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Cress, C., Donahue, D., & Associates. (2011). *Democratic dilemmas of teaching service-learning* (Curricular Strategies for Success). Sterling, VA: Stylus. 220 pp.

Review by James R. Calvin

There is an ample foundation, framework, and purpose underlying *Democratic Dilemmas of Teaching Service-Learning* (2011); furthermore, it is a well-crafted and well-organized set of service-learning cases and stories. I further assess that the text, in a clearly defined structure, adds to the literature on service-learning curricula and pedagogical work at universities and colleges. This review of the book also recognizes a more than century old history and foundation for service-learning, or national service, which is at the core of civic life needs, goals, and citizen participation. Such participation by a citizen can take the form of becoming involved with a host of community and voluntary organizations. Citizen participation also involves debating issues, voting in elections, standing for election, or being an advocate for a particular cause, all of which are important in American democracy. In times of national need and crisis, ideas and minds that are willing to work to find solutions through service are essential, and this reality of being a youth or adult participant is central in pursuit of a sustainable democracy in America.

The editors refer to the call for a service nation by President Barack Obama. This most recent call echoes and connects historically to previous calls for broad-based commitment to support national service by former presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, George H. W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush. It is important to consider on a national scale varied human, societal, and environmental conditions and issues as accumulated impetus for national service, beginning with the Great Depression under President Roosevelt and its multiyear impact on the nation. Under President Kennedy, the Peace Corps was founded to promote service at home and internationally. The conditions during the tenure of President Lyndon B. Johnson involved the Great Society, the War on Poverty, the Vietnam Conflict, and the Civil Rights Movement, ultimately leading to the new Urban Corps. George H. W. Bush created the Commission on National and Community Service in 1990. President William J. Clinton established in 1992 the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), and in 1993 the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) was formed. President George W. Bush created the USA Freedom Corps in 2002.

Given the importance of actively promoting service-learning in the nation across generations, the text embodies the depth and range of issues that have transcended presidents and generations. These issues span health, employment, education, ongoing poverty and hunger, natural disasters, and other environmental concerns such as urban brownfields. The book also explores the consequences of demographic change in the American population: specifically, the need for cultural preparation and for the recognition of power and privilege related to the approaches to and scholarship of service-learning. That this recognition continues to emerge as a reflection of real strength of inquiry is evidenced by such works as *Democratic Dilemmas*.

Democratic Dilemmas offers a number of individual examples from teachers whose collective presentation is made effective and illuminating by its sharpness and intensity. The subjects and themes span a range of conflicts encountered in curriculum and in learning and application; these are delivered through a set of clearly articulated service-learning cases that address questions of democratic meaning and values. This is the stated objective for the editors and contributors, although they also recognize that some of the case experiences are by their nature diverse and even messy.

The clear voices of the teaching faculty begin in part 1 with David M. Donahue's case, "The Nature of Teaching and Learning Dilemmas." He relates some of the crucial challenges as well as opportunities of navigating in the classroom the competing cultural, moral, and political values that are found throughout a democratic society. He also presents the uncertainties around the question of who is a citizen. What are the rights of citizenship? How are individual rights protected without trampling on the rights of others? In the words of this contributor, "these dilemmas are not obstacles or problems of democracy. They are the nature of democracy itself" (p. 17). Lynne A. Bercau describes clashing perspectives in service-learning as a democratic dilemma in "Banning Books to Protect Children," which details a teaching dilemma regarding what can happen when reframing the problem of dealing with the complexity of the right to express an opinion and freedom of information.

In part 2, Christine M. Cress discusses intentional course design, which she calls the experiential learning model for framing a course, within the context of (*Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2000, pp. 193-210*) four primary epistemological elements: having a concrete experience, observing and reflecting on that experience, forming abstract concepts based upon the reflection, and testing the new

concepts as a spiral of learning. Katja M. Guenther in the chapter “Practice Makes Imperfect,” came up against challenges she did not expect when embarking on service-learning for the first time. The lesson for the educator and students focused on social inequalities, especially where ideal expectations meet the realities of limitations, and, in my analysis, what is the power and who has it. In the remaining parts, 3 through 6, the issues and challenges faced and encountered include what students need to do to be effective within differing community cultural contexts; when conflict is and is not productive in the classroom; what happened when a faculty member integrated political engagement in a computers and society class to address dilemmas around the digital divide; and the key task ahead for faculty who want to improve the evaluation of service-learning process programs for greater intellectual depth and effectiveness.

Robert Stengel, managing editor of *Time* magazine, in an April 2007 cover story titled “The Case for National Service,” first proposed that every American high school student perform a year of service after graduation. He followed in July 2013 by reporting on a collaborative effort of *Time* and the Aspen Institute’s Franklin Project at the 21st Century National Service Summit in Aspen, Colorado. The partnership endorses a plan that calls for universal national service for every 18-to-28-year-old as well as expanding the GI Bill to support returning service veterans who want to perform a year of civilian service in organizations. This service-learning approach is a contributing factor that, in my view, directly connects with an established tradition of young citizens’ active engagement in service-learning efforts and projects in the nation. The development of service-learning in the United States was championed as an intellectual idea for citizen pursuit by two prominent American philosophers, William James and John Dewey. Both James and Dewey held views favoring pragmatism that led them to argue for the practical uses and successes of knowledge, language, concepts, beliefs, and meaning in life. In “The Moral Equivalent of War,” a speech originally given at Stanford University in 1906, William James (1910) called for service in the interests of the individual and the nation. John Dewey (1916/1997) argued that the purpose of schools and civil society was to encourage experiential learning, voting rights, plurality, and public opinion. These philosophers’ codifying ideas emerged in the national politic between the years 1905 and 1910, beginning three years after the Cooperative Education Movement was founded at the University of Cincinnati in 1902. Then as now, the economic and social environment were

critical influences on how an idea can be engaged with and gain broader acceptance by the general public.

Thomas Ehrlich, in the foreword to *Democratic Dilemmas*, wrote, “fortunately over recent decades, there has been renewed attention to integrating academic learning with learning for active engaged citizenship . . . today it is hard to find a campus in the United States where community service-learning is not a major part of the undergraduate education” (p. xii). Thus, I take the position that *Democratic Dilemmas* as inquiry is practical and revealing, and it is a thoughtfully conceived compendium of lessons, tools, assumptions, issues, practice, and evidence of what can and does happen when there is actual youth and adult engagement in a democratic process that is focused on service-learning.

This reviewer holds the view that *Democratic Dilemmas* is a significant pedagogical milestone to accompany and spur additional case inquiry and service-learning development in the field. Again, the book is a strong reference for service-learning teaching that will enable a deepening of learning experience research and practice in the field of service-learning in the United States and around the world. In reviewing the historical origins of service-learning, Speck and Hoppe (2004) point out that its underpinnings can be traced to antiquity, as argued by Jordy Rocheleau in part 1 as he “traces the theoretical roots of service learning to the ancient world, hastens to add that community service is most firmly linked pedagogically to progressive education as expounded by John Dewey” (p. ix). Speck and Hoppe further cite Barber and Battistoni (1993), who noted ten years ago service-learning “is [in] some ways a rather new pedagogy” (p. vii). The significance of service learning as new pedagogy is that emerging research and literature for regaining a sense of connectedness and community in America.

Finally, the editors of *Democratic Dilemmas of Teaching Service-Learning* provide a clear and coherent discussion about issues related to the meaning and terminology of service-learning teaching. The editors recognize and state that disagreement remains regarding use of the term service-learning and that its meaning varies across educational systems and organizations. Indeed, different universities and colleges favor various terms, including community-based learning, community engagement, and civic engagement in delineating learning linkages between classroom and communities. Thus, *Democratic Dilemmas of Teaching Service-Learning* is a text of strong service-learning inquiry that opens up to common interests whose language and interpretations may differ in striving toward a common goal.

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