalism, its core mission has traditionally involved some iteration of the belief that journalism provides citizens information they need to self-govern. Every professional realm has a mission, even if loosely defined. This information enabled the researchers to make substantive claims about the overall professional realms of journalism and genetics.

Conditions of Good Work

The professional realm, according to Gardner and his colleagues, consists of four components: practitioners, domain, field, and other stakeholders.³⁸³ Practitioners are the individuals who choose a profession, receive training in order to practice, and pursue their own personal and professional goals.³⁸⁴ A domain is a codified symbolic system comprised of specialized knowledge and an ethical dimension.³⁸⁵ A field comprises the people and institutions

³⁸¹ Howard Gardner, *GoodWork: Theory and Practice*.

³⁸² Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*, 10.

³⁸³ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

that enact a symbolic system, or domain.³⁸⁶ Other stakeholders include the general public, consumers, corporate shareholders, and executives.³⁸⁷ Alignment refers to the synergistic relationship among all of the components of a professional realm.³⁸⁸ Gardner explained the nature of alignment and its relationship to the health of a professional realm when he wrote that “a professional realm is healthiest when the values of the culture are in line with the values of the domain, when the expectations of stakeholders match those of the field, and when domain and field are themselves in sync.”³⁸⁹ Ideally, alignment boosts morale, motivates excellence in practice, and allows for a flourishing professional realm.

There are certain conditions, however, that impede the ability for professionals to do good work. The challenges facing journalism are well documented. The journalists interviewed for the Good Work project, however, reported that they found it difficult to do good work. In their study of over 100 journalists –ranging from seasoned to novice –researchers from the Good Work Project found that 64% of participants were pessimistic about the “growing demands to comply with the business goals of the industry” and 63% noted a “perceived decline in values and ethics within the field.”³⁹⁰ Within these broad concerns are more specific issues, such as increased corporate control of news outlets (as opposed to ownership by small family firms), profit driven work, the pressure to produce work with increased speed, the changing culture of newsrooms due to conflicting corporate interests, and de-emphasis on in-depth and investigative

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Howard Gardner, *GoodWork: Theory and Practice*.

³⁸⁹ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*, 27.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 128.

reporting.³⁹¹ One's ability to do good work might also be impeded by: a lack of personal commitment to doing good work; the presence of professional standards that are not deeply rooted in the foundational values of the profession; and/or a weak education that not only fails to properly mentor students, but also fails to educate journalists about the principles that ought to guide journalistic practice.³⁹²

The difficulty facing young journalists interested in carrying out good work is especially dire. In another study examining how young people cope with moral dilemmas at work, Fischman and her colleagues found that the majority of young professional journalists they interviewed faced daily moral and ethical dilemmas in which they “were often pressured to cut corners and sensationalize stories to beat competitors in breaking news stories.”³⁹³ Contrasted to other young professionals, these young journalists reported that they felt little responsibility for improving the state of the profession; they often impute this responsibility to older professionals and professional organizations.³⁹⁴ Another concern Fischman and her colleagues noted of young journalists was that rather than perform compromised work, young journalists with high commitment to the profession's mission, standards, and practices left journalism for other professions in which their ability to do good work was less difficult.³⁹⁵ The situation of journalists is especially concerning if we consider that journalists from the Good Work study

³⁹¹ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

³⁹³ Fischman et al., *Making Good*, 52.

³⁹⁴ Fischman et al., *Making Good*.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

reported that their education was not helpful in their efforts to develop strategies to do good work.³⁹⁶

The Good Work Paradigm: Limitations and Possibilities

The researchers found that journalism was a poorly aligned professional realm. However, Gardner and his colleagues also issued a caveat about alignment. They explained that while the term is useful, its explanatory power should not be overstated for two reasons:

First, domains and fields are far too complex to be characterized as simply aligned or misaligned; there will always be pockets of relative alignment (for example, Internet journalism today) and pockets of relative misalignment (for example, geneticists and corporations caught in disputes about the possible risks associated with genetically modified foods). Second, all conditions of alignment and misalignment are necessarily temporary. Conditions in the world are always changing, and the alignment of one day almost always contains within it the seeds of at least minor nonalignment. This state of affairs may disappoint those who feel that they can find the ultimate profession or practice, but it should stimulate those who are looking for new challenges in unexpected places.³⁹⁷

Alignment, then, has been an issue with journalism since it emerged as a profession. Madison clearly recognized problems with the press in his day, but believed the abuses of the press would never outweigh its necessity to a democracy. To this effect, Madison said, “To the press alone, chequered as it is with abuses, the world is indebted for all the triumphs which have been gained by reason and humanity, over error and oppression.”³⁹⁸ Recognizing its limitations and possibilities, I find that alignment is useful to consider here because it emphasizes the ideal and

³⁹⁶ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 35–36.

³⁹⁸ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*, 123.

challenges journalists and journalism educators to think creatively about how to confront the issues that face journalism, journalism education, and democracy.

The limitations to alignment suggest that professionals must understand the dynamics of changing social, cultural, political, economic and professional contexts. This should not be a difficult task for journalists or educators, because staying abreast of new knowledge and changing societal contexts is arguably an inherent feature of the work that journalists and educators in higher education are obligated to do. Further, the limitations associated with alignment seem to encourage innovation in the professional realm in terms of redefining core values, such as objectivity, or by changing the standards by which good work is judged. Alignment suggests that journalists and journalism educators seeking to do good work should consider both the ideal and the real.

It is clear that journalism is not a well-aligned professional realm –at least according to the good work paradigm. But, misalignment can lead to new and innovative possibilities for a profession. Public, or civic, journalism is one way that journalists, educators, and citizens have sought to form a new vision for journalism based on the ideal and the real.

Leveraging Good Work in Journalism: Public/Civic Journalism

Public journalism, which is also called civic journalism, is an innovation in journalism that has attempted to challenge the status quo in journalism. Civic journalism has been a polarizing concept since its emergence, but it still has a significant presence in journalism today. In the discussion that follows, I will offer a brief synopsis of its history, attempt to define the ethos of the public journalism movement, and explore arguments from those who oppose public

journalism. I will use the terms civic journalism and public journalism interchangeably throughout this discussion.

The Emergence of Public Journalism as a Movement

The public journalism movement began in the 1990s as a response to the coupling of two phenomena: a marked decline in citizens' engagement in civic affairs and disturbingly high rates of public disapproval of the press.³⁹⁹ At the time, voter participation was on the decline and a 1994 study showed that 71% of the American public expressed that “the press ‘gets in the way of society solving its problems.’”⁴⁰⁰ A significant catalyst to public journalism becoming a movement was the 1988 race for the U.S. presidency between George H.W. Bush and Michael Dukakis. Not only was the press coverage criticized for its “horse race” reporting style and inattention to substantive political issues, but the candidates were criticized for attempting to appeal to the public using “simplistic” patriotic imagery and rhetoric.⁴⁰¹ David Perry, who studies the scholarly roots of civic journalism, explained that Davis “Buzz” Merritt, who was then the editor of the *Wichita Eagle* and later became a founder of the public journalism movement, “felt disgusted” by the election and its coverage.⁴⁰²

Following the election, journalists and scholars joined together to call for changes in how journalists cover campaigns. Merritt, for example, changed the way his paper covered elections.

³⁹⁹ Rosen, *What Are Journalists For?*; Perry, *The Roots of Civic Journalism*; Haas, *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*; Merritt, *Public Journalism and Public Life*.

⁴⁰⁰ Haas, *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*; Rosen, “Public Journalism,” 34.

⁴⁰¹ Haas, *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*, 10; Perry, *The Roots of Civic Journalism*, 4.

⁴⁰² Perry, *The Roots of Civic Journalism*.

In what would be among the early manifestations of public journalism, *The Wichita Eagle's* coverage of the following gubernatorial election “targeted campaign coverage on issues identified as important in survey research.”⁴⁰³ The change in coverage was positive, showing an increase in voter participation and the paper’s readers evidenced a heightened awareness of the issues.⁴⁰⁴ Although there were some experiments in public journalism in the late 1980’s, Merritt’s efforts at *The Wichita Eagle* put public journalism on the national scene.⁴⁰⁵ Public journalism has extended far beyond reforms in election coverage since its emergence.

Defining Civic/Public Journalism

Defining public journalism is a difficult task, because some see it as a set of practices, others see it as a philosophical perspective on the role of journalism in a democracy, some see it as a new presentation of traditional ideals, and others see it as a revolution in journalism.⁴⁰⁶ Jay Rosen, who is considered one of the scholarly founders of public journalism, offered a three-part definition of public journalism: “First, it’s an argument about the proper task of the press. Second, it’s a set of practices that are slowly spreading through American journalism. Third, it’s a movement of people and institutions.”⁴⁰⁷ Perhaps Rosen’s definition reflects why some characterize public journalism, as having a “lack of theoretical development and specificity.”⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 4; Haas, *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*.

⁴⁰⁴ Perry, *The Roots of Civic Journalism*.

⁴⁰⁵ Voakes, “Civic Duties.”

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Rosen, “Public Journalism,” 35.

⁴⁰⁸ Haas, *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*, 2.

However, this lack of specificity may be by design. Public journalism arose from collaboration between academics and journalists. Although many scholars have written about the philosophical and theoretical impulses behind the movement, Rosen explained how he and Merritt worked together to “prevent the idea from becoming merely ‘academic’” so that the idea could really take shape as a set of practices within the profession.⁴⁰⁹ Another reason that public journalism may lack specificity is because initiatives are often tailored to community interests, which vary depending on the context.

Public journalism, which grew from joint efforts of journalists and academics, is based on the central belief that journalists are obliged to be more than neutral observers of public life. Instead, journalism should play an active role in revitalizing public life by helping citizens to participate.⁴¹⁰ The goal of civic journalism, as stated by Jan Schaffer, who served as Executive Director for the former Pew Center for Civic Journalism, “is to produce news that citizens need to be educated about issues and current events, to make civic decisions, to engage in civic dialogue and action -- and generally to exercise their responsibilities in a democracy.”⁴¹¹ Much like the claim I cite throughout this chapter, advocates of public journalism believe that the quality of thought and discussion in journalism impacts the quality of thought and discussion in a democracy. Public journalism is based on the central belief that journalists are obliged to be more than neutral observers of public life. Instead, journalism should play an active role in revitalizing public life.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ Rosen, “Public Journalism,” 35.

⁴¹⁰ Merritt, *Public Journalism and Public Life*.

⁴¹¹ Jan Schaffer, “Civic Journalism: A Decade of Civic Innovation.”

⁴¹² Merritt, *Public Journalism and Public Life*.

The Argument

The most distinctive aspect of public journalism's argument, according to Rosen, is "the simple fact that journalists are helping to create the argument."⁴¹³ Merritt, for example, published one of the key texts on public journalism, *Public Journalism and Public Life*. In this text, he argued that public journalism is guided by three underlying presumptions: First, he explained that journalism largely fails to fulfill its obligation as a steward of democracy. Because of this failure, public life, which he believed was the expression and experience of democracy, has suffered. Finally, he argued that journalism can and should play a primary role in revitalizing democracy.⁴¹⁴

The argument for public journalism is largely rooted in academic theory. Rosen cites Jurgen Habermas, John Dewey, and James Carey as major contributors to the argument for public journalism.⁴¹⁵ However, the philosophical impulses behind public journalism arguably reach much farther than the ideas on democratic deliberation from Habermasian public sphere theory, Dewey's beliefs about communication and community, and Carey's educational theory. The arguments for public journalism are reflected in the philosophical perspectives presented throughout this project. Carey, for example, cited Meiklejohn and Brandeis to argue that "the press exists not as the surrogate holder of the rights of the public but as an instrument which both expresses the public and helps it form and find its identity."⁴¹⁶ However, *A Free and Responsible Press*, was also cited as having a significant influence on the philosophy of public journalism.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹³ Rosen, "Public Journalism," 35.

⁴¹⁴ Merritt, *Public Journalism and Public Life*.

⁴¹⁵ Rosen, "Public Journalism."

⁴¹⁶ Carey, "Community, Public, and Journalism."

If public journalism advocates seek to reform journalism so that it is less about information and more about conversation, then the Commission's 1947 report validates that argument. The Commission was very clear about the responsibilities the press had to the public. To reiterate, the Commission concluded that the press must fulfill five requirements. First, the press must offer "a truthful, comprehensive, and intelligent account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning;" second, the press must provide "a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism;" third, the press must resist stereotyping by ensuring "the projection of a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society;" fourth, the press must attend to "the presentation and clarification of the goals and values of the society;" and finally, the press must "provide full access to the day's intelligence."⁴¹⁸ In *Good Work*, Gardner and his colleagues cited the Commission's findings as a source of strength in journalism. Interestingly, they titled their discussion of public journalism, "One Blind Alley: Public or 'Civic' Journalism." The researchers and the journalists they interviewed largely viewed public journalism as a threat to the profession.

Resistance to Public Journalism

Gardner and his colleagues contended that public journalism "breaks with the domain's traditions in a number of ways."⁴¹⁹ They expressed that public journalism was a partisan form of journalism that weakened the authority of journalists' expertise rejected the journalistic value of

⁴¹⁷ Haas, *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*.

⁴¹⁸ *A Free and Responsible Press*, 21–28.

⁴¹⁹ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*, 202.

searching for the truth.⁴²⁰ *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, for example, used the pages typically reserved for “editors, journalists, and other professional commentators” to publish questions that citizens had for candidates in an upcoming election.⁴²¹ This example points to one of the common criticisms of public journalism, in that it undermines journalistic values by “weakening the authority of experts.”⁴²² But aren’t many ordinary citizens experts about their local communities and the issues that are important to them? Another critique involves objectivity. But, I reject the idea of objectivity meaning that the information journalists present is value-neutral. Objectivity, rather, should be seen a method for providing verifying that journalists are reporting reliable information.⁴²³ It seems that some criticisms are matters of epistemology.

The problem with public journalism, according to Gardner and his colleagues, is that it threatens a free press and “suggests that the absolute standard of truth should be compromised for a ‘larger social good.’”⁴²⁴ This idea is shared by many critics of public journalism from within the profession and the academy who question efforts by public journalists to solve problems faced by communities.⁴²⁵ For example, one failure in public journalism occurred when a town hall meeting hosted by a California newspaper turned to fisticuffs over building codes.⁴²⁶ This does raise a serious concern because facilitating deliberation requires knowledge that some well-meaning journalists simply lack. The impulse for a journalist to solve a community’s problems

⁴²⁰ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁴²² Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

⁴²³ Kovach and Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism*.

⁴²⁴ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*, 203.

⁴²⁵ Haas, *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*.

⁴²⁶ Voakes, “Civic Duties.”

without relying on the expertise and leadership of the community reminds me of the journalistic conceit described by the 1968 Commission on Civil Disorders, which I discussed in a previous section. I agree with public journalism scholar, Tanni Haas in that I do not believe that opinion polls can truly capture the full context and meaning of the concerns held by community members.

Public journalism is often criticized for being a communitarian ideal that conflicts with liberalism, individual rights, and press independence.⁴²⁷ Arguments have also expressed that it is a teleological form of journalism in which the ends justify the means. However, given the core beliefs that guide public journalism, it seems that the means tend to justify the ends –even if the manifestations of the modes of practice vary. Another criticism issued toward civic journalism is that it is merely an effort to aggregate consumer interests to increase circulation.⁴²⁸ Public journalism was never a movement that sought to challenge the commercial media structure, so public journalism is not immune from the effects of a commercial media structure. However, Haas explained that public journalism has dedicated much of its resources “addressing the plight of the most marginalized segments of the citizenry.”⁴²⁹

Although I question the rationale of many of these criticisms, there are real concerns about terms of standards of objectivity, expertise, and journalistic independence that should be interrogated. Public journalism, like mainstream journalism, should be self-reflexive and critically examine its practices.

⁴²⁷ Haas, *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*; Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*; Carey, “Community, Public, and Journalism”; Perry, *The Roots of Civic Journalism*.

⁴²⁸ Haas, *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

Public Journalism as a Set of Practices

Although definitions and manifestations of public journalism vary, there are certain features that are common to public journalism. First, journalists and their audiences are seen as active participants in a democracy, rather than “detached (and often cynical) spectators.”⁴³⁰ Another common feature is that news outlets, such as newspapers, serve as a forum for public discussion.⁴³¹ Audiences, then, are not passive spectators, but participate in setting the agenda for what is considered important in the news.⁴³² A third feature is that value is placed on the expertise of ordinary people for being able to identify and articulate the issues that are important to them.⁴³³ Public journalism also values public opinion. But rather than aggregating public opinion through polls, those practicing good public journalism seek to aggregate public opinion through discussion and deliberation.⁴³⁴ Finally, advocates of public journalism often attempt to use journalism to facilitate and enhance community.⁴³⁵

The Movement Continues

Civic journalism has been practiced in newsrooms across the United States since the 1990s, largely through the support of the Knight Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts. Kettering Foundation, which is a non-profit think tank that addresses issues related to

⁴³⁰ Perry, *The Roots of Civic Journalism*, 11.

⁴³¹ Perry, *The Roots of Civic Journalism*.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

democracy, has also advocated the civic journalism movement.⁴³⁶ Civic journalism is certainly an idea that transformed journalism, even though it is still a polarizing concept. Schaeffer suggested that perhaps journalists reject the label, but not the principles. She cited a 2001 poll that found that "47 percent [of journalists] embraced the philosophy but didn't much care for the label."⁴³⁷ Despite the label, there have been significant results. In a 2002 speech to the Society of Professional Journalists, Schaefer reported, "The Pew Center since 1993 has funded 120 projects in more than 225 newsrooms, counting all the media partnerships. Another 450 independent initiatives have crossed our transom. We've trained nearly 4,000 journalists and educators."⁴³⁸ Schaefer became Executive Director of the Pew Center for Civic Journalism at its outset in 1993 until the initiative ended in 2003.⁴³⁹ Now that the Center for Civic Journalism is no longer a Pew initiative, Schaefer continues to advocate for civic journalism as Executive Director of J-Lab. J-Lab, which operates out of American University's School of Communication is "a journalism catalyst that funds new approaches to journalism, researches best practices and shares practical insights gained from years of working with news creators and news gatherers."⁴⁴⁰

The public journalism movement suggests that journalists should not only identify and define problems –they should also consider other possible ways to construct those problems based on local voices, and work to answer those questions in collaboration with citizens, journalists, and educators. Dewey, who is considered the "philosopher of civic journalism,"

⁴³⁶ Haas, *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*.

⁴³⁷ Jan Schaffer, "Civic Journalism: A Decade of Civic Innovation."

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ Haas, *The Pursuit of Public Journalism: Theory, Practice and Criticism*.

⁴⁴⁰ "J-Lab — Igniting News Ideas That Work."

might have seen current efforts toward public journalism as the realization of journalism as being more than a vocation, but as a profession based on principles meant to aid in citizen's education (along with schools and universities), stimulate conversation among citizens, and facilitate the creation of the common life Dewey believed was part and parcel of democracy.⁴⁴¹

While journalism is one important part of building the capacity to sustain democracy, educators are also in a unique position to build democratic capacity and, like journalists, are obliged to be leaders in doing so.

⁴⁴¹ Perry, *The Roots of Civic Journalism*, 36.

Chapter 5

Journalism Educators and the Pursuit of Good Work

This chapter is prefaced on the notion that journalism educators have an obligation to do good work by virtue of their simultaneous membership in a democratic community and a professional community. Throughout the previous chapters, I have emphasized core democratic principles and the ideal to demonstrate, in part, the potential for this knowledge to be transformative. In Chapter Two, I examined how Enlightenment-era scientific and philosophical innovations transformed the ways we would understand our relationship to society and the physical world. In Chapter Three, I illustrated how those principles articulated by thinkers from the European Enlightenment inspired the American Revolutionary Generation to pursue the ideal, and in doing so, transformed the way the world would understand the nature of rights in modern democracy.

In the previous chapter, I explored citizens' roles and responsibilities in a democracy to pronounce the obligation held by journalists and educators to build democratic capacity among citizens. In order for individuals to be politically free, self-governing members of a democratic community, they must have the capacity to do so. Citizens' capacity can increase with access to a range of knowledge, commonplaces of democracy that facilitate the exchange of ideas, and information placed in a context that gives it meaning. In the American democratic republic, journalists and educators represent two professional realms tasked with fulfilling this essential role in a democracy. However, our current social context has presented many journalists with monumental obstacles that stand in the way of their efforts to do good work. Market pressures and the formation of large conglomerates have played a significant role in changing the culture of the newsroom, driving the behavior of journalists, and threatening the quality of thought and

discussion in journalism.⁴⁴² I agree with Lee Bollinger’s claim that the quality of thought and discussion in journalism impacts the quality of democracy. Consequently, if journalism finds itself in a state of crisis, so does democracy.

Having discussed the conditions that impede journalists’ ability to do good work, findings from the Good Work Project suggesting that journalists are finding it increasingly difficult to do good work, and additional findings indicating that the journalists interviewed for the study did not believe their education was helpful in their effort to develop strategies to do good work, I pose this question: How do we know that education can significantly leverage good work in a professional realm? Before exploring how journalism education might fulfill their obligation to do good work, I begin by exploring the claim made by Gardner and his colleagues that education can leverage good work in a profession. What might we learn from the experience of geneticists, who represent the second professional realm in the Good Work study?

Leveraging Good Work: Lessons from Genetics

The Good Work researchers used interviews with geneticists—a professional field they determined to be well-aligned—to argue that education is a key factor in a professional’s ability to do good work. Analysis of the interviews with geneticists revealed that genetics was a well-aligned professional realm.⁴⁴³ Although storm clouds loom, such as ethical concerns, market pressures, and competition, the professional realm of genetics seems to be experiencing a golden

⁴⁴² Bollinger, Lee, “Statement on the Future of Journalism Education | Columbia University in the City of New York.”

⁴⁴³ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

age. Geneticists expressed “the thrill of scientific inquiry,”⁴⁴⁴ the “pleasure of working with scientific materials,”⁴⁴⁵ “enchantment with the quality of thinking that goes into the practice of science,”⁴⁴⁶ and the “belief that science foregrounds a certain kind of rational thinking.”⁴⁴⁷

Further, the geneticists expressed agreement about their guiding principles –integrity, honesty, and scrupulousness. Finally, the geneticists reported that they feel a great deal of responsibility to society, discovery, others (including family, students, colleagues, staff, etc.), a responsibility to self, and a responsibility to the workplace.⁴⁴⁸ The geneticists were committed to doing good work, and suggested that the essence of good work for them was fulfilling what they saw as an obligation to be ethical, excellent, and engaged –the three components of good work.

But how did these geneticists learn commitment? Gardner and his colleagues found that geneticists learned commitment to their profession and the principles of scientific inquiry in the course of their education. Education, they found, played a significant role in contributing to the alignment of the professional realm and the geneticists’ ability to do good work.⁴⁴⁹ They also found that certain educational processes “increase the likelihood of good work.”⁴⁵⁰

As students, many geneticists reported that they benefitted from a close relationship with a mentor who not only helped to instill in them the values of the field, but also reinforced that

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 73.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 75.

⁴⁴⁸ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 246.

education when the mentors led by example.⁴⁵¹ In painting a portrait of the prototypical creator-leader in genetics, Gardner and his colleagues make reference to the exemplary geneticist being encouraged by professors.⁴⁵² They cited one geneticist educator who explained, “You always want to make sure that your students live and appreciate the highest level of scientific integrity.”⁴⁵³ Another geneticist explained that fulfilling the obligation to lead by example was necessary in order to conserve the very important standards of work.⁴⁵⁴

In the pursuit of good work, conserving the foundational knowledge and values of a profession should not be neglected. I contend, however, that for some professions, values are often redefined to meet the demands of new social contexts. Gardner and his colleagues explained, “the beliefs and practices associated with exemplary good workers ... are often passed on not only to students or protégés, but also to even farther down the lineage to ‘grandstudents’ and even ‘great-grandstudents.’”⁴⁵⁵ The geneticists interviewed appear to have a clear understanding of the ongoing obligation they have to be stewards of their profession—an obligation that geneticists and genetics educators readily accept. The case of genetics suggests that journalism educators have the potential to be a powerful force in how journalism and, by extension, democracy, are understood and practiced.

The conclusion that education was a significant factor in geneticists’ commitment to doing good work, exemplifies the notion that students and practitioners benefit from an

⁴⁵¹ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴⁵⁴ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 247.

education that transmits a professions' core values, provides mentorship, and nurtures excellence in practice. Gardner and his colleagues explained that "knowing what should be done and having the means to do it are useless without personal commitment.... For the joy we derive from doing our best work, according to high standards, is rewarding enough, even if we must sometimes struggle in lonely confusion."⁴⁵⁶

The scope and intensity of the threats to journalism suggest that there is an urgent need to explore strategies to leverage good work in journalism. Public journalism, although controversial and polarizing, is one way that journalists have attempted to form a new vision for journalism.. The analysis from the Good Work Project is helpful for imagining the impact journalism educators can have on the profession and democracy. However, the idea that there is a significant relationship between democratic sustainability and education was established centuries ago.

Exploring the Meaning of Good Work in Journalism Education

In his classic treatise on education, *Emile*, Enlightenment-era philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau stressed that an education should not simply provide students practical skills. Education for Rousseau was far more than an apprenticeship. In Rousseau's social contract doctrine human beings were naturally virtuous and equal. In the state of nature, human beings were able to develop love for oneself and others, and to develop the ability to gain knowledge and understanding through experience.⁴⁵⁷ People no longer lived in a state of nature, however. Society, as Rousseau saw it, was corrupt, unequal, and stunted the development of the human

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., 249.

⁴⁵⁷ Delbanco, *College*; Shannon, *The Struggle to Continue*.

capacity to understand the range of complex human emotions that enabled one to be sympathetic to the plight of others.⁴⁵⁸ Society denatured human beings. *Emile* was Rousseau's attempt to imagine a type of education that would lead to a more harmonious society. Rousseau's philosophy of education challenged students to grapple with complex moral questions in order to help them develop into virtuous citizens.⁴⁵⁹ Rousseau believed that education was the key to forming civil society, a political cultural that embraced the General Will, and a good life met with dignity, agency, and virtue. Rousseau's philosophy on education emphasized a type of experiential learning in which students developed a deep and complex understanding of the physical self in relation to the world around them, as well as an understanding of their own moral nature in relation to other people.⁴⁶⁰

Rousseau's 1762 philosophy of education demonstrates an early iteration of the notion that, by attending to a student's moral, civic, and professional development, educators fulfill a duty to serve the student, and by extension, the good of society. All educators are obliged to build the capacity to sustain democracy, but journalism educators face a heightened challenge given the social, political, cultural, and economic context in which journalism is practiced. Journalists are certainly not powerless, but they need not face these challenges alone –nor should they. While this chapter focuses largely on the journalism educators' obligations to build democratic capacity, I believe that achieving any semblance of success will require a collaborative effort.

⁴⁵⁸ Shannon, *The Struggle to Continue*.

⁴⁵⁹ Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*; Wolin, "Democracy and Education"; Delbanco, *College*; Shannon, *The Struggle to Continue*.

⁴⁶⁰ Shannon, *The Struggle to Continue*; Rousseau, *Emile*.

Pursuing Good Work: Who leads and who follows?

My discussion of journalism education is premised on the notion that journalism is necessary to sustain a functioning democracy. I contend that challenges to the quality of journalism represent challenges to the quality of democracy.⁴⁶¹ The issues facing journalism are not simply about building journalists' skills; they involve an intricate weaving of philosophical and practical concerns that must be addressed through the collaborative efforts of journalists, educators, and citizens. However, I argue that members of the professional professoriate are in a unique position to provide the intellectual leadership necessary to build the capacity to sustain democracy. Journalism educators have access to the massive intellectual resources typical of an institution of higher learning. Generally, members of the professional professoriate enjoy academic freedom, which enables journalism educators to explore ideas and principles regarding journalism as part of an active research and/or teaching agenda. Although higher education has been encroached by corporatism, educators can “resurrect a language of resistance and possibility” in their classrooms and on campus that prepares them to exercise critical citizenship and leadership in their public and professional lives.⁴⁶²

Journalism educators have regular access to future generations of journalists in the classroom, which puts practicing journalists at a disadvantage for leading efforts emanating from within higher education. To be fair, journalism education is not without its problems, but those who teach are in a prime position to lead collaborative efforts to bridge pedagogical disconnects between theory and practice. More importantly, teachers can develop pedagogies of possibility

⁴⁶¹ Bollinger, Lee, “Statement on the Future of Journalism Education | Columbia University in the City of New York.”

⁴⁶² Giroux and Giroux, *Take Back Higher Education*, 238.

that pass on the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that can be transformative in preparing a new generation of journalists to challenge the status quo in journalism and democracy.

Educators as Academic Stewards of Democracy

The theme of academic stewardship –or the axiological call for educators to respond to a set of professional duties and civic duties as part and parcel of the educational process –is pronounced in the writings of many educational theorists and philosophers. In this chapter, I argue that academic stewardship is an idea that ought to be embraced by all teachers –but should resonate in very unique way for journalism educators. Journalism education, as I will demonstrate with the literature, is predicated on the idea of the academic steward –a teacher in service of the student and in service of citizens. I borrow my definition of stewardship from Peter Block, who is an author who writes about individual and community empowerment. Stewardship, he wrote, is the umbrella idea that promises the means of achieving fundamental change in the way we govern our institutions. Stewardship is to hold something in trust for another.⁴⁶³ In an attempt to define the concept, he also wrote:

Stewardship is... the choice to preside over the orderly distribution of power. This means giving people at the bottom and the boundaries of the organization choice over how to serve a customer, a citizen, a community. It is the willingness to be accountable for the well-being of the larger organization by operating in service, rather than in control, of those around us. Stated simply, it is accountability without control or compliance.⁴⁶⁴

In a similar vein, journalism studies scholar Beate Josephi explained that the purpose of journalism education expresses “the clear intent of modifying practice, enriching the quality of

⁴⁶³ Block, *Stewardship*, xxiv.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

information produced and, with the help of this quality journalism, achieving improvement in the workings of civil society.”⁴⁶⁵

All educators are obliged to build the capacity to sustain democracy, but journalism educators face a heightened challenge given the social, political, cultural, and economic context in which journalism is practiced. In Chapter One, I referenced Lee Bollinger, who suggested that because corporate interests were increasingly driving the behavior of journalists, a journalist’s personal call to conscience and sense of professional identity were the primary checks on the pressures that are negatively impacting the quality of conversation and thought of journalism – and therefore, the quality of democracy.⁴⁶⁶ In the remainder of the chapter, I explore perspectives from educational philosophers and theorists, trends in journalism education, and good work to answer the primary question of this dissertation: What is the good work that educators—especially journalism educators—are obliged to do in consideration of their simultaneous roles as members of a democratic community and members of professional communities?

History of Journalism Education in America

Journalism education was predicated on the belief that journalism served the interests of democracy. Willard G. “Daddy” Bleyer, who is widely considered the founder of journalism education, “believed that U.S. democracy could be improved through a more responsible press, staffed by news people trained so that they not only knew how to write the news but also could

⁴⁶⁵ Josephi, Beate, “Journalism Education,” 43.

⁴⁶⁶ Bollinger, Lee, “Statement on the Future of Journalism Education | Columbia University in the City of New York.”

understand the society whose events they were reporting.⁴⁶⁷ Bleyer was responsible for transforming journalism from a vocational subject to a legitimate academic discipline. As a legitimate academic discipline, members of the professional professoriate began to delve deeply into the empirical and philosophical issues surrounding journalism, democracy, and the principles that should guide professional practice.

Bleyer began his journalism program at the University of Wisconsin, which is a major research institution.⁴⁶⁸ He insisted that a journalism curriculum in the service of democracy should largely be devoted to humanities and social sciences.⁴⁶⁹ Bleyer's desire for journalism to gain academic legitimacy is cited as a contributing factor to his decision to integrate social scientific inquiry into the curriculum.⁴⁷⁰ Bleyer's curriculum included a four year plan of study in which three-fourths of students' studies were located in the humanities and social sciences, while only one-fourth of students' classes were journalism courses.⁴⁷¹

Many journalism schools followed Bleyer's program of study at the University of Wisconsin, but not everyone believed that Bleyer's emphasis on social science research was the best approach to journalism education.⁴⁷² Disagreements about the curriculum resulted in bitter tension between the "Green-Eyeshades" and the "Chi-Spares."⁴⁷³ The Eyeshades, who were steeped in the primacy professional standards for practice, represented a vocational approach to

⁴⁶⁷ Rogers, *History Of Communication Study*, 20.

⁴⁶⁸ Rogers, *History Of Communication Study*.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.; Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously*.

⁴⁷⁰ Rogers, *History Of Communication Study*.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 406; Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously*, 20.

journalism education.⁴⁷⁴ The Chi-Spares, on the other hand, were most interested in the study of journalism and communication as a social science.⁴⁷⁵ Debates about the journalism education curriculum have been going on for over 100 years.⁴⁷⁶ It is no surprise that competing visions for journalism education still characterize a significant source of tension in both the academy and industry.

Sources of Tension in Journalism Education

As noted in the previous chapter, market pressures have been cited as a major challenge to journalism. Similar concerns have been issued concerning journalism education. Following communication scholar James Carey, Whitney and Wartella argued that “every encroachment of the business and industrial world to professionalize and commercialize the university must be resisted.”⁴⁷⁷ Mark Deuze has suggested that mastering journalistic practice across new digital platforms, along with a restructuring of the relationship between news consumer and news producer pose major challenges to journalism education.⁴⁷⁸ The rapidly changing realm of technology has also been a source of tension for journalism educators. This tension reflects changes to the traditional model of institutional journalism reflected by newspapers being published exclusively online, the rise of citizen journalism through blogs, and basic concerns about how to make use of emerging technology in the classroom. Communication scholar Shyam

⁴⁷⁴ Rogers, *History Of Communication Study*; Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously*.

⁴⁷⁵ Rogers, *History Of Communication Study*; Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously*.

⁴⁷⁶ Mensing, “Rethinking [again] the Future of Journalism Education.”

⁴⁷⁷ Whitney and Wartella, “On US Journalism Education,” 52.

⁴⁷⁸ Deuze, “What Is Journalism?”

Sundar suggested that teachers should not be focusing so much energy on teaching technology, but rather, on “how communicators operate within the realm of a given technology.”⁴⁷⁹ Sundar’s pedagogical insight might come into conflict with some industry models for journalism education that emphasize teaching skills and technique.⁴⁸⁰

Other tensions arise from critiques about the knowledge (or perceived lack thereof) journalists and journalism educators possess. Journalism educator Anthony Serafini, for example, cited an over-abundance of technical training and too little inclusion of the philosophical perspectives that underlie journalism’s “foundational assumptions.”⁴⁸¹ Altschull suggested that a central problem with journalism is the threat posed by journalists who lack a deep philosophical understanding of the profession’s core principles.⁴⁸² Similar critiques have been issued against the journalism educators who teach future journalists.⁴⁸³ Bovee, for example, argued that many journalism educators lack a deep understanding of journalistic principles. Another perspective suggests that across the academy, there is “inattention as professors to our own professionalism” which might suggest that too little attention is being focused on “issues of academic and industry preparation of faculty.”⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁷⁹ Dennis et al., “Learning Reconsidered,” 298.

⁴⁸⁰ Mensing, “Rethinking [again] the Future of Journalism Education.”

⁴⁸¹ Serafini, Anthony, “Applying Philosophy to Journalism,” 257.

⁴⁸² Altschull, *From Milton to McLuhan*.

⁴⁸³ Bovee, *Discovering Journalism*; Reese and Cohen, “Educating for Journalism.”

⁴⁸⁴ Reese and Cohen, “Educating for Journalism,” 224.

Questioning Journalism Educators

In their study of good work, Gardner and his colleagues did not only consider a profession's mission and standards –they also considered personal identity. They explained that “A central element of identity is moral –people must determine for themselves what lines they will not cross and why they will not cross them.”⁴⁸⁵ One way to gauge identity is called the “mirror test.” Essentially, it asks people to engage in an ongoing internal dialogue in which they consider how their behavior aligns with their principles. The mirror test motivates individuals to ask: “What would it be like to live in a world if everyone were to behave in the way that I have?”⁴⁸⁶ Although it might be difficult, the mirror test is a useful tool for any profession realm. Cohen would likely advocate a mirror test for the professional professoriate. He suggested that the problems facing journalism should “raise fundamental questions about the work we do in journalism and mass communication education.”⁴⁸⁷

A profession is only a profession, after all, because the public has legitimized its existence as a profession.⁴⁸⁸ As such, the public represents a major stakeholder in any profession. But the public, Cohen observed, believes that “undergraduate education in general and journalism and mass communication education in particular...are not meeting the nation's democratic needs.”⁴⁸⁹ Although the problem Cohen identifies is partly an issue of curriculum, it

⁴⁸⁵ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*, 11.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁸⁷ Cohen, “Curricular Obesity,” 125.

⁴⁸⁸ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*.

⁴⁸⁹ Cohen, “Curricular Obesity.”

is also a matter of teacher education. Are teachers in higher education being adequately prepared to fulfill this role as democratic stewards?

In the case of teachers in higher education, many are not educated in the scholarship of teaching and go on to begin their careers as college teachers without the benefit of having taken even a basic pedagogy course.⁴⁹⁰ Although members of the professional professoriate are often experts in their field of interest, Louis Menand challenged his readers to consider that:

they are often asked to perform tasks for which they have had no training whatsoever: to teach their fields to non-specialists, to connect what they teach to issues that students are likely to confront in the world outside the university, to be interdisciplinary, to write for a general audience, to justify their work to people outside their discipline and outside the academy. If we want professors to be better at these things, then we ought to train them differently.⁴⁹¹

Given Menand's argument, could it be that, similar to arguments issued against journalists, educators do not possess a deep understanding of the role of education in a democracy and the principles that ought to guide the good work educators do? Are professors adequately preparing students to leave college with the knowledge, commitment, and principled understandings that might motivate them "to make more enlightened contributions to the common good?"⁴⁹² Do educators share the sense of urgency articulated by Giroux and Polychroniou when they asserted that "higher education may be one of the few public spheres left where knowledge, values, and learning nurture critical hope and a substantive democracy?"⁴⁹³

⁴⁹⁰ Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas*.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 157–158.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 56.

⁴⁹³ Giroux and Polychroniou, "Higher Education Without Democracy?"

In response to these questions, I only make no claims. However, I do believe that these are questions educators should consider if they accept the fallibilistic belief that ideas can be improved through critical examination and the willingness to be self-reflexive about their work. However, it does seem that journalism educators have been engaging in important conversations about what journalism education should look like.

A New Conversation in Journalism Education

Much of the debate surrounding journalism education has argued theory versus practice, but the debate has shifted over the past decade, and journalism education has largely evolved.⁴⁹⁴ The shift in conversation has been credited, in large part, to Columbia University President Lee Bollinger. Tasked with hiring a new dean for the School of Journalism, Bollinger realized that a search could not continue without rethinking the purpose of journalism education.⁴⁹⁵ I have noted Bollinger's concerns about journalism and democracy throughout this project. Bollinger was very vocal in his belief that the real issue in journalism education was not about the theory-practice dichotomy. Bollinger was primarily interested in building a curriculum that would hold students to the highest professional values to guard against the corporate and deregulatory environment he saw as increasingly driving the behavior of journalists.⁴⁹⁶ Others have argued that conversations that pose the behavior of individual journalists as the lynchpins for reform in journalism is ineffective and ignores basic issues related to the political economy of mass

⁴⁹⁴ Kelley, "Teaching Journalism."

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.; Bollinger, Lee, "Statement on the Future of Journalism Education | Columbia University in the City of New York"; Rosen, Jay, "The Bollinger Thesis | Poynter."

⁴⁹⁶ Bollinger, Lee, "Statement on the Future of Journalism Education | Columbia University in the City of New York."

communication.⁴⁹⁷ Both of these ideas have merit, but I would go one step further. Corporate constraints are real, and professional identity is important, but perhaps the focus of journalism education should be about educating professionals for change.

Educating Professionals for Change

Like democracy, journalism, is created anew by each succeeding generation. Given trends toward public journalism, journalism is not simply a lecture –it is a conversation in which citizens are active participants. Concerning the public journalism movement, Clark recalled how journalism educator, James Carey, discussed the new trend: “The way that journalists tell stories is always changing. Some of those old story forms came into being to solve old problems. In our time, they may be exhausted. We may need some new forms of journalism to solve new problems.”⁴⁹⁸ According to Carey and Clark, the changing face of journalism is an important consideration for how journalists are educated. However, educators must remember that the philosophical underpinnings of journalism and democracy remain constant. Journalists must be educated to have a deeply rooted understanding of the principles that define their obligations in a democracy.

In response to contemporary market pressures, journalists and their educators often tout professionalism as the primary goal of journalism education.⁴⁹⁹ But, there are different ways to understand professional education. Carey expressed concern that professional education for

⁴⁹⁷ Mensing, “Rethinking [again] the Future of Journalism Education.”

⁴⁹⁸ Clark, “James Carey: A Model for Journalists and Scholars Alike | Poynter.”

⁴⁹⁹ Mensing, “Rethinking [again] the Future of Journalism Education.”

journalists might create a power relation such that the journalist is the expert who controls the information and the audience is the passive, dependent spectator.⁵⁰⁰ This approach to professional education reifies myths about journalistic practice that encourage students to develop “an attitude of professional authority as an embedded ideology.”⁵⁰¹ However, this type of journalism also prepares future journalists who are knowledgeable and principled. So, it seems that a commitment to traditional journalistic principles may not be the issue. I contend that journalists should be educated to hold a deep commitment to democratic values, instead. As my previous analysis has shown, democracy is dynamic. I contend that educators should tailor the curriculum to prepare students to be leaders who have the knowledge, skills, and commitment to be agents for change.

What Kind of Education?

Public journalism, or journalism by any name that places value on diversity, participation, deliberation, and democratic stewardship, would emphasize professional ethics as well as professional practice. This education would seek to engage students in learning that instills a deep knowledge of democratic principles and journalistic principles. This type of education would also “be complemented by that of the broader public.”⁵⁰² This type of student learning would be best facilitated by an education that is both liberal and professional. The type

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 514.

⁵⁰² Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*, 247.

of learning I describe here should be of particular interest to journalism and mass communication educators, but it is ultimately relevant to all educators who seek to educate for democracy.

The debate between professional education and liberal education represents an important conversation in contemporary higher education. Recent scholarship also reflects the many institutional impediments that pose fundamental challenges to those journalism educators who wish to produce a new generation of citizen-professional journalists. Liberal education, broadly, is an education by which students receive a general knowledge and also learn “how to keep learning through their lives, so that they can participate in a dynamic, changing society.”⁵⁰³ However, only 2.5 percent of undergraduates attend liberal arts universities and less than one-third of students major in liberal arts majors.⁵⁰⁴ Enrollment in vocational or professional education increased significantly after WWII, especially with the emergence of two year colleges and for-profit colleges in the 1990’s.⁵⁰⁵ Consequently, students increasingly see college as a vocational training ground. Grubb and Lazerson asserted that “the plain fact is that civic, intellectual, and moral purposes are not what most students think higher education is about.”⁵⁰⁶ Perhaps the failing of liberal education, as Shulman suggested, is that liberal education has failed to make itself relevant.⁵⁰⁷

There have been pockets of reform efforts and a good deal of talk about the purpose of liberal education. Donald Harward, who described the purpose of liberal education as an

⁵⁰³ Ferris, *The Science of Liberty*, 2011, 17.

⁵⁰⁴ Colby et al., *Educating Citizens*.

⁵⁰⁵ Grubb and Lazerson, “The Education Gospel and the Role of Vocationalism in American Education”; Lattuca and Stark, *Shaping the College Curriculum*, 2009.

⁵⁰⁶ Grubb and Lazerson, “The Education Gospel and the Role of Vocationalism in American Education,” 7.

⁵⁰⁷ Shulman, “Professing the Liberal Arts.”

integration of epistemic, eudemonic, and civic purposes, explained that many colleges and universities still use the three core purposes of liberal education to define their mission, but “it is not clear, however, that these institutions actually give priority to the practices that instantiate the core purposes. Nor is it clear they recognize that the intentional development of all three interrelated purposes results in confirmable outcomes affecting the full development of students.”⁵⁰⁸ The key to defining a purpose is intentionality. Detailing the purpose of education entails describing the desired learning outcomes specifically related to “knowledge, skills, and attitudes.”⁵⁰⁹ Purposes are not always clearly stated, manifested, or evaluated by higher education institutions. This approach to education seeks to teach the whole student. In doing so, educators fulfill one aspect of their academic duty, which, according to Kennedy, is to put students first.⁵¹⁰

Conclusion

Lee Shulman—an educational theorist and past President of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching—stressed the importance for educational professionals to acquire and internalize the knowledge they will need to adequately practice their profession. Sennett quantified the time and energy one needs to be considered a skilled craftsperson at 10,000 hours.⁵¹¹ However, many educators in higher education do not dedicate this amount of time developing their craft of teaching. Shulman’s work, which attempts to ease the perceived tensions between professional education and liberal education, suggested students are best

⁵⁰⁸ Donald W. Harward, “Engaged Learning and the Core Purposes of Liberal Education: Bringing Theory to Practice,” 8.

⁵⁰⁹ Lattuca and Stark, *Shaping the College Curriculum*, 2009, 9.

⁵¹⁰ Kennedy, *Academic Duty*, 1997.

⁵¹¹ Sennett, *The Craftsman*.

prepared to do good work as professionals and as citizens when educators, professionals, academic institutions, and the public come together in the interest of educating students.

This process, however, must also involve efforts by educational institutions to shift the culture of the university toward these principles. Shulman explained that, “this kind of learning can rarely succeed one course at a time. The entire institution must be oriented toward these principles, and the principles must be consistently and regularly employed throughout each course and experience in a program.”⁵¹² For Shulman, if educators are to work toward transforming the higher education institution, then they should share a common view on the purpose of education based on a mutually agreed upon set of principles. Shulman suggested that educators share a common mission, which is a major constituent of good work.

But, the idea of mission need not be constraining. Gardner and his colleagues offered a broad definition of mission. They explained that a mission reflects the “defining features of the profession” and expresses a “basic societal need which the practitioner should feel committed to realizing.”⁵¹³ For journalists and journalism educators, I think that the common mission involves some iteration of serving democracy. I believe that this is the essence of stewardship for journalists and educators.

⁵¹² Shulman, “Professing the Liberal Arts.”

⁵¹³ Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon, *Good Work*, 10.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Key Findings

This project positions good work, education, and democratic citizenship as the conceptual framework of democracy. Each can be considered important elements of enlightened democratic community. Each has been the object of considerable bodies of scholarship. Each carries assumptions and obligations for individuals and publics. Yet in many ways, good work, education, and democratic citizenship lie outside of a unified consideration of their interactive nature. Ultimately, this dissertation sought to consider the interactive nature of these key concepts by focusing on their underlying principles.

Chapter five concluded that the essence of good work for both journalists and journalism educators in the professional professoriate is democratic stewardship. The missions of both professional realms oblige educators and journalists to serve the broader society by giving them the information, knowledge, and skills to be self-governing citizens in a democracy. In order to fulfill this mission, I argued that journalists and journalism educators must engage in “critical philosophical reflection,” which is a tradition that Cohen and Reese contended was a central feature of professions.⁵¹⁴ The literature suggests that journalists and the journalism educators can leverage their ability to good work by fostering deep understandings of the principles that guide their mission. Because journalists’ and journalism educators’ mission is inherently democratic, they should have deep understandings of the principles that define our shared democratic life.

⁵¹⁴ Reese and Cohen, “Educating for Journalism,” 221.

Although I will recommend some ideas of what professional praxis would look like, I also emphasize the need for citizens, journalists, and educators to understand the core values that direct their obligations in a democratic community. When journalists and journalism educators engage in professional activity that is informed by these principles, they have the potential to transform democracy. In the discussion that follows I discuss implications of my research, limitations to my inquiry, and directions for future research.

Implications

Critical Media Literacy

In Chapter Five, I concluded that an education that would best prepare future professionals to be agents of change must integrate elements of liberal and professional learning. Although journalism education is meant to educate journalists, only about a third of journalism majors actually go into the profession.⁵¹⁵ This suggests that journalism programs must also address media literacy and other skills that help students who do not pursue journalism as a career to be competent, critical media consumers.

Caring

Nel Noddings is a contemporary philosopher of education. Her body of work, which includes her ethic of care, has made significant contributions to pedagogical practice, educational

⁵¹⁵ Reese and Cohen, "Educating for Journalism."

theory, and ideas about democratic citizenship.⁵¹⁶ Similar to Hume's Principle of Humanity, Noddings contended that through experience, all human beings have some natural understanding of care, which enables individuals to respond to the plight of others with some measure of care and concern.⁵¹⁷ An ethic of care implies obligation for those being cared for and for those caring. Noddings wrote, "The ethic of care binds carers and cared-for in relationships of mutual responsibility."⁵¹⁸ Interestingly, both Noddings and Hume might benefit the theoretical development of public journalism. In an educational setting, an ethic of care also makes students responsible for their education and the education of others. The emphasis on "moral interdependence" suggests that knowledge is socially constructed. As such, it encourages collaboration and places value on the experiences of all.⁵¹⁹

In many ways, educating future journalists to do good work as stewards of democracy means that educators are obliged to teach for democracy. Noddings suggested that this might mean creating democracy in the classroom. She explained:

Similarly, learning to participate in democratic life involves living democratically—students working together on common problems, establishing the rules by which their classrooms will be governed, testing and evaluating ideas for the improvement of classroom life and learning, and participating in the construction of objectives for their own learning.⁵²⁰

So, if a journalism education must educate for democracy, attend to the whole student, include aspects of liberal and professional learning, and make the knowledge students encounter relevant

⁵¹⁶ Noddings and Century, *Educating Citizens for Global Awareness*; *ibid.*; Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*; Noddings, *Happiness and Education*; Noddings, *Caring*; Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools [electronic Resource]*; Katz, Noddings, and Strike, *Justice and Caring*.

⁵¹⁷ Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*; Noddings, *Caring*.

⁵¹⁸ Noddings, *Philosophy of Education*.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 36.

to their lives, then what more might this suggest about preparing teachers for democratic stewardship?

Graduate Education

Menand argued that changing the way knowledge is produced involves change the way the producers of knowledge are produced.⁵²¹ In the case of teachers in higher education, many are not educated in the scholarship of teaching in their graduate careers and go on to begin their careers as college teachers without the benefit of having taken even a basic pedagogy course.⁵²² Although members of the professional professoriate are often experts in their field of interest, Louis Menand challenged his readers to consider that:

they are often asked to perform tasks for which they have had no training whatsoever: to teach their fields to non-specialists, to connect what they teach to issues that students are likely to confront in the world outside the university, to be interdisciplinary, to write for a general audience, to justify their work to people outside their discipline and outside the academy. If we want professors to be better at these things, then we ought to train them differently.⁵²³

Are professors adequately preparing students to leave college with the knowledge, commitment, and principled understandings that might motivate them “to make more enlightened contributions to the common good?”⁵²⁴ I make no claims here, but I pose this question to stimulate critical reflection and discussion on the subject.

⁵²¹ Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas*, 157.

⁵²² Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas*.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, 157–158.

⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

Valuing Difference

In a pluralist society, difference is a positive value, and recognition of difference among equals may, according to Audre Lorde, help us to “devise ways to use each other’s difference to enrich our visions and joint struggles.”⁵²⁵ Difference is what makes democracy so great and so rich. After all, there is no politics without conflict. By addressing a politics of difference that rejects difference as a democratic deficit, it creates the space to address a type of education that fully recognizes the college campus as a site of ideological struggle. Therefore, issues of oppression and privilege cannot be ignored by educators hoping to achieve the good work of preparing students for citizenship in a dynamic and diverse democratic community. Assimilationist perspectives that fail to deal with difference in a responsible manner may only reify the system of privilege and oppression that is already embedded in our social institutions.

Recognizing Enlightenment Failures and Searching for Enlightened Solutions

As a female researcher of color, I struggled with the decision to focus so heavily on the significance of Western philosophy as a means for understanding our current democratic context. The philosophical perspectives produced by the Enlightenment have been challenged extensively based on the gender, racial, and class-based privilege that arguably underlies the writings of the white, male, Western philosophers of the Enlightenment Era. For example, Pateman argues in her book, *The Sexual Contract*, that Enlightenment conceptions of the social contract generated by Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and others are inherently patriarchal and exclusionary to women.

⁵²⁵ Lourde, Audrey, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” 1997.

She wrote, "...the classical theorists had left a legacy of problems about women's incorporation into, and obligations within, civil society that contemporary arguments failed to acknowledge."⁵²⁶

Charles W. Mills later built upon Pateman's argument in his seminal work, *The Racial Contract*. Mills recognized that Enlightenment-based social contract theory is a "central concept of Western political theory for understanding and evaluating the social world."⁵²⁷ Because of the centrality of this theory, he said that a corresponding theoretical perspective that includes analysis of racial and other forms of social privilege "might be more revealing of the real character of the world we are living in, and the corresponding historical deficiencies of its normative theories and practices, than the raceless notions currently dominant in political theory."⁵²⁸ Despite their critiques of the Enlightenment, neither philosopher fully rejects the usefulness of Enlightenment political theory or social contract theory. Similar to claims made in this line of research, Pateman and Mills used their understandings of this foundational philosophical perspective to address issues of domination and subordination they observed in our current democratic context.

"The Enlightenment," Neiman explained, "was infected with the same prejudices that blighted nearly every intellectual movement till the late twentieth century."⁵²⁹ So many atrocities emerged from the Western tradition –in spite of the Enlightenment commitment to equality, liberty, and reason. When the words, "We the People" were first written –based on Enlightenment ideals –the people constituted an exclusive group of white males. Women were

⁵²⁶ Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, x.

⁵²⁷ Mills, *The Racial Contract*, 6.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵²⁹ Neiman, *Moral Clarity*, 196.

routinely denied rights enjoyed by their male counterparts. Thousands of American Indians were slaughtered. The continued institution of Black slavery, which is one of the most profound tragedies of the American Revolution and subsequent founding, not only denied the rights of Blacks in America, but it also denied their basic personhood. For the thousands of African Americans left objectified as mere property at the time of the founding, there was no foreseeable ladder of opportunity leading to their full socio-political enfranchisement. Neiman echoed the reality of the Enlightenment's failings when she wrote:

The Enlightenment did not realize its own ideals –but that's what ideals are all about. This sort of argument could have strengthened the Enlightenment by showing that through its tools of self-criticism, it had the power to right its own wrongs. Instead, those who should have extended the Enlightenment were engaged in extinguishing it."⁵³⁰

Columnist and scholar Richard Wolin offered a compelling argument for studying the legacy of Western reason. First, he cited Frankfurt School theorist Theodore Adorno, who observed that “only the hand that inflicted the wound can cure the disease.”⁵³¹ Second, Wolin referenced moral philosopher Hannah Arendt, who similarly concluded that “thoughtlessness –the incapacity for sustained critical reflection –had become one of the defining features of our times.”⁵³² The Enlightenment, for all of the failings associated with the historical context surrounding it, is nevertheless useful for thinking through our current challenges and problems.

⁵³⁰ Neiman, *Moral Clarity*, 122.

⁵³¹ Wolin, “Democracy and Education.”

⁵³² *Ibid.*

Change is Scary, but there is Hope

I argue for change in my conclusions, but I have to admit that change is scary. Hobbes lived his life in fear, and that was reflected in his philosophy. When I made the change to teaching online, I was crippled with fear. My existence in faceless cyber classroom, certainly led me to believe that life as a cyber-teacher was nasty, brutish, and short. With my phone constantly ringing with new messages from students at all times of day and night, I retreated. But, I was coaxed out of my hiding place by a faculty mentor, who was alerted by a student that I was not doing good work. It was true. I was not. In the course of my conversation with this faculty mentor, he shared his experiences of struggle and triumph in the cyber classroom, offered strategies for improving my pedagogy and course management, and related stories that helped me to understand the principles that underlie online education, which helped me to finally understand its value. More importantly, this conversation gave me hope that there was a different way to approach online education.

Whereas my cynicism and fear blocked my ability to engage in creative problem-solving, understanding the principles opened a new imaginative space. Al Gore also discussed the danger of fear when he explained, “Fear is the most powerful enemy of reason. Both fear and reason are essential to human survival, but the relationship between them is unbalanced. Reason may sometimes dissipate fear, but fear frequently shuts down reason.”⁵³³ I think Gore also taps in to familiar experiences we all share. But, we can hardly afford to diminish our capacity to reason.

The hope, reverence, and reason that sustains the aspiration for the ideal is based in Enlightenment principles born largely in response to the philosophical perspectives motivated by Hobbesian realism. Hobbes’s philosophical perspective outlined within *Leviathan* is useful today

⁵³³ Neiman, *Moral Clarity*, 188.

because it motivates readers to carefully consider the implications of how they weigh the ideal and the real. We all have the choice to either “treat the world cynically, or ...meet it with a measure of hope,” as Neiman said.⁵³⁴

The story of the American founding is one that reflects Kant’s notion of well-reasoned hope. Hope, in this context, is not based on sentiment, but on our ability to see that if change happened before, that it could happen again. The American Revolution is one signpost of change, and suggests that through collective action guided by a set of shared ideals, ordinary citizens can change democracy. For education, journalism, and democracy, change might be slow, difficult, or seemingly impossible –but it also has the potential to be revolutionary.

Skepticism and Imagination

Hume’s view of moral reason has important implications for the value of education in a democratic society. If imagination, and therefore the capacity for sympathy, increases as experience increases, then educators should be interested in creating opportunities for their students –and themselves –to access a diverse and wide ranging set of knowledge and experiences necessary to approach moral and political questions with due skepticism. Due skepticism not only suggests that individuals should question moral and political certainties, but it also suggests that individuals should recognize the validity of differing perspectives and the role that experience has in shaping the views of the self and others.

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 28.

Transformative Knowledge

However, educators might be better prepared to negotiate these tensions between their pedagogical agency and institutional change by first shifting their focus. Enacting one's agency to successfully catalyze institutional development depends on the degree that educators interrogate the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal elements of their agency. As educational theorist Patrick Shannon might argue, developing a robust sense of self authorship through critical reflexivity, forming communities of practice with like-minded others, and working to increase one's knowledge about the power relations within an institution can increase educators' agency.⁵³⁵ Transformative agency or "the capacity to make over in ways that endure"⁵³⁶ is best achieved within a materialized community of like-minded individuals organized by common values and the common pursuit of catalyzing institutional development.⁵³⁷ "The remaking of democracy in our classrooms," Shannon wrote, "might begin with our engagement in democratic practices. ... we can makes sense of our values and use them to evaluate the existing and possible approaches...to education."⁵³⁸

Limitations

As I have previously discussed, this inquiry deals primarily in the realm of abstract principles. Although I identify a number of problems associated with journalism and journalism

⁵³⁵ Shannon, "The Practice of Democracy and Dewey's Challenge."

⁵³⁶ Lachicotte, "Identity, Agency, and Social Practice," 231.

⁵³⁷ Shannon, "The Practice of Democracy and Dewey's Challenge."

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

education regarding the changing structure, increased corporatism, and the impact of market forces, I do not go into any in-depth analysis concerning the political economic of the mass media. Another limitation involves the scope of inquiry. Many of these ideas might apply to educational institutions outside of the academy. But, at the same time, my focus on the academy does not examine the institutional differences that might have facilitated an inquiry that could address the full complexity of higher education institutions. Finally, although I have addressed the type of education this examination might suggest, this discussion does not deal with curriculum or the many internal and external factors that might impact the development of an academic plan. Admittedly, my focus on abstract principles limited this inquiry in a number of ways, but it also presents opportunities to pursue future research.

Directions for Future Research

Lee Bollinger, Jeremy Cohen, Jay Rosen, and Steven Reese represent just a few academic leaders in efforts to build democratic capacity both inside and outside the academy. While many of these academic change agents have experienced a range of successes, they have likely met a range of failed or benign attempts. My inquiry addresses the ideal as one step in pursuing informed praxis. What lessons have these seasoned academics learned in their efforts to catalyze institutional and democratic change? How did they motivate faculty? Were their efforts interdisciplinary? If once-successful efforts are now nonexistent, what factors led to this fizzling out? Their stories represent a massive source of data that can be useful for understanding institutional culture, common pitfalls, patterns of success, and more. The findings would be

useful for anyone attempting to imagine higher education as one point of entry for building the capacity to sustain democracy.

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- Santus, S., Winters, C., Toula, C., Christo-Baker, G., & Randall, D. (August 2010). The "Obama is a Muslim" Myth: Analyzing the Implications of Right Wing Abuse of Religion and Culture during the 2008 Presidential Race; Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Denver, CO.
- Christo-Baker, G., Randall, D., Santus, S., Toula, C., & Winters, C. (October, 2008). An Analysis of Muslim University Students' Attitudes Toward the "Obama is a Muslim" Myth. Paper presented at the Congress of the Americas II [Co-sponsored by the International Communication Association (ICA), American Communication Association (ACA), Universidad de San Martin de Porres (Peru), and the InterAmericas Council (IAC)].

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