Teaching about Deliberative Politics: Case Studies of Classroom–Community Learning Projects in Four Nations

Abstract

Theories of deliberative politics position grassroots community members as more than spectators of politics, and instead recognize their capacity for political engagement by discussing and evaluating options in order to make decisions around issues affecting community life. The processes and products of journalism can assist deliberative politics by providing community members with information resources that are vital for understanding root causes of problems, weighing up competing claims, forming networks around shared concerns, reaching decisions and undertaking action. This article presents the findings of case studies of four community–classroom projects—one each from Australia, New Zealand, the United States and South Africa—that develop the capacity of journalism students to be effective contributors to deliberative politics. The research points to the importance of scaffolding deliberative learning activities with preparations for students to work in diverse communities, map significant community places and structures, identify leaders and stakeholders, engage in respectful dialogue about problems and perspectives, and appreciate community frames and values.

Introduction

University-level education for journalism students about politics has traditionally focused on the media's fourth estate functions and reporting on processes of government and other formal institutions of power. In more recent years, students have increasingly explored the political implications of the relationships and power structures afforded by new and social media

platforms that enable citizen journalism and other community-driven communications. This article addresses a subject less frequently addressed in journalism education, which is the potential for journalists to assist deliberative democracy among grassroots community members. This article will present four case studies—one each from Australia, New Zealand, the United States (US) and South Africa—of how university educators have designed deliberative community-based learning projects for journalism students. The aim is to identify pedagogic approaches and considerations that are fundamental to teaching about deliberative politics through classroom–community learning projects.

In deliberative politics, citizens are more than 'spectators who vote' (Walzer, 1992, p. 6). Individuals have capacity to engage in deliberation—discussion and evaluation of competing perspectives and options in order to make decisions about issues affecting their groups or communities—and take actions based on those deliberations to resolve problems and issues. Journalists have clear potential to support deliberation in communities. Journalists can bring emerging problems and issues to light, report relevant background and developments, identify community members and groups with a stake in the issue, describe their experiences and perspectives, frame complex issues, weigh up competing claims, and describe the processes and outcomes of decision-making. Such activities furnish the five resources that Fishkin (2009, p. 34) identifies as essential to determining the quality of deliberative processes:

- Information: the amount of relevant and accurate information that participants can access,

- Substantive balance: the scope for each argument or side to be answered by opposing ones,

- Diversity: the range of major perspectives that are represented,

- Conscientiousness: the extent to which participants genuinely appraise the merits of differing positions,

- Equal consideration: the scope for arguments to be judged on merit rather than who is advocating those contentions.

Experiential learning and deliberation

Concepts of deliberative education mesh with Heron's notion that 'a fully educated person' is characterized by self-determining and cooperative competencies (1999, p. 131). 'What is valuable as a means to this end is participative decision-making, which enables people to be involved in the making of decisions, in every social context, which affect their flourishing in any way' (Heron, 1999, p. 11). Experiential learning—such as internships, practicums and different types of community-engagement projects and activities—can support this type personal and professional development because it places students in complex, real-world contexts where they have to adapt and adjust prior presumptions, theories and strategies to manage or improve 'messy situations' (Luckett, 2001, p. 52).

Dewey warns educators to not presume that such development is the automatic consequence of experiential learning. Transformation 'cannot be accomplished by merely trying to give a technical preparation for industries and professions as they now operate, much less by merely reproducing existing industrial conditions' (Dewey, 1916, p. 303). In such circumstances, the 'out-of-school experience' might just as easily become 'an instrument of perpetuating unchanged the existing industrial order of society, instead of operating as a means of its transformation' (Dewey, 1916, pp. 303–4). Dewey proposed that while vocational education must develop technical competency for immediate work, it is also crucial to nurture students' understandings of the social contexts of that work and build their proficiency in forming and carrying out their own plans and the plans of their communities (Dewey, 1916, p. 305). In the context of 21st century journalism education, this means 'exposure to much more than just the consensual knowledge of the day,' as education must shift away from 'a product-oriented teaching culture' to 'a process-focused learning culture' (Deuze, 2006, pp. 29–30). The case studies below of four classroom–

community projects illustrate attempts to shift beyond basic vocational learning in order to enrich students' capacity to contribute to processes of informed decision-making within their communities of professional practice.

Case Studies—Australia, New Zealand, United States and South Africa

Case studies were conducted of four classroom–community learning projects that have involved journalism students in deliberative activities as part of creating or co-creating stories[i]. The teaching staff who convened the Australia and South African projects consciously employed theories and principals of deliberative journalism, as they were influenced by public journalism and similar philosophies. The US and New Zealand project convenors did not draw overtly from such philosophies, but deliberative opportunities and activities have arisen organically in their projects due their commitment to service learning. Information about the four projects was gathered through interviews with convenors of three projects, auto-ethnographic reflection on the author's management of a fourth project, and existing literature about the operation, outcomes or contexts of the respective projects.

The Australian project was conducted as a one-off, elective activity, in contrast to the other three ongoing projects that offered each year to students as a compulsory part of their respective degree studies. Students from the Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, were invited to create stories for three 30-minute-long, documentary-style, deliberative radio programs about asylum seekers and refugees. Twelve students engaged in listening and research in Brisbane and surrounding areas with ordinary community members, asylum seekers and refugees, academics, lobbyists, activists, non-government organizations, and other stakeholders to identify their presumptions, direct experiences, concerns and issues about the nation's response to the new arrivals. The three 'New Horizons, New Homes' radio programs won a national Media Peace

Award for Best Radio, the only time that student work has won such a prize since the annual awards were founded by the United Nations Association of Australia in 1975.

In the ongoing New Zealand project, graduate journalism students in their second semester of study at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, have engaged in storytelling with grass roots participants. The project commenced in 2013 with stories about residents' recovery following the devastating earthquakes of 2011. The aim was 'community enrichment and engagement' (Ross, 2013). The idea of creating stories that could contribute to resilience and agency was inspired by research about post-disaster renewal, which indicated that social capital and social networks were 'the main engine of long-term recovery' (Aldrich, 2010, p.1). Different groups and organizations partner with the Journalism Program each year, thus different themes are addressed each time the project runs. Students are assigned each year to work with a relevant community group, whose members help the students to identify individuals with whom they co-write stories.

In the US project, final-year students from Temple University, Philadelphia, produce multi-media stories about one of the city's neighbourhoods or a prescribed news 'beat', such as city hall, education or housing. Students visit their neighbourhood or beat each week to attend meetings, speak with local leaders, and listen to community members. From this process, students identify and create stories with text, still images and/or audio-visual content for publication on a student news and feature site, *Philadelphia Neighborhoods* (http://philadelphianeighborhoods.com/). A high proportion of stories from the 180 Temple University students who undertake the project each year provide insight into individuals and organizations that have overcome problems, have improved their communities or are attempting to do so. Student reporters and the overall site have won multiple awards for student journalism.

In South Africa, journalism and media studies students from Rhodes University, Grahamstown,

have created hyper-local journalism with, for and about economically marginalized local communities since 2003. The main project has been the Journalism, Development and Democracy–Critical Media Production course. The course has run annually since 2006 for third-year students, requiring them to construct content about community problems. Some students have maintained traditional journalism practices, and media formats, such as stories that quote official sources and are written in standard news style for newspapers. Other students have operated as facilitators, collaborators and activists, using a range of communications and media formats. For example, one student group made an audio-visual production with the intention of narrowcasting it to municipal councillors and, later, local businesses. The goal was to increase awareness among a small group of individuals with political and economic collateral, and motivate them to take action to repair the roofs of tornado damaged homes (Amner & Marquis, 2012, pp. 14-15).

Scaffolding deliberative learning projects

For students to commence deliberative engagement with communities, they need three different types of knowledge and skills to scaffold their learning. First, they require knowledge and skills about discipline-specific activities, such as initiating, researching, creating, editing or circulating journalistic stories. Second, they must understand deliberative processes and the potential roles in those processes for practitioners from their discipline. Third, they need a grasp of the histories, cultures, socio-economic structures, demographics and other attributes of the target communities. The amount of scaffolding required will reflect the expectations about what students will do or create during the project.

The US and South African projects have taken a whole-of-course approach to scaffolding learning. From the commencement of their studies, students have been progressively instilled

with capacities not just to research and write stories, but also to understand the dynamics of the diverse communities that surround their respective campuses and to work deliberatively with them . In their first year, Temple University students study theory about ethical and other issues germane to covering neighbourhoods. The first production class commences with two on-campus exercises that introduce students to the basics of reporting, then students advance to rudimentary reporting of specific neighbourhoods. At Rhodes University, students learn the civic-mapping approaches developed by Harwood and McCrehan (2000). Project convener Rod Amner says that first-year students start by exploring their own campus to 'discover the university under their feet' by charting the main spaces and networks, exchanging ideas with community leaders, and observing places where people gather to talk about problems and issues. Students progress a few months later to investigating the culturally rich but economically disadvantaged municipal wards outside the campus gates. Despite the very different learning activities offered by the two universities, by the time that students begin their major community-based projects in their third year (South Africa) and fourth year (US), they have mastered the fundamental competencies that are prerequisites for deliberative journalism in those neighbourhoods.

The whole-of-course approach taken by Rhodes is relatively new strategy, which was introduced as a response to challenges of previous teaching methods. Prior to 2015, 120 to 220 students were thrown into deliberative community activities each year, without substantive prior knowledge of either the communities or deliberative concepts and methods. Most Rhodes University students are socio-economically privileged and commute to campus from areas outside Grahamstown, which has unemployment rates of up to 70 per cent and vast variations in living conditions. A precipitous learning curve was involved for students in discovering a city and trying to stimulate discourses among a public they knew little about (Amner, 2003, p. 35). In addition to the complexities of relating to these new communities, some students dabbled in novel formats such as wall newspapers, a mockumentary, a public forum, and pamphlets. Students also sometimes

also had to select an appropriate communication strategy from many options, which ranged from traditional journalistic stories to advocacy/radical journalism, investigative journalism, citizen journalism, communication for development, social marketing, life history, or other approaches. While positive outcomes were recorded by many students and participating community members (Amner, 2003; Amner & Marquis, 2012), Amner evaluates the earlier projects as 'too unfocussed, too big and too ambitious' (2015, pers. comm.).

The timeframe for scaffolding in the New Zealand project was far shorter than that possible in the US and South African projects due to the intensive nature of the University of Canterbury's one-year study program for university graduates seeking vocational journalism skills. The New Zealand project builds student competencies progressively, but in a far more concentrated time period than the US or South African projects. In their first semester, University of Canterbury students learn the fundamentals of journalism research and writing, ethics, cultural competence, civics and local government reporting. They must also report on at least one community 'beat' or 'round' and complete at least one workplace internship. This scaffolding is ample for the classroom–community project in second semester. The project is not a test of student ability to create high-level, complex stories that require multiple sources and extensive fact checking and verification. Project convener Tara Ross says that instead, the aim is on processes of engagement to help students 'recognize the value of building trust and finding new ways of navigating communities' (2015, pers. comm.). Over several months, students network with a community group, identify one person who they will co-create a story with, then complete the story.

The Australian project formed a stark contrast to the other three projects in that students had only two weeks' preparation for community-based work. The project commenced with a block of readings, followed by focus groups and community conversations. Through these activities, students were familiarized with a variety of stakeholders as well as the legal, social, cultural,

economic and security factors that lead to a dramatic polarization of community responses to asylum seekers and refugees, particularly undocumented asylum seekers by boat. Such a brief, intensive introduction was possible due to the narrow scope of the topic being addressed and the focused support of staff members who facilitated the project. The final-year students had also mastered discipline-based skills, with competencies equivalent to those of a junior journalist, thus learning could concentrate on deliberative activity rather than technical skills.

Dealing with Difference

The projects demonstrated that in additional to basic scaffolding, students in deliberative projects also need to learn about dealing with differences of background, power and personal perspectives. This includes preparation for emotional responses to entering communities where ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic status, worldviews and physical settings may be very different from those in the students' immediate milieu. Students also need to be readied for dialogue with new people in unfamiliar spaces and places, and for appreciating diverse characters with different values and standpoints.

Research from other classroom–community project similar finds that many students need support to transcend the challenges created during first encounters with communities that are different by virtue of ethnic, social, economic or other characteristics. Students can be taxed by reactions of confusion, guilt, fear, suspicion, superiority, disdain, prejudice, detachment, or indifference (Novek, 2000, p. 5, 18). They may not interact respectfully or comfortably with people whom they see as 'different', and when the encounter ends, they may feel little interest in further community participation (Novek, 2000, p. 5).

Of the four universities that were studied for this research, the largest gap between students and

communities existed in South Africa due to the extreme economic disparity discussed above. After the first classroom–community project in 2003, Amner noted that his economically privileged students were taken 'outside their comfort zones' (2003, p. 35). Although the socio-economic gap may not have been so large in the other projects, each project presented different types of challenges. In the US project, some students reported on neighbourhoods recovering from decades of economic decay, drug wars and other social turbulence. In the Australian project, students extended themselves beyond usual circles for information gathering and story-telling, but the greater challenge was the response to input from sources who had undergone or witnessed prejudice, abuse, self-abuse, indefinite detention of children, and other emotionally charged experiences. In the New Zealand context, Ross has not observed such an extreme response, but even so, she sees a lack of preparation among students to work with communities that are unlike their own, and a propensity to rely on email or Facebook messages rather than the more demanding effort of initiating face-to-face conversations (Ross, 2013). Lack of face-to-face engagement reduces opportunities for building networks, connections and trust, particularly among Māori and Pacific Island communities whose members will question the interests and motivations of people who are not prepared 'to front' to talk with them (Ross, 2015, pers. comm.).

The project convenors used three main approaches to prepare students to overcome the initial discomfort of working with diverse communities, to talk across socio-economic differences, and to develop consequential relationships with community members. The first strategy was to incrementally increase the number and variety of community encounters over months or even years, as was discussed in the previous section. The second approach for convenors to partner students with community organizations or stakeholders, who could in turn further broker connections to other groups and individuals. Novek (2000, p. 23) further recommends communal experiences, such as introductory visits by students groups and a teacher to community settings or

meetings with stakeholders, in order to reduce student anxiety and create models for respectful interaction. The third approach was to provide students with readings, discussions in classes, workshops and similar activities about community cultures and histories as well as appropriate protocols and ethical practice for community engagement. The content of these texts, classes or activities can be as basic as simple tips. An example is emailed advice from the Temple University teaching team that students should 'talk to old people', thus encouraging them to engage with a 'different' community demographic who otherwise may not have been considered.

All three approaches are aimed at stimulating journalism students to conduct what Young (1996, pp. 127–8) calls 'listening across difference'—a key characteristic of deliberation. Research shows that most people avoid engaging in conversations with people who have perspectives that disagree with their own (Mutz, 2006). Even when a person with opposing perspectives is given an opportunity to express their voice, it is only meaningful in a deliberative process if listeners are open to the ideas of the speaker. Listeners must be able to acknowledge how their own bias, predispositions, status and social histories can shape their understandings of what a speaker says, particularly if the speaker is less privileged or powerful than the listener. Listeners must also be amenable to the potential for connection with speakers and action that acknowledges differences of needs and perspectives of all parties, rather than trying impose outcomes or solutions based on some generic perspective of common good (Young, 1996).

'Listening across difference' is an intrinsic value that emerges prominently in all four university projects that were studied. It commences with a requirement for all students to clearly outline their intentions, purposes and goals to community participants rather than entering as interlopers. Temple University goes so far as to prescribe this type of 'listening across difference' as one of the precepts in its Ethics Code for Student Journalists. The second point in the list of 10 dos and don'ts is: 'Do hear from many voices. Journalists should work to understand and represent the

true diversity of the community they are covering. They should recognize their own cultural biases and work hard to move past them' (Temple University, 2013).

Related notions of 'proper distance' are also reflected in all four projects. Proper distance is a system for recognizing other people's perspectives on their own terms; it requires that you look at yourself as an outsider might see you, so that you are consciousness of how your preconceptions, social background and subjectivities shape your views of others (Silverstone, 2007). Amner actively teaches the theory of 'proper distance' to Rhodes University students (2015, pers. comm.). At the other three of the universities, concepts of 'proper distance' are incorporated in an applied way, without specific mention of that particular terminology. For example, Temple University's Ethics Code (2013) spurs students to look through the eyes of others: 'What if the roles were reversed? How would I feel if I were in the shoes of one of the stakeholders?' Principles of 'proper distance' also appear in the teaching content. For example, *Philadelphia Neighborhoods* convener George Miller teaches his students about the context and background of city neighbourhoods, so that rather than being shocked at what they see, they think about how the origins of people and places have led them to what they now are (2015, pers. comm.).

The discussion above describes how students are provided with guidance and assistance to engage with diverse communities and stakeholders, but mere the provision of know-how alone will not mean that students will be motivated to make the effort required for deep connections with grassroots stakeholders or diverse communities. In the four projects, assessment activities also stimulated students to plumb different levels of community interests and concerns. Miller, for example, notes that when he began working with the project in 2013, students wrote stories based on superficial experiences with their respective neighbourhoods because a deeper approach was not required to fulfil the assessment requirements (2015, pers. comm.). This was remedied when he rewrote the assessment instructions to mandate repeated encounters with specific types

of community members, thus compelling students to extend themselves beyond the obvious and easy-to-access political and community leaders. Without wanting to place too much emphasis on the oft-stated maxim that 'assessment drives learning', the four case studies indicate that when educators embed deliberative concepts and activities into assessment and evaluation activities, there is greater impetus for students to practice what is preached.

Expanding notions of professionalism

While vocational study often inculcates models of professionalism that prioritize detachment and objectivity, Palmer (1998, p. 51) notes that in social life, there are no universal truths that can be discovered by disconnecting ourselves from the subject that we are studying. Palmer (1998, p. 51) argues that instead of isolating themselves, professionals need connections in order to comprehend and forge relationships between the things in our world. An expanded notion of objectivity is important in teaching about deliberative politics, because both students and professionals need to be able to recognize people's values and motivations in order to understand what shapes their beliefs, relationships, choices and actions.

In journalism, objectivity has long been associated with the system of news values that are used to evaluate what topics and issues have sufficient public interest to warrant their being reported. A large body of research conducted in the past 50 years furthermore shows that both the professional cultures of objectivity and news values commonly contribute to over-reliance by journalists on official or accredited sources who can provide story ideas and information that is deemed reliable or credible (Phillips, 2015, pp. 40-59). Lauterer (2006, p. 9) proposes an update on traditional Western notions of newsworthiness by shifting the focus from the news topic to the community that will use it: 'We no longer ask, 'Is it newsworthy?' Instead we ask, 'To whom is it newsworthy?''

As was discussed above, the four projects have required students to extend into diverse communities that are well beyond a standard array of official or accredited sources. The projects have also explored Lauterer's question of 'to whom is it newsworthy?' Each project has required that students use interviewees or other stakeholders as informants in the process of evaluating what is newsworthy and how stories should be framed. Temple University's Ethics Code, for example, advises students to ask: 'How can I include other people, with different perspectives and diverse ideas, in the decision-making process?' The Australian project included focus groups and short on-the-street conversations with citizens to explore how they perceived issues relating to asylum seekers and refugees. From that information, students developed story agendas and frameworks that they concluded would be most meaningful and useful to community members. In the New Zealand and South African projects, students are either formally required or strongly encouraged to incorporate their interviewees and other relevant stakeholders in developing the themes or topics of stories, to check the story contents with interviewees prior to their circulation.

Students in the 2013 New Zealand project also invited their interviewees and other stakeholders to a launch party in which all the earthquake-recovery stories were printed as posters that were displayed on the walls in a body of work to be read together rather than in isolation. Students were surprised at how stakeholders consistently highlighted certain elements within the body of stories that students themselves had not previously realized were significant. From this experience, students learnt that some things that might be considered 'small' in terms of formal news values could have resonance and impact in communities (Ross, 2013). The broader lesson to be drawn from those students' experience is that asking stakeholders to contribute their ideas about news frames and topics does not require a surrender of professional decision-making or autonomy to outsiders. Instead, it can be used as a deep and nuanced way for journalists to explore the possibilities of telling stories in ways that will be salient and significant to

communities.

These deliberative strategies to covering community life and politics also enhance student understandings of the ways in which communities understand and use journalistic stories. Temple University's Ethics Code (2013) again expresses this notion by urging students to ask what are the consequences of their actions, and can they clearly and fully justify decisions and actions to stakeholders and the public. Ross saw first-hand the impact on students when they heard the answer to the latter question. In the earthquake recovery storytelling project, students commenced with a 'what's in it for me attitude' towards connections and communities; obtaining feedback from interviewees was a 'powerful moment' that led them to appreciate how interviewees are affected at a human level by the choices that a journalist makes when creating stories about them (Ross, 2013).

Delving into community dynamics

To observe community actors, structures and political movements, students require an aptitude for identifying the places where community members meet and engage in deliberative discussions. Students should easily be able to locate places that by organizations with some degree of formal structure, such as government agencies, faith-based bodies, businesses and workplaces, schools, clubs, non-government organizations, lobby groups, and support groups. These organizations and their venues are usually identifiable through maps, telephone listings, websites and similar information sources. Students are likely to overlook the significance of what Oldenburg (2000, 1991) identifies as 'third places' where people congregate outside the hours they spend at school, work or home. Oldenburg argues that places such as coffee shops, fast-food restaurants, public bars, hairdressers, shopping malls, bookstores, post offices, amusement arcades or public parks become anchors for community life by providing spaces for creative

social interaction and grass-roots democratic discussions and activities (2000, 1991). Since Oldenburg first introduced the notion of 'third places', it is important to recognize that such places may exist virtually or online as well as in the physical world.

In addition to mapping community spaces, students also need to understand which community members play leadership roles. Harwood and McCrehan (2000) identify five types of community leaders who are important to community deliberative processes. It is usually easy to locate the first three types of leaders—official leaders, civic leaders and experts. Official leaders include heads of governments, businesses, unions and other major organizations; civic leaders include faith-based leaders and leaders of non-profit, community and interest groups; and experts include university professors and other professionals with high-level knowledge. It is takes more time, effort and insight to find the other two types of leaders—connectors and catalysts. Connectors are networkers whose person relationships extend across many types of people, organizations, groups and/or interests. They often broker links or develop relationships between individuals, organizations and groups. Catalysts are those individuals who other community members routinely approach for help, guidance or information.

It is often only by understanding how community members and subgroups interact with each other that journalists can identify connectors and catalysts. These latter types of leaders may hold jobs as varied as shop assistants, taxi drivers, or hairdressers, but community members turn to them for assistance with problems as varied as negotiating for neighbourhood developments, raising funds for schools, or mediating family disputes. These informal leaders will often show better understanding of trends, opinions, problems and developments in their communities than formal leaders.

Educators at all four universities studied for this project provided factual background through

readings, lectures or classroom discussions about different types community spaces, structures and/or leadership. The Australian and South African projects consciously drew from Harwood and McCrehan's (2000) civic mapping guides, while the US project also used similar strategies. The New Zealand and South African universities have partnered with community organizations, thus sharing their strong networks and reservoirs of knowledge about different community personalities, spaces and political issues.

The New Zealand project has the strongest focus on partnerships. The project was founded after Ross established a loose partnership with the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA). CERA staff introduced students to organizations that it was affiliated with, such as church, gay rights and community advocacy groups and a retirement home. Those small organizations in turn helped students navigate their communities to find relevant community members with important issues and stories to relate regarding earthquake recovery. Since the first project in 2013, Ross has developed similar partnerships each year around different themes. The South African university has also engaged in partnerships, such as collaborations with local high schools and a children's shelter. The most recent partnership is with local libraries—safe places where people gather and enjoy free resources such as books, computers, and Wi-Fi hotspots. Students will use their journalism skills to assist library patrons in creating citizen journalism and social media products.

Leading by example

Educators teaching deliberative politics must explore the extent to which they and their institutions can model types of connection building and deliberative decision-making that they wish their students to learn about. This involves consideration of the university's and educators' role in establishing and developing connections and conversations between different stakeholders

about shared concerns. It also requires exploration of the extent to which educators share decision-making and governance with students in their classrooms.

Universities and colleges are generally well funded and influential community assets, and thus have potential to partner with multitudinous community groups for mutual benefit. University actors, however, often view the community as a place to advance university objectives (Bortolin 2011) Studies of campus–community partnerships have found that universities and colleges are rarely focused on building relationships with grassroots community partners and, when they do, they often have a shallow grasp of partner perspectives (Creighton, 2008, p. 12). When students are involved, community organization members regularly complain that students are poorly prepared; educational institutions 'use' the organizations; and even when there is a shared vision, this is regularly lost when the semester ends and the project is completed (Creighton, 2008, p. 14).

Educators must thus model the same types of connection building that they require their project students to follow. New partnerships require attention to team-building as well as agreements around expectations, roles, responsibilities, and outcomes (Brundiers, Wiek & Redman, 2010, p. 314). Ross notes that initiating and sustaining viable partnerships involves a substantive time commitment to talk with different communities, understand the structures of different community organizations and their relationships with each other, and set up and steer the relationships between the community partner/s and the university (2015, pers. comm.).

Ross also pointed to the possibility for educators and students in deliberative learning projects to set up networks not just between themselves and community groups, but to act as catalysts and connectors for links and activities between community groups. When University of Canterbury students invited interviewees and other stakeholders to a launch party for stories resulting from

the earthquake-recovery initiative, this event became the most important part of the project by helping attendees to share stories and feel valued and connected (Ross, 2013). New connections were formed, with possibilities for future collaborative action (Ross, 2015, pers. comm.).

Classrooms also have the potential to be microcosms of deliberative communities. In this setting, educators act as facilitators who monitor, guide and nurture their students, rather than set rigid expectations of knowledge that must be distilled or strict topics, activities and structures that must be followed. Each of the educators who convened the four deliberative-learning projects studied for this research required students to adhere to overarching project goals and achieve certain outcomes, but they also allowed student work to be shaped by the nature and results of their interactions with community members. Of the four universities, Rhodes University has extended the democratic partnership to the greatest degree. Journalism, Development and Democracy– Critical Media Production students have exercised substantive decision-making capacity about the specific goals, tasks and outcomes of each year's projects. Students and community members have thus become co-creators of the educational project itself.

Conclusions

The goals, student cohorts, resources, and communities of interest in the four deliberative learning projects varied greatly. Despite these differences, all shared common attributes of scaffolding learning by teaching students to work in diverse communities, to map significant community places and structures, to identify leaders and stakeholders, to engage in respectful talk about problems and perspectives, and to understand community frames and values. The project design furnishes the potential that the students' journalistic processes and products have potential to provide communities with the fuel for deliberative politics—information resources for understanding problems, assessing options, forming networks around shared concerns, making

decisions or taking action.

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[i] Some findings presented in this article have also been reported in a book chapter, 'Deliberative pedagogy and journalism education', to be published by Michigan State University Press in 2016 in Deliberative Pedagogy and Democratic Engagement.