Service-Learning as a Tool to Cultivate Democratically Minded Students: A Conceptual Framework

Hannah Lebovits – Cleveland State University
Del M. N. Bharath – California State University, Dominguez Hills

The field of public administration is intrinsically linked to a substantive experience of democracy and the development of a democratic community. This article employs John Dewey's constructivist pedagogical approach to make the case that service-learning can be a vehicle to cultivate students' understanding of democracy as a movement toward a common good. We use the term "real democracy" to describe the ways that substantive practices of Dewey's communal democracy materialize in today's public sector. We highlight the concerns "real democracy" presents for public administrators before arguing that Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs are a particularly suitable setting to cultivate Dewey's constructivist approach to democratic education given that the spirit of the approach is already well-aligned with MPA core competencies. Finally, we present public administration educators with a *democratic service-learning* conceptual framework that ties together pedagogical goals, service-learning design and outcomes, and Dewey's constructivist, democratic student experience.

Keywords: Public Administration, Democracy, Service-Learning, Social Justice

Over 100 years ago, John Dewey's *Democracy and education* (1916) moved the conversation about democracy from one focused on a form of government to a discussion about the process of creating a more empowered populace working toward a common good. This shift in focus from neo-liberal (or representative) democratic government to substantive democratic citizenship called for a change in the way that citizens viewed themselves as community members (Box, Marshall, Reed, & Reed, 2001).[1] A democratic educational experience, according to Dewey (1916) must be an intentional effort to create community and increase equity through a deeply constructivist approach. Dewey encouraged educators to not only teach democratic practices but to instill democratic ideals in their students through an inquisitive and context-dependent process.

Dewey's perspective highlighted the need for students to experience and wrestle with ideals in order to truly internalize them. Dewey placed increased importance on the role of higher education institutions and their educators in cultivating this experience. Specifically, Dewey noted

---

the need for educators to prepare students for uncertainty and to encourage adaptability in understanding and applying democratic principles to new situations (Dewey, 1916; Lipman, 1991). From its onset as a discipline, the field of public administration has prioritized professional training of public servants as one of its main goals. Whether as managers, leaders, or co-producers, public servants are expected to be at the helm of the ontological process of creating a democratic community (Box et al., 2001). Today, as Dewey's democratic principles of community, engagement, and direct service face real and existential threats, we contend that the constructivist approach is as timely as ever.

Contemporary public agencies face new challenges in a highly technologized, privatized, and polarized world. We use the term "real democracy" to describe the ways in which Dewey's socially connected democratic ideals are challenged in an era where technology shapes information and learning, public agencies function in austerity, and residents are unsure of their trust in government. In accordance with Dewey's predictions, the current practices of government agencies require institutional adaptability and a highly engaged citizenry. In this article, we recommend that institutions of higher education utilize service-learning as a pedagogical tool to instill substantive democratic ideals in Master of Public Administration (MPA) students. By instilling these ideas, instructors are preparing future public administration professionals to overcome challenges to democracy and serve as "responsible administrators" (Burke & Cleary, 1989).

Service-learning is a type of experiential learning in which students engage with a community partner (e.g., organizations, political/administrative actors, and/or individuals) not only to develop the community partners' capacity, but also to develop students' ability to perform tasks, build relationships, and gain knowledge of a particular field (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Britt, 2012). Service-learning can help develop students academically, personally, and professionally. However, we contend that service-learning courses can also be designed to develop students civically and democratically—a process we refer to as *democratic service-learning*. In the article we explore how public administration educators can design and execute service-learning courses in a way that aligns with Dewey's ideals in an age of "real democracy."

While the case for increased service-learning in the public administration classroom is neither new nor groundbreaking (Imperial, Perry, & Katula, 2007), it can be challenging to intentionally design and execute a valuable service-learning experience aimed at achieving a specific outcome or set of outcomes (Dicke, Dowden, & Torres, 2004; Felten & Clayton, 2011). Currently, there is little guidance for MPA faculty on how to conceptualize a course with the explicit goal of increasing students' substantive democratic ideals. This article seeks to fill this gap. We contend that democratic service-learning, which emphasizes social justice and critical citizenship as well as components of reflection and responsibility, can be a unique method to increase students' ability to internalize democratic ideals. In making our argument we develop a conceptual framework for MPA faculty and program staff to consider.

The Rise of "Real Democracy"

Democracy is of vital importance to the practice and study of public administration (Diamond & Schultz, 2018; Gaynor & Carrizales, 2018). Indeed, some have even suggested that democracy *requires* (italics in original) the field of public administration (Meier, 2010). Public administration would not be a field without the public, a public sector, and public service work—all of which are cogs in the system of the communal democratic experience. Because democratic ideals are the foundation of our public sector, there is value in integrating aspects of democracy

in public administration pedagogy. However, due to waning connections between citizens and their communities, some have argued that the value of substantive democracy has decreased in the last century (Box et al., 2001).

"Real democracy" is a term that we have coined to represent the ways that Dewey's democratic principles of engagement, service, and citizenship exist in our present world, a world where the provision of government services increasingly occurs outside the control of government agencies (Warner & Hefetz, 2008), where these agencies rely more heavily on technologies to screen and service clients (Eubanks, 2017), and where government must continuously prove its trustworthiness (Kettl, 2018; Roberts, 2018). Private companies, data scientists, and technology corporations are increasingly replacing public sector services and administrators (Eubanks, 2017); and, although some of the threats to democracy are as old as the system itself, new advances in technology and privacy (Eubanks, 2017) coupled with increasing demands to provide more services with fewer public dollars (Brown & Potoski, 2003) have impacted the application of substantive ideals of democracy within the public sector.

The development of the Internet has also blurred geographic boundaries and globalized concerns that were once local in nature. This has resulted in a weakening of the institutional, state, and political boundaries (Brewer, Neubauer, & Geiselhart, 2006); and, although scholars continue to argue that information technology can increase trust in government systems (Kettl, 2018; Song & Lee, 2016), the rapid rise in "fake news" and social media trolls has reshaped citizens' knowledge of and interactions with their own government systems (Allcott & Genskow, 2017). Ultimately, then, the use of technology has led to a distancing of citizens from public servants (Eubanks, 2017). This has undoubtedly altered the public sphere and is limiting the ability of street-level bureaucrats (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2012) to apply the substantive ideals of Dewey's democracy.

It should also be noted that when data scientists determine how values are institutionalized within technological systems they effectively become public administrators creating systems that can limit citizens' voices and representation within large government systems (Lebovits, 2018). Collectively, these issues can lead to questions about the legitimacy of government agencies as a substantive democratic apparatus that maintains the ideal of democracy and creates community and citizenship. These questions about government's legitimacy can result in increasing citizen dissatisfaction with government (Ariely, 2013).

In order to promote substantive democratic ideals and ensure an application of these ideals in public service outcomes, we argue that public administration education can and should prepare students for the world of "real democracy." As a professional degree program, the MPA curriculum is already designed to prepare students to be leaders and responsible administrators. Thus, the degree has objectives that supersede the course goals of undergraduate education in public administration (Haupt, Kapucu, & Hu, 2017; Morse & Buss, 2014). Therefore, we maintain that MPA instructors are uniquely positioned to develop democratic citizens at the graduate level.

We explore this idea through an approach to experiential education that we refer to as "democratic service-learning." In particuilar, we propose that public administration educators should consider service-learning—an experiential learning approach that allows students to practically apply the theoretical knowledge from their coursework—as not only a tool to develop professional skills but also as a way to increase students' ability to connect with and cultivate substantive democratic values and understand their role within a democracy as both citizens and public administrators.

Using examples from the literature we show that service-learning can be intentionally designed to produce the democratic development of MPA students. Moreover, we suggest that public administration educators are uniquely situated to provide this type of development through democratic service-learning, as Dewey suggested.

In the following sections, we elaborate on the idea of democratic service-learning. We begin with a review of the design elements, goals, and outcomes of service-learning. We also highlight the role of educators and institutions in creating and executing a constructivist environment for student growth. This review allows us to frame the discussion of democratic service-learning within the larger institutional goals of learning and citizenship. We then continue with a discussion of the distinctly democratic elements of MPA education and how the objectives of MPA programs can be achieved through service-learning. Finally, we combine these components within a single democratic service-learning framework, which is intended to provide a guide for MPA faculty and program staff seeking to cultivate democratic ideals through service-learning. We augment the framework with examples from public administration courses, democratic and social justice initiatives in higher education, and service-learning research.

Service-Learning: Purpose and Design

Dewey's (1916) approach to learning advocated for connecting practical experience with knowledge while linking individuals to society and placing educators at the nexus of this relationship. Proponents of Dewey's method have suggested that educators can enhance democratic citizenship through experiential learning (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Kapucu & Knox, 2011). Higher education, it is believed, plays an integral role in the democratic development of students and community problem-solving because it encourages educators to use their expertise to benefit communities (Bryer, 2011).

Building on these ideals, Bryer (2014) suggested that educators should teach students how to be: a) socially connected with others; b) politically intelligent enough to understand how to pursue individual and collective interests within governing and political processes; c) socially aware and empathetic to the conditions in which others, both locally and globally, live; and d) economically self-sufficient and able to use skills necessary to earn a competitive salary. By working toward these outcomes, students are believed to become empowered to help strengthen their communities.

One way to intentionally infuse the pursuit of these goals into higher education is through the use of service-learning, which is a form of experiential education that encourages civic engagement. It is a context-dependent practice that allows students to apply the principles of the institution and/or discipline in a community-based setting (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). The integration of service with an academic curriculum increases the value of both environments (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011) as students serve their community by using knowledge and newly acquired skills in realistic situations (Terry & Bohnenberger, 2004).

The use of service-learning in college classrooms has increased due to national initiatives and federal funds (Madrell, 2014). At the undergraduate and graduate levels, service-learning courses often take the form of students assisting community organizations and applying lessons from the classroom in the real world (Imperial et al., 2007). Service-learning experiences can range from short-term modules, semester-long activities, or multi-year/multi-course projects, with students providing direct and/or indirect service (Felten & Clayton, 2011). Service-learning can be a useful workforce development tool and a meaningful opportunity for students to engage with

community members and learn new perspectives and behaviors (Britt, 2012; Simon, Yack, & Ott, 2013; Stout, 2013).

Student outcomes of service-learning range from increasing students' academic ability and technical skills to encouraging their substantive development as citizens (Britt, 2012; Bryer, 2014). Students gain professional networks and they learn about the real-life experiences of professionals. They are also able to enhance their résumés (Gallaher & McGorry, 2015). Service-learning participants develop academically by improving in their grades and gaining a better understanding of course material (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Personally, service-learning participants develop social skills, self-efficacy, leadership, and inter- and intrapersonal skills (Astin et al., 2000; Celio et al., 2011). Service-learning can also provide an outlet for students to build relationships with faculty and community members all while cultivating new behaviors in an experiential activity that occurs within a community setting (Britt, 2012; Simon et al., 2013; Stout, 2013).

Service-learning differs from other forms of experiential learning such as internships, practicums, and job placements. As opposed to these forms of experiential learning, service-learning focuses on reality, reciprocity, reflection, and responsibility (Godfrey, Illes, & Berry, 2005). Specifically, scholars have argued that service-learning projects should be *realistic* and have an explicit connection to the service project and learning objectives. Being realistic suggests that there are appropriate time and participant commitments. This also means that there are clear goals and an understanding of impacts as well as proper design and management (Imperial et al., 2007; Maddrell, 2014). Service-learning projects should not be time-consuming for participants. Everyone should be fully aware of their roles, responsibilities, and commitments needed for completion of the project. Best practice suggests formalizing project management protocols in order to detail expectations, roles, and responsibilities (e.g., Maddrell, 2014); define success; and identify processes for clear and constant communication. Contracts between participants can act as a tool to allow for role clarity and understanding of responsibilities, outcomes, and outputs. These contracts can be used as tangible tools to ensure the design of realistic service-learning projects (Bennett & Green, 2001) that are able to connect student learning outcomes with community service activities (Hydorn, 2007).

Reciprocity means that all parties are involved to assist in the structuring of the activity (Hilosky, Moore, & Reynolds, 1999, p. 143). Service-learning projects should be designed for co-education outcomes between community partners and instructor(s), where community partners work with instructor(s) to develop the course, share course objectives, and design the project (Blouin & Perry, 2009). Feedback loops and constant communication can facilitate the increased partnerships needed for reciprocity and increased outcomes for all participants (Imperial et al., 2007).

Reflection in service-learning means that these projects allow for the construction of knowledge (Fisher, Sharp & Bradley, 2017). Reflection differentiates service-learning from other forms of experiential education as it specifically connects the service experience to desired learning outcomes. Reflection, however, can be the most challenging part of service-learning to implement effectively; as a result, it is often done poorly or not at all (Barnes & Caprino, 2016). Reflective exercises can be journals, group discussions, or short-answer responses. These exercises should be designed to allow students an opportunity to connect the service to their learning by asking questions or discussing problems and fostering intellectual and emotional engagement in their service experience (Dubinsky, 2006). Without reflection, the service-learning experience risks being meaningless to the democratic development of students. Our conceptualization of democratic service-learning is dependent on reflection as it allows students to consider not only

how the service had an impact on them and the community they serve (Barnes & Caprino, 2016; Terry & Bohnenberger, 2004) but also how the service had an impact on their role as a citizen in that community.

These three components (*realistic*, *reciprocity*, and *reflection*) are considered to be the three Rs of service-learning. However, Godfrey, Illes, and Berry (2005) include *responsibility* as a fourth service-learning component needed to promote the development of students as citizens. While these authors noted that responsibility is related to the ethical behavior of business, in this article we argue that responsibility is relevant in the neoliberal environment within which public administrators work. Responsibility draws students' attention to issues of equity and civic values, where they are grounded in their responsibility to contribute to others (Godfrey et al., 2005).

Still, while the aforementioned design components all lend themselves to effective service-learning projects, the results of service-learning can vary significantly. Together, the four components (*reality, reflection, reciprocity,* and *responsibility*) can produce outcomes from professional development to democratic development. We contend that public administration educators can connect ideals from Dewey (1916) and Bryer (2014) to move beyond conceptualizing service-learning as a tool solely used for knowledge dissemination and professional skill development and move toward conceptualizing service-learning as a vehicle for the development of students as citizens and community members. We highlight this combination of Dewey (1916) and Bryer (2014) as well as the specific pedagogical goals of MPA programs in the conceptual framework discussed later in the article.

It should be noted that even with the best intentions, service-learning projects can still be ill-designed and badly executed if components of these courses are not clearly delineated and specified in the design phase. Students can be triggered by this immersive process. Thus, individual needs should be identified and addressed so that students are not negatively impacted by the experience (Larsen, 2017). Poor design can also reinforce students' existing paternalistic and stereotypical ideas of community members as being deficient and them (students) acting as community savior (Chupp & Joseph, 2010; Fisher et al., 2017). Proper design can elicit positive emotions as well as increased positive outcomes overall (Chupp & Joseph, 2010).

Service-Learning: Goals and Outcomes

The design and implementation of service-learning courses vary significantly (Bryer, 2014). As a result, service-learning outcomes differ across instructors and institutions. Britt (2012), however, developed a typology of service-learning outcomes that could be expected from these courses (e.g., "skill-set practice and reflexivity, civic values and critical citizenship and social justice activism" [p. 80]).

Skill-set practice and reflexivity are *cognitive* outcomes connected to learning course materials by applying the theoretical knowledge to practical experience. This goal is met when service-learning acts as a method to connect theory and practice. Students are individual learners and the end goal is to develop students' competencies and feelings of self-efficacy.

Civic values and critical citizenship are outcomes linked to students as citizens "providing the experience of being an individual in relation to the collective community" and "exploring what it means to exist in relation to others in community" (Britt, 2012, p. 250). Courses that expect these outcomes do so with the intent of "rais[ing] awareness of and critical thinking about social issues and students' values and morals" (p. 250) and fostering *relational* change in students.

Finally, social justice activism outcomes allow students to take collective action against systems of oppression. Courses that expect these outcomes can create a behavioral change in students whereby they become change agents. Students, for example, can act against societal injustices and power imbalances. Outcomes of a single service-learning project can overlap to develop students as learners, citizens, and/or change agents (Britt, 2012).

Britt's (2012) outcomes align with Dewey's (1916) call for an adaptive and engaged student learning experience. These outcomes can encourage public administration educators to better utilize experiential learning programs to cultivate the relational and behavioral components of democratic public service, in addition to skill-set practice. Britt (2012) notes that service-learning is often used as a means to reinforce skills and train students for future employment. We contend, however, that in the face of "real democracy" a singular focus on using service-learning to produce skill-set and reflexivity outcomes will not necessarily provide students with the democratic stamina to perform as responsible public administrators (Burke & Cleary, 1989). In addition to professional skills development, future public administrators need democratic development.

Ultimately, democratic service-learning courses can be designed with the goals of increasing students' ability to engage with the community and create a sense of their own citizenship. Planning and executing a course in this manner requires the support of educators and institutions, a thoughtful combination of the four R design components outlined above (i.e., *reality, reflection, reciprocity,* and *responsibility*) and an understanding of the democratic underpinnings of higher education—specifically, public administration. Therefore, before outlining our framework for democratic service-learning, we describe the importance of democratic education in the MPA classroom.

Dewey's Democracy and Public Administration Education

In combining Dewey's call to institutions and educators with the challenges of "real democracy," we see MPA educators as being integral to the development of democratic students. Institutions of higher education have historically played a significant role in the development of students as active citizens (Felten & Clayton, 2011); however, more recently these institutions have focused on becoming economic drivers keen on producing students who are competitive candidates for the labor market (Bryer, 2014).

One of the main goals of graduate MPA education is to produce graduates who will efficiently and effectively act as public servants (Lazenby, 2010; Vicino, 2017). In accordance with Dewey's (1916) approach, we argue that, in order to produce the engaged citizenry needed for a well-functioning democracy, public administration educators must build on Dewey's foundation and begin to shape students as democratic and engaged citizens.

A number of studies have provided evidence to support the notion that educators (especially those in public affairs, political science, and social work fields) should foster the constructivist development of students as democratic citizens (Britt, 2012; Chupp & Joseph, 2010; Waldner, Roberts, Widener, & Sullivan, 2011). Scholars within public administration have, therefore, suggested that the MPA environment is uniquely positioned to cultivate students as future practitioners, community builders, and engaged citizens (Morse & Buss, 2014; Vicino, 2017).

While graduates of MPA programs need technical and practical skills to succeed in the workforce, the theoretical and ethical components of public administration curricula are still considered core competencies of graduate public administration programs (Haupt et al., 2017). The focus on dual

compentencies in these programs can leave faculty with mixed priorities. For example, they must ensure that students are able to do the work required for gainful employment while also attempting to instill ethical public service values (Brintnall, 2008; Vicino, 2017).

The Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) has highlighted five core competencies that accredited MPA programs must integrate into their curricula: 1) leading and managing in public governance; 2) participating in and contributing to the policy process; 3) analyzing, synthesizing, thinking critically, solving problems, and making decisions; 4) articulating and applying a public service perspective; and 5) communicating and interacting productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry (NASPAA, 2014, p. 7). Several of these competencies go beyond practical knowledge of administrative duties and focus more on engaged duties of applying democratic principles to administrative work, engaging with community members to resolve conflicts and encourage social change, and creating and maintaining an environment that encourages diversity and social equity (Haupt et al., 2017; Lopez-Littleton, Blessett, & Burr, 2018). Each of these is a key objective of public administration; and, while these objectives might appear straightforward in classroom settings, they can be difficult to contextualize in the workplace.

In their research on the value that managers place on these competencies, Haupt, Kapucu, and Hu (2017) found that the application of democratic principles and practices as well as the ability to understand and develop policy were the most important qualities that managers believed were necessary to succeed in public governance and the policy process. Similarly, Lazenby (2010) found that public managers ranked ethical behavior and community-building skills as more relevant tools to succeed in public management than technical and service delivery skills. This trend goes even further back to when Nalbandian (1999) found that the substantive notion of democracy and the goals of community and citizenship were a strong focus for public managers. Collectively, these studies highlight the importance of knowledge dissemination, information provision, and ethical citizenship in MPA programs.

Still, there may be some disagreement between MPA educators as to the intended outcomes of service-learning. Some educators, for example, may view service-learning as a method for students to acquire knowledge, apply skills, and analyze issues (Astin et al., 2000). Thus, these educators may not use service-learning to instill democratic ideals. Other educators, however, may view service-learning as a way to develop students as citizens (Britt, 2012; Bryer, 2014). Public affairs educators, in particular, who have intentionally designed service-learning courses to emphasize these objectives have reported believing that the effort was valuable (Kimoto, 2011; Nickels, Rowland & Fadase, 2011; Simon et al., 2013; Stout, 2013). Despite the value that these educators find, there is no comprehensive overview of how to design a uniquely democratic service-learning experience that is intended to produce critical citizenship and social justice activism (Britt, 2012), while also meeting the goals of higher education (Bryer, 2014) and specifically designed to address NASPAA's core competencies. Thus, in the following section we integrate all of these components into a single conceptual framework and provide examples of service-learning courses that we believe are a representation of democratic service-learning.

Democratic Service-Learning: A Conceptual Model

The values of substantive democracy and the constructivist democratic approach are integral to public administration education and practice, particularly in our current state of "real democracy." To help guide public administration educators on their path toward democratic service-learning, we combine Britt's (2012) typology of service-learning outcomes with Bryer's

Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework for Democratic Service-Learning
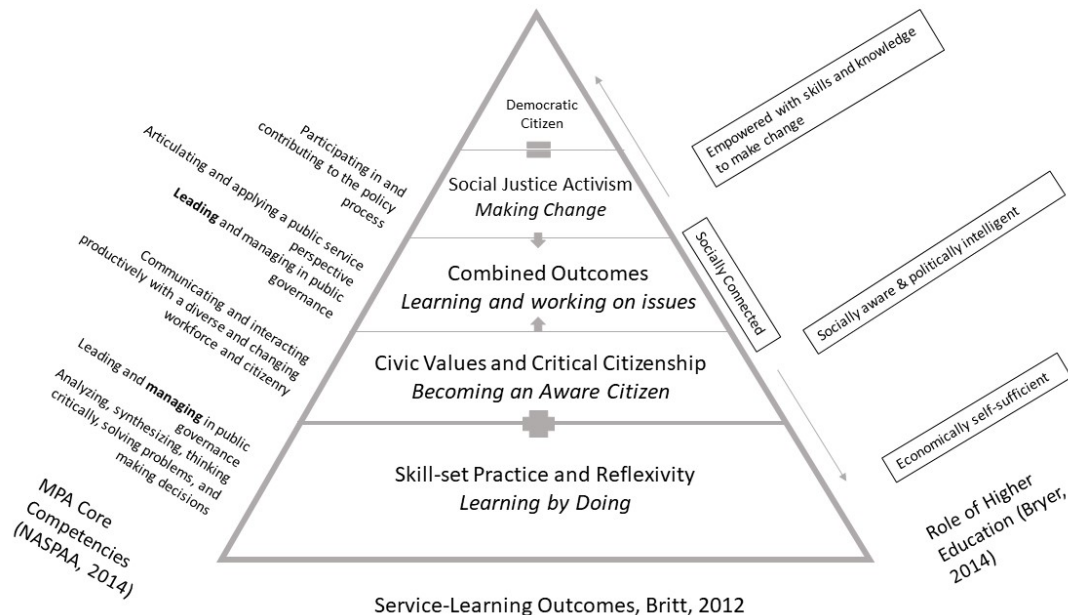
Note: Adapted from Britt (2012), Bryer (2014), and NASPAA (2014).

(2014) development of students as community members and NASPAA's (2014) graduate core competencies to create a unified conceptual framework (see Figure 1). The framework visually highlights the steps toward developing democratically minded public administrators through a well designed democratic service-learning experience in MPA degree programs.

The central components of the framework correspond to Britt's (2012) typology of service-learning outcomes. The categories are independent and can be produced individually or in different combinations for each course. However, some degree of skill-set practice and reflexivity underlies all service-learning activities because, by definition, these courses enable students to learn by doing. As a result, students are able to develop practical skills. If these projects had no connection to learning by doing or skill-set practice and reflexivity then they would not be considered service-learning. They would merely reflect more traditional experiential learning experiences such as community service or volunteering (Furco, 1996; Kapucu & Knox, 2011).

Wodicka, Swartz, and Peaslee (2012) noted that MPA students often work with government officials on program evaluations; and, Mottner (2010) described how service-learning can be used to teach students about nonprofit marketing. In these instances, the service-learning projects were connected to course materials for professional development or skill-set practice. These types of service-learning projects, only aimed at professional development skills, are useful but do not sufficiently develop students in all four areas of Bryer's (2014) institutional goals of student development nor do they exemplify Dewey's (1916) democratic constructivist philosophy of education. We, therefore, encourage MPA instructors to focus on outcomes that lead to the development of democratically minded students, i.e., students who are also citizens and who have the potential to uplift their communities and become responsible public administrators.

Bryer's (2014) ideas about the role of higher education institutions in the development of students are listed on the right side of Figure 1. As shown, institutional outcomes are directly linked with Britt's (2012) student outcomes. At all levels, students gain social connections while working with other students, community partners and members, and educators. Skill-set practice and reflexivity projects can foster economic self-sufficiency, as the development of professional skills can increase the likelihood of gainful employment. Outcomes related to civic values can develop politically intelligent and socially aware students who know their role as citizens and who want to learn more about the political system and how they can interact with it.

The NASPAA (2014) core competencies are listed on the left side of Figure 1 along with their relationship to the goals developed by Bryer (2014) and the outcomes identified by Britt (2012). We separate "Leading and managing in public governance" into distinct competencies (i.e., leading *and* managing) as we believe that the goals of "managing in public governance" and "analyzing, synthesizing, thinking critically, solving problems and making decisions" align with skill-set related competencies (Haupt, Kapucu, & Hu, 2017).

Also shown in Figure 1, the competency related to, "Communicating and interacting productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry" is likely to be developed through outcomes that correlate with civic values and critical citizenship. The competency related to "Articulating and applying a public service perspective" as well as the competency related to "Leading in public governance" are best achieved through a mixture of activities that cultivate social justice and critical citizenship (Lopez-Littleton et al., 2018). Finally, we link social justice activism to the competency focused on "Participating in and contributing to the policy process." Throughout the framework, the NASPAA core competencies align with the institutional goals developed by Bryer (2014) as well as the outcomes identified by Britt (2012).

At the apex of the framework is the democratically-minded student. This is a student who has participated in service-learning experiences that build on skill-set practice, critical citizenship, and social justice behaviors. This development is fostered by democratic service-learning which promotes meaningful engagement through *reflection* and *responsibility*. Democratic service-learning develops students who are politically intelligent, socially connected, socially aware, and economically self-sufficient. By engaging in this type of service-learning students are connected to the community. They also understand the needs of the community and they feel empowered to make a change within the community. This, for us, is the democratic student (as per Dewey's writings) who now has the increased potential to become a responsible public administrator.

While our conceptual framework is unique, several examples in the literature highlight the components we describe. Student philanthropy service-learning projects, for example, highlight strong relational growth among students, organizations, and the social values of nonprofit partners (Benenson & Moldow, 2017; Olberding, 2009). In their review of the *Pay It Forward* initiative, Benenson and Moldow (2017) found that students reported higher rates of confidence in their own skills when the experience allowed them to engage with the organization and play an active role in organizational leadership and decision-making. Similarly, Olberding (2009) found that through student philanthropy, students felt more connected to and aware of nonprofit organizations and the social issues they attempted to tackle.

Bryer (2011) also provides an example of democratic service-learning in his description of an MPA course that assisted students in studying collaborative governance. In the course, students practiced data analysis (a skill that public administrators need) to provide recommendations to a nonprofit organization while they learned about the theory and practice of collaborative governance and other governmental processes. Waldner and colleagues (2011) also noted the

importance of social justice service-learning in a public policy course where MPA students worked with local health officials to analyze policy data and provide relevant recommendations. In this course, students were immersed in a social equity experience that allowed them to not only learn about historical and current inequities but to also work toward resolving them (Waldner et al., 2011). Both of these service-learning projects were intentionally designed to not only give future public administrators the opportunity to actively participate in the policy process but to also allow them to understand the functioning of government and issues of social equity.

These types of projects undoubtedly build students' social awareness. They allow students to develop empathy for the conditions of others and to cultivate their relational capacity. Still, these projects are not social justice advocacy focused, which is a key component of our conceptual framework. Interestingly, in our review of the literature, we failed to find evidence that social justice advocacy projects are utilized in MPA courses, although they are at times present in undergraduate public administration education (Nickels et al., 2011). These types of courses would be useful for MPA instructors in providing the training needed for students to function as responsible administrators in an age of "real democracy."

Conclusion

In his journey to the United States, de Tocqueville (2003) noted that the substantive experience of democracy does not simply consist of cognitive awareness and understanding of society's issues, but it demands an empowered populace willing to confront difficult issues. Almost 200 years later, austerity and privatization, technology and the lack of clarity concerning information, along with low levels of citizen trust in government have created cracks in our democratic foundation. Therefore, fostering key elements of constructivist democracy—i.e., civic values and social justice behaviors—in public administration graduate students can allow for the development of democratic students and future public administrators who are empowered to create change.

This article presents a framework that can prepare future public administrators to enter the world of public service with Dewey's democratic ideals deeply ingrained. We began by describing the general principles of service-learning including the design, objectives, and outcomes of service-learning courses. We noted that service-learning can be an ideal vehicle for instilling the principles of Dewey's constructivist, context-dependent democratic approach. We then highlighted the discipline specific pedagogical goals of public administration and the role of service-learning in cultivating democracy in the MPA classroom. Finally, we presented a conceptual framework describing a service-learning path uniquely intended to cultivate civic values and social justice-oriented democratic students, which we defined as "democratic service-learning."

Our conceptual framework outlines the core components of democratic service-learning by aligning MPA core competencies, the roles of higher education institutions in student development, and service-learning outcomes. Educators can use this framework to guide the intentional design of meaningful projects. Although this is not a simple task, we believe that in an age of "real democracy" public administration students must enter into the public sector with these ideals already ingrained; and, democratic service-learning can foster this development.

Public administration educators are responsible for the professional skills development of their students, particularly their graduate students who are being primed to enter the workforce as leaders and skilled contributors. We contend that public administration educators are also

responsible for the development of responsible administrators who are democratically developed citizens capable of bridging the public servant and citizen divide. These are students who have been prepared not only to act as effective administrators but who have also been prepared to understand their obligations as a citizen in a substantive democracy. Moreover, these are students who now have the skills to navigate "real democracy" and work with their communities to address the potential challenges of democracy in present times. It is, therefore, not enough for public administration educators to send skilled labor into the workforce. We must also produce responsible professionals who can uphold the ideals of democracy and the bureaucracy that they serve.

Notes

1. The term "citizen" has exclusionary connotations, particularly in an age in which the term has been co-opted by communities that seek to narrowly define one's capacity to engage within a democratic system. Similar to existing literature, we use the term with the hope that a new word or series of words will soon be adopted and integrated into public administration literature and research.

Disclosure Statement

The author(s) declare that there are no conflicts of interest that relate to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Acknowledgments

References

Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of Economic Perspectives, 31*(2), 211-36.

Ariely, G. (2013). Public administration and citizen satisfaction with democracy: Cross-national evidence. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *79*, 747-766. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852313501432

Astin, A. W., Vogelgesang, L. J., Ikeda, E. K., & Yee, J. A. (2000). *How service-learning affects students*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute. https://doi.org/10.1142/S1363919610002660

Barnes, M. E., & Caprino, K. (2016). Analyzing service-learning reflections through Fink's taxonomy. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *21*, 557-575. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2016.1160221

Benenson, J., & Moldow, E. (2017). Paying it forward: The role of student philanthropy course activities on civic outcomes. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 23*, 885-902. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2017.12002294

Bennett, G., & Green, F. P. (2001). Promoting service-learning via online instruction. *College Student Journal*, *35*(4), 491-498.

Blouin, D. D., & Perry, E. M. (2009). Whom does service-learning really serve? Community based organziations' perspectives on service-learning. *Teaching Sociology*, *37*, 120-135. https://doi.org/10.1177/0092055X0903700201

Box, R. C., Marshall, G. S., Reed, B. J., & Reed, C. M. (2001). New public management and substantive democracy. *Public Administration Review*, *61*, 608-619. https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-3352.00131

Brewer, G. A., Neubauer, B. J., & Geiselhart, K. (2006). Designing and implementing e-government systems: Critical implications for public administration and democracy. *Administration and Society*, *38*, 472-499. https://doi.org/10.1177/009539970629063

Bringle, R. G., & Hatcher, J. A. (1996). Implementing service-learning in higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, *67*(2), 221-239.

Brintnall, M. (2008). Preparing the public service for working in the multiethnic democracies: An assessment and ideas for action. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 14*, 39-50. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2008.12001508

Britt, L. L. (2012). Why we use service-learning: A report outlining a typology of three approaches to this form of communication pedagogy. *Communication Education, 61*, 80-88. https://doi.org/10.1080/03634523.2011.632017

Brown, T. L., & Potoski, M. (2003). Transaction costs and institutional explanations for government service production decisions. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *13*, 441-468. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpart/mug030

Bryer, T. A. (2011). Linking students with community in collaborative governance: A report on a service-learning class. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, *17*, 89-114. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2011.12001629

Bryer, T. A. (2014). Beyond job creation and service-learning: Putting the public back in public affairs education. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 20*, 233-252. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2014.12001784

Burke, J. P., & Cleary, R. E. (1989). Reconciling public administration and democracy: The role of the responsible administrator. *Public Administration Review*, *20*, 180-186. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900699708525233

Celio, C. I., Durlak, J., & Dymnicki, A. (2011). A meta-analysis of the impact of service-learning on students. *Journal of Experiential Education*, *34*, 164-181. https://doi.org/10.1177/105382591103400205

Chupp, M. G., & Joseph, M. L. (2010). Getting the most out of service-learning: Maximizing student, university, and community impact. *Journal of Community Practice*, *18*, 190-212. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2010.487045

de Tocqueville, A. (2003). *Democracy in America* (Vol. 10). Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York, NY: Macmillan Press.

Diamond, J., & Schultz, D. (2018). Democracy and the teaching of public administration. *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, *24*, 3-7. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2018.1430978

Dicke, L., Dowden, S., & Torres, J. (2004). Successful service-learning: A matter of ideology. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 10*, 199-208. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2004.12001359

Dubinsky, J. (2006). The role of reflection in service-learning. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, *69*, 306-312. https://doi.org/10.1177/1080569906900308

Eubanks, V. (2017) *Automating inequality: How high-tech tools profile, police, and punish the poor*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Felten, P., & Clayton, P. H. (2011). Service-learning. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 128*, 75-84. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.470

Fisher, E. E., Sharp, R. L., & Bradley, M. J. (2017). Perceived benefits of service-learning: A comparison of collegiate recreation concentrations. *Journal of Experiential Education, 40*, 187-201. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053825917700922

Furco, A. (1996). Service-learning: A balanced approach to experiential education. In *Expanding boundaries: Serving and learning* (pp. 9-13). Washington, DC: Corporation for National Service.

Gallagher, M. J., & McGorry, S. Y. (2015). Service-learning and the capstone experience. *International Advances in Economic Research, 21*, 467-476. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11294-015-9550-z

Gaynor, T. S., & Carrizales, T. J. (2018). Teaching democracy: A review of public administration introductory courses. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 24*, 66-79. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2018.1429822

Giles, D. E. & Eyler, J. (1994). The theoretical roots of service-learning in John Dewey: Toward a theory of service-learning. *Service Learning, General, 1*(1), 7-85.

Godfrey, P. C., Illes, L. M., & Berry, G. R. (2005). Creating breadth in business education through service-learning. *Academy of Management Learning and Education, 4*, 309-323. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMLE.2005.18122420

Haupt, B., Kapucu, N., & Hu, Q. (2017). Core competencies in Master of Public Administration programs: Perspectives from local government managers. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 23*, 611-624. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2017.12002272

Hilosky, A., Moore, M. E., & Reynolds, P. (1999). Service-learning: Brochure writing for basic level college students. *College Teaching, 47*, 143-147. https://doi.org/10.1080/87567559909595805

Hydorn, D. L. (2007). Community service-learning in statistics: Course design and assessment. *Journal of Statistics Education, 15*, 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1080/10691898.2007.11889464

Imperial, M. T., Perry, J. L., & Katula, M. C. (2007). Incorporating service-learning into public affairs programs: Lessons from the literature. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 13*, 243-264. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2007.12001478

Kapucu, N., & Knox, C. C. (2011). Utilization of service-learning in emergency management programs in the United States. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 19*, 31-51. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2013.12001719

Kettl, D. F. (2018) Earning trust in government. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 24*, 295-299. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2018.1426923

Kimoto, D. M. (2011). Transformational service and action learning: The sustainability of civic engagement. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 17*, 27-44. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2011.12001626

Larsen, M. A. (2017). International service-learning: Rethinking the role of emotions. *Journal of Experiential Education, 40*, 279-294. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053825917706379

Lazenby, S. (2010). The adequacy of MPA course content in preparing local government managers. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 16*, 337-360. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2010.12001603

Lebovits, H. (2018). Book review of "Automating inequality: How high-tech tools profile, police, and punish the poor." *Public Integrity, 21*, 448-452. https://doi.org/10.1080/10999922.2018.1511671

Lipman, M. (1991). *Thinking in education*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Lopez-Littleton, V., Blessett, B., & Burr, J. (2018). Advancing social justice and racial equity in the public sector. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 24*, 449-468. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2018.1490546

Maddrell, J. (2014). Service-learning instructional design considerations. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education, 26*, 213-226. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12528-014-9085-y

Maynard-Moody, S., & Musheno, M. (2012). Social equities and inequities in practice: Street-level workers as agents and pragmatists. *Public Administration Review, 72*, 16-23. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2012.02633.x

Meier, K. J. (2010). Governance, structure, and democracy: Luther Gulick and the future of public administration. *Public Administration Review, 70*, 284-291. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2010.02288.x

Morse, R. S., & Buss, T. F. (2014). Preparing MPA graduates to serve as intermediaries in community building and public engagement. In R. S. Morse, & T. F. Buss (Eds.) *Innovations in public leadership development* (pp. 141-158). London, UK: Routledge.

Mottner, S. (2010). Service-learning in a nonprofit marketing course: A comparative case of pedagogical tools. *Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing, 22*, 231-245. https://doi.org/10.1080/10495142.2010.483274

Nalbandian, J. (1999). Facilitating community, enabling democracy: New roles for local government managers. *Public Administration Review, 59,* 187-197. https://doi.org/10.2307/3109948

Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA). (2014). *Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation. NASPAA standards: Accreditation standards for master's degree programs.* Retrieved from https://www.naspaa.org/sites/default/files/docs/2019-01/NASPAA%20Accreditation%20Standards.pdf

Nickels, A., Rowland, T., & Fadase, O. (2011). Engaging undergraduate students to be agents of social change: Lessons from student affairs professionals. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 17*, 45-60. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2011.12001627

Olberding, J. C. (2009). Indirect giving to nonprofit organizations: An emerging model of student philanthropy. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 15*, 463-492. https://doi.or/10.1080/15236803.2009.12001572

Roberts, R. (2018). Safeguarding the public trust: Teaching organizational dissent in an era of political polarization. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 24*, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2018.1426426

Simon, C. A., Yack, M., & Ott, J. S. (2013). MPA program partnerships with nonprofit organizations: Benefits to MPA programs, MPA students and graduates, nonprofit organizations, and communities. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 19*, 355-374. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2013.12001737

Song, C., & Lee, J. (2016). Citizens' use of social media in government, perceived transparency, and trust in government. *Public Performance & Management Review, 39*, 430-453. https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2015.1108798

Stout, M. (2013). Delivering an MPA emphasis in local governance and community development through service-learning and action research. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 19*, 217-238. https://10.1080/15236803.2013.12001731

Terry, A. W., & Bohnenberger, J. E. (2004). Blueprint for incorporating service-learning: A basic, developmental, k-12 service-learning typology. *Journal of Experiential Education, 27*, 15-31. https://doi.org/10.1177/105382590402700103

Vicino, T. J. (2017). Navigating the multiple roles of the MPA Director: Perspectives and lessons. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 23*, 785-798. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2017.12002287

Waldner, L. S., Roberts, K., Widener, M. C., & Sullivan, B. (2011). Serving up justice: Fusing service-learning and social equity in the public administration classroom. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 17*, 209-232. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2011.12001639

Warner, M. E., & Hefetz, A. (2008). Managing markets for public service: The role of mixed public–private delivery of city services. *Public Administration Review, 68*, 155-166. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2007.00845.x

Wodicka, R., Swartz, N., & Peaslee, L. (2012). Taking the classroom to town hall: Advancing public affairs education through university–municipal collaborations. *Journal of Public Affairs Education, 18*, 271-294. https://doi.org/10.1080/15236803.2012.12001684

Author Biographies

Hannah Lebovits is a doctoral student at Cleveland State University. Her research is predominantly focused on urban, suburban and metropolitan governance. Hannah's interest in service-learning stems from her experiences in service-learning courses as an MPA student. She is passionate about using service-learning as a vehicle to cultivate idealism and a social justice mindset in future public servants.

Del Bharath is a faculty member in the College of Business Administration and Public Policy at California State University, Dominguez Hills. As a public administration educator and student, she is interested in researching and utilizing service-learning to connect theory to practice and increase learning and development outcomes in students.