

Jacoby, B., & Associates. (2009). *Civic Engagement in Higher Education: Concepts and Practices*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Review by Kathryn Ortbal and Grace Emmerling

As the topic of civic engagement moves to the forefront for many institutions of higher education, Jacoby and associates present a timely and succinct volume of practical methods for shaping the personal and professional development of university graduates. The authors embrace the complexities of the term “civic engagement,” noting that no single definition can be applied to the aggregate; each institution must create a definition that encompasses the unique circumstances, values, and goals that best suit its needs. For the clarity of their discussion, however, Jacoby and associates offer a working definition of “civic engagement” that is used consistently throughout the chapters. A slight variation of the definition put forth by the Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership at the University of Maryland, the authors’ definition of civic engagement encompasses not only the knowledge and skills needed to participate in civic affairs, but also the values, motivation, and commitment needed to sustain participatory efforts across a diverse and wide range of subject matter. The subject matter referred to in the working definition entails learning from others and from self in order to develop informed perspectives on social issues, build an appreciation for diversity, cultivate skill sets needed to work through controversy with civility, develop an active role in political processes, engage in empathetic and ethical behavior, and embrace a leadership role along the way.

As a whole, the book is thematically segmented; Jacoby and associates organize the information in 13 essays that easily stand alone. Though separate, the chapters do come together to create a well-balanced discussion that culminates in a call to restore institutions of higher education to their original public purpose: to prepare students to live balanced, engaged, and democratic lives. The authors address topics such as the current trends in college students’ civic engagement, the number and breadth of civic engagement-based programs currently available, the importance of the first-year experience, and leadership education’s role in revitalizing public life. They provide specific stories of institutions’ successful incorporation of civic engagement into curriculum. They also offer practical tools for the implementation of programs that encourage civic education in diverse settings as well as methods for promoting democracy in the classroom and the integration of interdisciplinary capstone experiences.

The main utility of the book lies in its providing guidance to institutions of higher education that hope to launch programs that incorporate civic engagement into their curriculums. It accomplishes this through a series of essays, making it useful to professionals searching for information on particular civic engagement themes. In contrast, for student readers hoping to become more civically involved, the book does not offer pragmatic methods for integrating civic engagement into their lives. Rather, Jacoby and associates offer theoretical suggestions in an effort to allow readers an abstract understanding of the ways civic engagement can benefit institutions of higher education as well as their students.

Chapter 3, “Educating Students for Personal and Social Responsibility,” is the book’s strongest chapter. Caryn McTighe Musil, the contributing author, overviews recent student-led civic movements—namely the U.S. Diversity, Global Learning, and Civic Engagement movements—and offers methods to maximize the educational value of all three. She introduces a five-question schema to facilitate student development in two ways:

- (1) The schema encourages students to reach a deeper understanding of self, which (2) enables them to develop a deeper capacity to work cooperatively alongside others who may have different ideologies but have mutual goals of working toward civic ends. In order to promote this development, the schema asks students to define five concepts for themselves: (1) Who am I? [knowledge of self], (2) Who are we? [communal, collective knowledge], (3) What does it feel like to be them? [empathetic knowledge], (4) How do we talk with one another? [intercultural process knowledge], (5) How do we improve our shared lives? [applied, engaged knowledge]. (p. 57)

By going through the exercise of defining and reflecting, Musil suggests that students may be better prepared to work collectively in an atmosphere of diverse ideologies. It is through cultivating this atmosphere of diversity and cooperation that Musil suggests the common aspirations of different reform movements can be realized and educational coherence can be made possible.

Also in this chapter, Musil introduces the Civic Learning Spiral, the original product of her work with the Civic Engagement Working Group, which is a collaboration of noted thinkers initiated by the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

The shape of the spiral is designed to emulate the fluid integrated continuum that is a student's learning system. Musil eloquently points out that with each turn of the spiral, "learners bring with them their recently acquired knowledge and their synthesis of the integration of [the following] six interrelated braids" (p. 60): (1) self, (2) communities and cultures, (3) knowledge, (4) skills, (5) values, and (6) public action. All six braids need to coexist simultaneously, Musil suggests, in order to create a sustainable system for the integration of civic engagement into students' lives. Therefore, Musil concludes, it is necessary for institutions of higher education to re-examine their pedagogies, course structures, and intellectual architectures with the spiral in mind to ensure that students' senses of civic imagination are carefully fostered and developed.

In Chapter 9, another strong essay, contributing authors Nicholas Longo and Marguerite Shaffer build on the themes presented in Chapter 3. This chapter, titled "Leadership Education and the Revitalization of Public Life," emphasizes the importance of leadership development within institutions of higher education. Using examples from the Harry T. Wilks Leadership Institute at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, among others, the authors emphasize public leadership work that integrates community involvement and democratic principles. In contrast to approaches that typically forgo student involvement, the authors advocate utilizing student knowledge and experience to create an atmosphere that invites students to be equals in the eyes of their instructors. Through the effective use of examples, the authors emphasize the benefits of educating students to be leaders within civic engagement education, thereby giving students more power and respect within decision-making systems in higher education.

Together, the frameworks offered in Chapters 3 and 9 provide a coherent set of strategies for professionals hoping to integrate civic engagement education into their institutions. While effectively defining and elucidating these strategies, however, the authors miss an opportunity to diversify their audience to include students. *Civic Engagement in Higher Education* appeals to a broad readership—"academic officers . . . mid- to senior-level professionals . . . and public policy members" (p. 2)—whose support is crucial to the process of nurturing students' transitions into fully engaged citizenship, but Jacoby and her associates overlook current and future students as a potential audience. The strategies reflect little student representation, and the language used makes it clear that the work is about students, not for them. Academic and professional studies

are integrated into the chapters to shed light on the mindsets of the students themselves in lieu of students' collective voices.

For example, on page 71 the authors cite Levine and Cureton's discussion of certain concerns they had found students held during their experiences in higher education. By the time that *Civic Engagement in Higher Education* was published in 2009, the Levine and Cureton study was already 11 years old and applied to students who are most likely no longer enrolled in the institutions of higher education that Jacoby and associates seek to improve. The book would have benefited from including the perspective of current students in order to better acknowledge the needs of the current generation—the one that the authors intend to foster. The use of more surveys and interviews of current students would have facilitated a better integration between students and faculty when addressing the concerns of students in higher education. Ultimately, it is ironic that Jacoby and associates seek to lessen the divides among students, faculty, and administrators, but in many ways encourage divides through the authors' proposed solutions.

Chapter 4, "Civic Engagement in the First College Year," deals with the first-year experience movement. The chapter's content exemplifies the divides among students, faculty members, and administrators. The authors attempt to provide a single definition for the first-year experience in terms of what it entails and what it does not. Their definition, and further elaboration of related concepts, could have been made much stronger by including student voices. Instead of addressing the concerns of students, the authors seek out the opinions of other professionals, many of whom are as separated from the students as Jacoby and associates are themselves. In effect, the authors find themselves "looking in on" student experiences rather than listening to what students say they experience. In other words, the authors draw conclusions from observations rather than from interactions with students. The effect removes students from the process of facilitating civic engagement altogether and makes them, as readers, feel disengaged.

Overall, the book serves as an excellent resource to newcomers to the study of civic engagement. Each essay is clear, concise, and well-supported. Although not effective in reflecting student voices, the essays provide a well-versed and user-friendly field guide to the topics covered. For this reason, *Civic Engagement in Higher Education* is a valuable resource that would complement university-level policy-making processes, provided that administrators remain aware of the integral role that the perspectives of actual students play in the implementation and success of such policies.

About the Reviewers

Kathryn Ortbal and **Grace Emmerling** are undergraduate students studying at the Schreyer Honors College at The Pennsylvania State University. Each is pursuing a bachelor's degree in community, environment, and development. Emmerling plans to earn a second bachelor's degree in economics.

Acknowledgment

The *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement's* associate editor for book reviews, Ted Alter (who is professor of Agricultural, Regional, and Environmental Economics at The Pennsylvania State University) thanks Jossey-Bass for providing complimentary copies of the book for this review.

