CIVIC ASPIRATIONS

Why Some Higher Education Faculty are Reconnecting Their Professional and Public Lives

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A Study for the Kettering Foundation

Kettering Foundation

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Introduction

OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS, there has been a vigorous outpouring of activity aimed at getting citizens more involved in American democracy. Yet our political institutions seem more unaccountable and dysfunctional than ever, and outright hostility toward anything public seems increasingly common. A similar trend has been taking place within higher education. Since the 1980s, there has been an increasing number of initiatives and efforts aimed at reconnecting higher education to its historic civic mission—to train public leaders, provide students with the skills they need for citizenship, and work with communities to solve public problems.[1] Despite these efforts, higher education as a whole seems more disconnected than ever from any public purposes. These trends are hard to understand.

Even more puzzling, as David Mathews observes, two civic-engagement movements—one in local communities and the other on college and university campuses—often fail to connect with each other, as if they are "ships passing in the night."[2] Fortunately, however, the two ships of civic engagement are actually sailing in the same direction, albeit on different courses, and, if the right people take the helm, the two vessels might begin to sail side by side on a joint civic journey. While community leaders and academics often follow different maps, Mathews suggests that there are a few individuals who might help steer a new course. For example, there are a "surprisingly large number of faculty members" who want "to combine a public life with a scholarly career," and they are working with one foot on campus and the other in the local community.

Mathews quotes Professor Marguerite Shaffer, who shared her story in the 2008 issue of the *Higher Education Exchange:*

> I have joked with colleagues that I am in the midst of an academic midlife crisis—questioning every aspect of life in academe. In thinking about my future in the university, I have wondered whether my time will be well spent researching and writing a scholarly monograph that might well get me promoted, but that will be read by only a handful of like-minded scholars with similar intellectual interests.

As a parent of two young children, I look out to the world and worry about what their futures will be. I wonder if my work in the academy is paving the way for a culture I want my children to inherit.

> I have questioned the time I devote to teaching critical thinking skills to students who are socialized, both inside and outside the university, to care more about their final grades and potential career options than the knowledge they can share and the collective future they will create. As a parent of two young children, I look out to the world and worry about what their futures will be. . . . I wonder if my work in the academy is paving the way for a culture I want my children to inherit. On very bad days, I think not.[3]

Shaffer's desire for academic work that has relevance for public life led her to found a major civic-engagement initiative on her campus, and Mathews sees that as a beacon of hope: "The Shaffers of academe are one of the forces driving a civic-engagement movement on campuses across the country."[4] And the collaborative work they are doing with local communities might help us navigate the hostile political waters we face today in both the country and academe.

Hostility to civic engagement does not exist simply in the realm of politics-as-usual. To the contrary, higher education often shares an anti-public bias with the political arena. Indeed, recent studies document several factors that undermine the public purposes of academe, including the rise of a dysfunctional, status-seeking culture at universities and an overly narrow definition of what counts as scholarship. Moreover, as higher education turns further and further away from public life, faculty morale has declined. Over 15 years ago, John Bennett commented on a sense of "growing faculty malaise, alienation, and a longing for earlier, better times."[5] In the early 2000s, Harry Boyte found similar feelings among senior faculty at the University of Minnesota.[6] Then, in 2012, a Harvard study documented the widespread unhappiness that exists among associate professors.[7]

Out of this alienating morass, however, emerges an increasing number of professors who are making the choice to engage the public, even when their institutions do not reward and sometimes even penalize that type of work. Why do they do it? What motivates them? What sustains them? Does working with others on projects with public relevance energize them, eliciting feelings that Hannah Arendt would call "public happiness"?[8]

What Motivates Faculty to Do Civic-Engagement Work?

Is the desire for public happiness what motivates faculty to do civic-engagement work at institutions that do not reward it? In order to learn more about the deep motivations and civic aspirations of faculty, I interviewed a diverse group of 39 academics from all over the country who do civic-engagement work of various kinds, including deliberative pedagogy, service learning, public scholarship, and community engagement. I asked them how they got involved in civic-engagement work (in the interviews, I used the term "civic-engagement work" because it seemed to be both broad and broadly recognized; in this paper, I use it interchangeably with "public work"), what motivates them to do it, how their institutions and colleagues have responded, and how the work has affected their professional and public lives. While not a representative sample, these interviews provide a collection of unique, yet remarkably similar, stories that illustrate the benefits of synthesizing professional and civic aspirations. More specifically, the interviewees included people I met through the Kettering Foundation network, including 26 from Kettering meetings on

higher education, 4 from the Public Philosophy Network (PPN) conference in 2013, and 8 from the American Democracy Project (ADP) annual meeting in 2013, as well as one additional professor who was referred to me by a friend. I selected those who seemed to have an intriguing story or who were recommended for the study. Names in this paper have been replaced by identifying numbers to protect confidentiality.

While not a representative sample, the interviewees include a diverse group of academics who work at various types of institutions, come from a range of disciplinary backgrounds, and are at different points in their careers. They include:

- 18 from research universities, 10 from comprehensive or regional universities, 10 from liberal arts colleges, and 3 from community colleges;[9]

- 8 who hail from the Northeast or Mid-Atlantic region, 9 from the South, 13 from the Midwest, 4 from the Mountain West, and 5 from the West Coast;

- 20 whose backgrounds are in the social sciences (9 from political science), 11 who are in the humanities (7 from philosophy), 2 from the arts, 2 from education, and 4 in the sciences (including math and nursing);

- 16 full professors, 8 associate professors, 8 assistant professors, 5 adjunct professors, instructors, or lecturers, 1 visiting assistant professor, and 1 center director who teaches.

While my small, nonrepresentative sample limits the generalizability of the study, a very strong set of common themes and similar experiences emerged out of the interview data. What I found was astounding: all those interviewed felt positive and energized by their civic engagement, found that it helped them do their academic jobs better, and experienced increased levels of connection with others and meaningfulness in their work.

The interview data further revealed that the sense of fulfillment experienced by civically engaged faculty does not come solely from professional teaching or solely from public work, but rather stems directly from activities that synthesize the professional with the public. While the faculty interviewed said they love teaching, they specifically emphasized that it is the public aspects of their work that they find so energizing—things like organizing deliberative forums, working with local communities, and interacting with people in ways that are not strictly intellectual. At the same time, faculty connected the public aspects of their work to the pedagogical when they cited things like seeing a student flourish, teaching a student what it means to be an active citizen, or sharing their expertise—whether in a philosophical way of thinking or a deliberative approach to conversation—with the larger public. In other words, they would not have the same sense of fulfillment if they were just teaching or just working with the Rotary Club. Unfortunately, higher education today is not structured to make such syntheses easy.

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The "Publication Treadmill" as a Barrier to Public Work

THE PEOPLE I INTERVIEWED work within a context in which higher education has become increasingly disconnected from its historic civic mission and more focused on publishing, and these trends make it more difficult for faculty to do civic work. Indeed, Kerry Ann O'Meara's 2010 study[10] of faculty civic agency pinpointed the institutional emphasis on scholarship, narrowly defined, as a disabling condition for civic-engagement work by faculty. The incentive structures at universities across the country increasingly privilege publishing over any other aspect of the typical faculty job, often valuing only blind peer-reviewed, disciplinary, non-collaborative work.

Publishing has become the primary basis for status within academia, a trend that has been exacerbated as institutions and individuals compete for increasingly scarce resources. Faculty often find that recognition and higher salaries accrue to those with more publications.[11] Moreover, institutional status also depends upon the "rigor" of the promotion and tenure process, and the level of productivity required by research universities is spreading to other types of institutions as well. Deborah Rhode calls this phenomenon the "iron cage of conformity."[12] Furthermore, sometimes less prestigious schools can be even more demanding than more prestigious institutions, a phenomenon some call "the tyranny of the second-tier." If elite schools require a first book for tenure, wannabe institutions demand a book and six articles, for example.

The overemphasis on publishing in academic incentive structures can have a negative effect on the sense of community on campuses. Ejner Jensen noted that faculty members sometime feel "alienated and bitter" because the academic reward system "emphasizes publication as key to status, money, and perks," and "this elevation of publication over teaching has a deleterious impact on faculty self-worth and financial standing," relegating many faculty to "secondary status—a kind of failure—despite what may be their own quite significant scholarly accomplishments. Moreover, those who have chosen to concentrate their energies on teaching almost always have less status, money, and fewer perks for their efforts."[13] Indeed, on a personal note, my friends who work at less prestigious teaching institutions, as well as those in nontenure-line positions, have told me of feeling snubbed and slighted at conferences by those who occupy more rarified ranks.

A couple of people I interviewed shared their negative experiences related to the increasing role of status within academic culture. Consider these quotations:

> [At the conference I would see] great friends, and I love interacting, and there are great conversations and good debates. I certainly see the value of that. But there was also a lot of it that I found kind of unpleasant. It's just a really competitive environment, you know? There are a lot of people there, and only a few slots . . . There are a lot more articles and papers floating around out there than there are places to publish them.

> There were some people who I read their articles, and I thought, "boy these are really interesting." And then I see these panels . . . I'd try to go up and talk with them, and they clearly weren't interested. "Well, I see someone's got a little ego here. All right, I'll see you later. I have no interest in trying to impress you." (#4)

> There is a lot of status-seeking in my discipline, but I kind of try to keep myself away from that when I can. There's one particular conference I don't usually go to, which I've heard is a lot like that. But yeah, I feel like I had more cachet when I was a graduate student because I went to a fancy . . . graduate program, and my advisers were well-respected. And now no one knows what [my college] is. (#3)

While some faculty can opt out of academic conferences, many institutions expect participation.

Related to the increase in status-seeking motivations among faculty, some universities now demand that faculty establish national, or in some cases international, reputations as a condition for tenure, a requirement that takes the focus of faculty away from local commitments. One of the professors I interviewed addressed this issue directly. He spent 13 years at a prestigious research university and saw firsthand how the institution became less focused on the local community over time.

> There was a generation of faculty who were specifically hired to be working with communities and to be doing what amounts to public scholarship and public work. And those people have steadily left and eroded away, and they've been replaced with people whose work is not configured that way. [Consequently,] almost all of the work in the state . . . has been erased in favor of work in African countries and Asian countries and Latin America. . . . The idea that the faculty and students and staff from this college in particular were supposed to be working with the public, in public [exists only as a undercurrent]. (#2)

At what point did publishing become so all-important within academe? Deborah Rhode finds that "between the mid-1970s and the 1990s, professors identifying research as their primary focus increased from about a fifth to a third. Over four-fifths reported engaging in scholarship, and three-quarters of those in four-year institutions reported that it was difficult to obtain tenure without publications."[14] And that trend continues. In a 2006 study by the Modern Language Association, 62 percent of all departments reported "that publication has increased in importance in the last 10 years, and the percentage ranking scholarship as being of primary importance (over teaching) doubled to just over 75 percent." In addition, "nearly half of baccalaureate institutions now consider a monograph 'very important' or 'important' for tenure. And almost one-third of all institutions are now looking for significant progress on a second book." Even institutions that do not support a research agenda with lower teaching loads or research support still expect publications.[15]

It makes sense to expect faculty to share their learning with the larger society via some sort of publication or other product. The key problem arises when only very narrow types of publications—namely, blind peer-reviewed journal articles and monographs—meet the bar of acceptability. Consequently, some people in the civic-engagement field have attempted to expand what counts as scholarship for the purpose of promotion and tenure, but sadly, those attempts have been largely rejected. As Ellen Schrecker explains:

> In 1990, Ernest Boyer . . . published *Scholarship Reconsidered*, a highly touted jeremiad about the state of higher education. Decrying the academy's overemphasis on a narrowly delimited and hierarchical type of research, Boyer called for a reconceptualization of scholarly work that would restore undergraduate teaching and service activities to their central position within the academic profession. He developed an elaborate four-part definition of scholarship. . . . It was an ingenious model, one that was widely admired as a way of maintaining intellectual standards while eliminating the proliferation of often trivial research and publication that the then current academic reward system encouraged.[16]

Unfortunately, "instead of heeding Boyer's call for more attention to undergraduate education and community service, the nation's colleges and universities focused more heavily on research. They upped the requirements for tenure, even as many senior professors confessed that they could never have met their own demands."[17] Interestingly, this increased emphasis on publishing corresponds to the rise of the anti-deliberative culture wars in the early 1990s in American politics, including direct attacks on higher education.[18]

The attempts by national organizations to change incentive structures within higher education are ongoing, and few of the faculty I interviewed had been involved in trying to make such changes on their campuses. One man worked with colleagues to change the rules that had almost resulted in his not getting tenure when he came up for it, and he now serves as department chair. Consequently, a junior faculty member at his institution reported feeling very supported in her own civic work, and, in fact, she sought out the school because of its emphasis on civic-engagement work. Thus, change is possible.

While administratively imposed incentive structures play an important role in the fetishization of blind peer-reviewed publications, oftentimes faculty members themselves reproduce dysfunctional norms. Three faculty members I interviewed shared with me their own ambivalence about changing the incentive structures at their colleges to reward civic-engagement work. Apparently, they are invested in the status-oriented nature of traditional academic culture because of the way they were trained in graduate school and because of the way their campus hierarchies operate. Consider these stories:

> I love academics. I love research. I love doing projects. But . . . it's exhausting. . . . I don't know that it's university pressure. It's probably just self-pressure. My PhD was out of . . . [a top public research university], so there was a lot of expectation. I mean, I was just trained, and that was the norm. (#17)
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> What I said previously about hearing the voices [telling me I have to keep publishing], I really do still have that in my head. I [also] feel like, "Okay, I'm working, working,

working all the time. And when is it going to stop?" . . . [I believe] it's beneficial to our larger community if we're able to publish about this work because people can read about it. It makes you learn from each other . . . I believe that absolutely, but, geez, how much can you do? (#3)

One of my colleagues . . . is much more . . . sympathetic to the idea of public philosophy because she actually teaches in one of the prisons around here. But . . . she is still an associate professor. . . . I think, like me, she has these mixed emotions because we were raised up in these graduate school cultures that said the only thing we are doing is journal articles, traditional academic monographs. And . . . [you don't want to] feel like . . . you're getting it on the cheap, or you are sneaking under the door. . . . It is the internal dynamics of prestige and power and, you know, respectability. (#27)

Moreover, when that last interviewee tried to get her colleagues to expand what counts for the senior capstone experience to include experiential learning and approaches other than the traditional thesis, even her public work colleague did not support her:

[A new assistant professor] said, "I know that a lot of our students think that writing the research paper . . . is scary, and you know I think that that is a good thing. I think we ought to have some things that are scary like that." And so it was like we have our prestige because we have this scary senior research project. (#27)

As these responses demonstrate, culture does not simply act on people. Instead, people play a role in actively perpetuating cultural norms.

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Higher Education and the
Disconnection from Public Life

THE EXPANDED EMPHASIS ON PUBLISHING WITHIN HIGHER EDUCATION correlates with its drift away from public life, and these two trends have negatively affected the quality of community on many college and university campuses. In *Going Public*, Harry Boyte notes that "academic culture at many of today's colleges and universities has produced a widespread sense of powerlessness in their faculties, disappointment in their students, and dismissiveness from the public at large." His study found that many senior faculty bemoan "the erosion of the spirit of community, connections, and public culture in their departments and in the university" that has occurred over time.[19] Cathy Trower's study finds that young scholars share these feelings; they desire more collaboration and community as well. They want "roots not rungs."[20]

The disconnect between higher education and public life seems to hit tenure-line faculty most acutely at mid-career—the time after the coveted goal of tenure and before achieving the final goal of full professorship. The security of tenure allows time for faculty to assess what they are doing with their lives as they plan for the next stage of their careers. An article by Robin Wilson in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* entitled "Why Are Associate Professors So Unhappy?" describes the malaise that results when faculty lack a sense of purpose in their work and feel disconnected from community and public life. One woman "says she gave up her job . . . because her colleagues were so busy that they barely had time to chat with her in the hallways, much less have lunch or socialize on the weekends. She found the campus culture stifling and indicative of broader problems within the academic workplace." Interviews in Wilson's article reveal that many faculty members feel disappointed that their work does not have public meaning, and they are unhappy with the lack of community on their campuses. Consider the following comments:

> After tenure lots of faculty go through a crisis of meaning, where they think: "There has to be something more than writing research grants, publishing, and teaching." An associate professor starts to think: "Why am I doing what I'm doing?"

> A lot of people who get doctorates are idealistic, they want to change the world or study something where they think they can make a true difference. Most of us teach at places, though, where students are after a credential, and where your colleagues—who you thought would be really smart—are people you don't even like all that much.

> I went into the nonprofit sector because I thought that would be worth something. But I've looked behind the curtain, and Oz just isn't all that great.

You don't have relationships with your colleagues that are fully trusting. There are resentments over privileges, personality conflicts, and struggles over space in the curriculum.

After a while, you begin to think, I actually just want to teach my classes, be a good steward of the university, and go home and have my life.[21]

Clearly, these faculty members want to do meaningful work that has public relevance, and to feel that they are part of a community.

Faculty unhappiness caused by meaninglessness and isolation—disconnection from public life—is not a new phenomenon. Bennett discussed similar issues in his 1998 book *Collegial Professionalism:*

> [Julius Getman wrote in 1992] of entering academic life with the expectation that "universities provided an opportunity for caring relations, a sense of community, an atmosphere in which ideas were shared and refined, an egalitarian ethic, and a style of life that would permit time for family, friends, and self-expression."

> [Clara Lovett reported in 1993 that] at every type of institution she visited, "faculty express a longing for an older and spiritually richer academic culture, one that placed greater value on the education of students and on the public responsibilities of scholars, one that nurtured community and collegiality instead of promoting competition for resources and prestige."

> [Jane Tompkins shared in 1992] that she is "hungry for some emotional or spiritual fulfillment that [higher education] doesn't seem to afford. I crave a sense of belonging, the feeling that I'm part of an enterprise larger than myself, part of a group that shares some common purpose."[22]

Apparently, today's faculty lack what Hannah Arendt would call "public happiness."

What Is "Public Happiness"?

In everyday parlance, the term "happiness" refers to an individual's emotional state, but the history of political thought includes another type of happiness that relates to feelings produced through interaction with others, specifically the sense of fulfillment human beings experience when they work with others on projects that have public relevance. This vision of "public happiness" arises from the work of civic republican political theorists, such as Aristotle, Thomas Jefferson, and Hannah Arendt.

Hannah Arendt articulates the concept most explicitly in her discussion of the American Revolution, where she links "public happiness" to participation in self-government. She explains as follows:

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Americans knew that public freedom consisted in having a share in public business, and that the activities connected with this business by no means constituted a burden but gave those who discharged them in public a feeling of happiness they could acquire nowhere else. . . . They knew very well, and John Adams was bold enough to formulate this knowledge time and again, that the people went to the town assemblies, as their representatives later were to go to the famous Conventions, neither exclusively because of duty nor, and even less, to serve their own interests but most of all because they enjoyed the discussions, the deliberations, and the making of decisions.[23]

Thus, it was feelings of pleasure that motivated early Americans to participate in self-government:

This freedom they called later, when they had come to taste it, "public happiness," and it consisted in the citizen's right of access to the public realm, in his share in public power—to be "a participator in the government of affairs" in Jefferson's telling phrase—as distinct from the generally recognized rights of subjects to be protected by the government in the pursuit of private happiness even against public power, that is, distinct from rights which only tyrannical power would abolish. The very fact that the word "happiness" was chosen in laying claim to a share in public power indicates strongly that there existed in the country, prior to the revolution, such a thing as "public happiness," and that men knew they could not be altogether "happy" if their happiness was located and enjoyed only in private life.[24]

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I do not think anyone familiar with public deliberation and other forms of civic participation would dispute Arendt's claim. Engaging with others in public work can be enjoyable and deeply fulfilling, a form of pleasure one cannot get alone.

Thomas Jefferson's famous phrase "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," which he chose over John Locke's "life, liberty, and estate," invokes the ideal of public happiness, as well as the more private notion. As Richard K. Matthews explains, Jefferson's vision of small ward republics included the vision of happiness cited by Arendt, as well as a more individualized version:

That this public aspect of happiness is crucial to Jefferson can readily be seen in his writings on ward republics . . . However, Jefferson also believes in the pursuit of happiness in the private realm, outside the public gaze, "in the lap and love of my family, in the society of my neighbors and my books, in the wholesome occupations of my farm and my affairs." The pursuit of happiness, in its dual interdependent facets, can provide a fully human life; but the pursuit of either at the neglect or expense of the other will lead to personal perversion in the individual and to social decay in the corporate body.[25]

Living a fully human life is what the Greeks called *eudaimonia*, a term frequently translated as "happiness," although that English term does not capture the full meaning of the Greek.

Jefferson's emphasis on public happiness places him within the tradition of civic humanism, which views "the development of the individual towards self-fulfillment [as] possible only when the individual acts as a citizen, that is as a conscious and autonomous participant in an autonomous decision-taking political community, the polis or republic."[26] The political version of that vision is called civic republicanism, and it grew out of the Aristotelian tradition that defines human beings as fundamentally political.

What this means for Aristotle is that we naturally form political communities, and through them develop and perfect our nature as "political animals." As Bernard Yack explains, "A political community is, according to Aristotle, a self-sufficient group of free and relatively equal individuals who have the opportunity to engage in regular and public discussion about which laws and policies should direct their activities and who take turns, according to regular and recognized rules, in ruling and being ruled."[27] This does not require, Yack argues, that we rise above our familial ties and economic interests, but rather that we engage with others, deliberating about issues of shared concern.

It is because of our different "needs and capacities" that we come together in political community, and, because of our capacity for logos—the rational faculty that allows for speech, argument, and communication—we do not form a harmonious whole but rather engage in deliberation or argue.[28] For Aristotle, "these [political] communities shape individuals to serve a higher natural end, the completion of human development in the good life."[29] They allow for eudaimonia, best defined as human flourishing.[30] For Aristotle, eudaimonia involves "a praiseworthy way of living" that produces a sense of flourishing, rather than being "a mere emotional state."[31] It should not be confused with the term *hedonia*, which also translates as happiness and more closely resembles what happiness means in contemporary culture—the pursuit of pleasure. Eudaimonia is political, not simply individual. It is, in short, "public happiness."

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Motivations for Faculty Civic Engagement

My study builds on the O'Meara study cited previously, which includes interviews with 25 tenured and tenure-track faculty who have been very successful doing civic-engagement work at their universities, and asks why they engage in that kind of work.[32] Her report opens with three quotations from people she interviewed. One interviewee attributes her interest in public work to an academic midlife crisis, similar to the Shaffer story also cited previously:

> After I got that moment in my career and in my life where . . . I'd finished the book, I'd gotten tenure, I was appointed the director of [my program], so I was doing kind of program building and curriculum development stuff, and at the same time I started having kids and I had a family, and I was really thinking about, "hey, so what am I doing and where do I really want to spend my time?". . . those two things intersected really strongly for me. So, I started asking myself, "Is it really worth it to go back into the archives and spend . . . what's going to be five or six years, probably more, researching and writing another monograph that maybe a handful of people are going to read[?]" . . . and I was thinking more broadly. So, "how do I speak to the public? What can I do?" . . . The early part of this decade made me really feel like it's my responsibility to add something back to the culture as a parent, as a community member, as a scholar, as a teacher.[33]

This professor's comments expressing desire for meaning and public relevance are followed by a quotation from a person who does not want to be disconnected from public life by staying "in the

'Ivory Tower,'" preferring "to engage in communities." The third faculty member also cites a desire "to have an impact on public life."[34]

O'Meara found in her interviews that all of her subjects "had early family, religious, community, and professional experiences before entering academia that they attributed to their current work."[35] Some talked about their "family legacy," some about their religion's emphasis on making the world a better place, and some about their love of a particular community to which they wanted to give back.[36] Remarkably, "over half . . . talked about growing up in a specific religious tradition and the effect [of those backgrounds] . . . on their current sense of obligation to the world, and . . . need to be involved in work that was contributing to a community, public, or the world . . . whether or not they were currently practicing" in their faith tradition.[37] Others saw their gender, racial, and/or working-class identities as contributing to their desire to connect with those outside of academia. Some attributed their interest in civic engagement to their membership in Generation X or Y. And finally, "all the women in the study who were parents talked quite a bit about the world their children would inherit and mentioned that part of their identity as a central explanation for their sense of civic agency."[38]

In addition to upbringing and identity, many participants mentioned other pre-academic experiences as key motivators, such as participation in an Americorps service-learning program or work as a community organizer.[39] Five had experiences in graduate school that influenced them.[40] Many saw civic work as central to their discipline—their work "as a biologist, engineer, political scientist, etc."—a point that contradicts the idea that graduate education undercuts public work.[41] Many believed the work made them better at their jobs.[42]

O'Meara's interviews document that civic faculty often do public work to counteract the sense of isolation that can develop at universities, where each faculty member is an expert in a particular area and rarely has departmental colleagues in the same narrow field or who are linked by a shared focus on public life. Many of the faculty members she interviewed fulfill their need for connection with community work. Interestingly, however, "for these faculty members their sense of community and purpose was much stronger with partners off campus. In other words, they seemed to be finding something in the way of collegial support and relationships they were not getting primarily through their disciplines, departments or campus."[43] Perhaps that has something to do with faculty culture, which can be competitive and demoralizing, as discussed above.

O'Meara found that the emphasis on single-authored work within institutional reward structures at institutions of higher education created a sense of isolation among faculty:

> Another barrier described by faculty was the tendency in the general culture to work very individually and to not collaborate. While engaged faculty observed that this was a general operating norm, it was even true among many of their colleagues involved in engagement. Jennifer observed: "But still, this barrier of isolation is there, in a way. Even the faculty who are engaged are not engaged with me. They're engaged with institutions in [city] and students at [institution], and they're running their own program that's connected to [institution]. But as far as collaborating with faculty, that's still not happening. So, I don't know if it's a barrier, but it's certainly a problem for me. It's something I keep working to change. But the paradigm of, 'I've got to be able to point to something that's mine,' is what persists."[44]

While the person just quoted blames the individualized work on faculty choices and cultural norms, some institutional incentive structures actively penalize collaborative work—a reality I experienced first-hand during my years teaching at a research university.

In summarizing O'Meara's findings, the major barriers to civic-engagement work involve having to write on topics considered scholarly, the narrow definition of what counts as scholarship, the quantity of scholarship required, and the anticollaborative culture of academe. Less important factors included the envy allegedly invoked in colleagues and the ways in which the university is not geared to support public work in terms of the way offices of sponsored contracts are oriented, as well as liability issues.[45] Despite these barriers, all 25 of those she interviewed successfully performed public work at their institutions.

Contradictions and Confirmations

My interviews asked faculty how they originally got involved in civic engagement work, and what I heard differed significantly from O'Meara's findings. All 25 of O'Meara's interviewees attributed engagement in public work at their universities to experiences they had prior to entering academia. This suggests that institutions that want to encourage civic work need to find the right people, those with pre-existing commitments to public life.

In contrast, while some of my interviewees saw their civic-engagement work as an extension of their long-standing commitments to social-justice work, most did not. More specifically, while 13 professors got involved in civic-engagement work because it was connected to their long-standing commitments to "social justice," 18 faculty members, almost half, came to civic-engagement work on the job. Three came to the work through a need in their teaching and five came to civic-engagement work after connecting with people affiliated with the Kettering Foundation. All but two of the American Democracy Project faculty were recruited on the job, and two of them cited meeting Tom Ehrlich as a catalyst. Two had already been very active in electoral politics.

A third group constitutes a hybrid; they came to civic-engagement work not because of values instilled in childhood or opportunities presented on the job, but through experiences they had during their own educational process—including three out of six of the public philosophers. Three people discovered civic engagement during high school, two in college, and four in graduate school. Three were hooked by volunteering, while others were taken by intellectual ideas, including two introduced through a professor and two through their reading.

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Lack of Public Happiness at Traditional Institutions of Higher Education

AS PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED, the high emphasis placed on single-authored publications makes it more onerous for faculty to do civic-engagement work because it limits their time:

> [My college does not view public work] well at all . . . it is what you do in your free time, and it is really nice, and you put that on your service, but as we know, service is the least important part of your dossier. And so, pay raises for instance, are calculated on the basis of publications. . . . Peer-reviewed articles and academic monographs are the coin of the realm [for promotion]. (#27)

Some faculty wonder about the meaningfulness of such publications:

> There's so much work that's published and that's done at conferences that just doesn't really seem to be that great of work. It can't just be publishing for the sake of publishing. (#30)

Not only does the writing and revision process take time that could be spent on civic engagement, but the requirements of traditional scholarship make it difficult for civic work to be translated into a format considered publishable by academic journals or presses. While, theoretically, a person could write an article about his or her civic-engagement work, as one person noted, there would be "nowhere to publish" it.

While research universities place the most emphasis on publications, other types of institutions are beginning to put a greater emphasis on research as well:

> [I work at] a liberal arts college, but because of the dominant culture [in academia in general], it has become much more focused on research and scholarship. Because this is a buyers' market for faculty, we are hiring more people who come from research-oriented cultures. And so they come here, and they expect they will be primarily scholars, and teachers secondarily. And that creates a lot of tension. (#5)

Unfortunately, an increasing emphasis on publications can lead to a more status-seeking mentality, as discussed above.

While one professor I interviewed was able to get his institution to change its incentive structure to accommodate civic work, other faculty essentially do their civic-engagement work alongside their traditional academic work, pursuing parallel agendas:

> I feel like I am living two lives. . . . I don't know fully how to resolve that. . . . I'm in a philosophy department. I'm also [at a Center]. I'm doing a lot of outreach work . . . There is this sense in which there's this other part of the department, like the professional side, that is not really about being in the public and doing work with, say, retirement communities or in schools. Right now . . . [I'm] trying to do both the best I can. (#30)

Sometimes it is hard to think about integrating academic and civic work because the two modes can differ significantly. One man explains the cultural differences between his traditional academic department and the civic program he heads at his college:

> The best way to talk about the culture [clash] is that I have department meetings in [both the civic program I direct and my social science disciplinary department] and the contrast couldn't be greater. I dread going to a [Social Science] Department meeting. . . . We don't talk with each other about our teaching, our work . . . There is very little that's civic about work in the [Social Science] Department. And it's a real shame because there are some people who might like it to be more that way. . . . On the other hand, in [my civic] program . . . things on the table at the meeting are all public, and we are all part of it. (#5)

Similarly, two professors who engage in extensive civic-engagement work that takes up 50 percent or more of their professional time told me that none of that work "counts" towards promotion and tenure; they still have to produce the same number of peer-reviewed publications as their colleagues who do not do civic-engagement work. Because they have a large degree of control over their work time, they have been able to do civic-engagement work as part of their jobs, and while that work may be viewed favorably, it is not considered worthy of reward.

Several faculty members shared that they made a conscious decision not to work at institutions that make it hard to do civic-engagement work. One full professor, currently a center director, made the choice earlier in his career to resign from his tenure-track job—and even left academia for a number of years—because he was unhappy with the disconnection between the institution and public life:

> I was frustrated by the assumption that philosophers are going to want to talk to other philosophers. You know, as junior faculty, they dumped all the lower-division courses on me and took the major courses for themselves, the senior professors, and I thought they had it exactly backwards. I would rather teach a business major his one philosophy course than go sit in a room with a bunch of people who wanted to use recondite language to talk fancy. I lasted two years in there and then I quit, because I was dissatisfied with it. (#29)

Another interviewee gave up a tenure-track job and now enjoys teaching as an instructor at a state university, where she is very active in civic-engagement work:

> Getting back to the civic-engagement thing . . . would have been very difficult for me with a traditional research path . . . I'm not sure I could have done that if I was also putting out papers and set theories several times a year . . . sometimes a tenured position is not everything it's cracked up to be. (#13)

In addition, two faculty members told me that they chose not to pursue jobs at "high-prestige" institutions because they knew they did not want the high-intensity publication requirements that go along with that type of job. One woman called it "a happiness choice" not to work at a research university. She said that as a newly minted PhD, she had a good chance of landing a job at an elite private school, but decided not to apply. "I was ready to just not have a job in academia rather than pay the dues that you have to pay to do the standard thing." She chose a job at a community college—and has subsequently published several books anyway.

"I'm Tired but I'm Happy": Faculty Workloads

In the *Chronicle of Higher Education* article "Why Are Associate Professors So Unhappy?" Robin Wilson focused on high levels of committee work as the main cause of unhappiness for associate professors. Although at many institutions, service does not count toward promotion and tenure, it is still required of faculty and constitutes the third component of the typical faculty job that also includes research and teaching, and it can be quite time-consuming. Thus, it is puzzling that civic professors voluntarily take on huge amounts of extra work that most likely falls under the category of "service." Why do they do it?

I will never forget a conversation I had with a friend who teaches at a regional state university. I told her I was conducting a study of why faculty do civic-engagement work. She replied, "I'll tell you why they do it: because some dean tells them they have to, and they are stuck with it!" When I told her that faculty actually take on the work voluntarily because they love it, her jaw dropped.

Contrary to the expectations of many, the remarkable thing I discovered in my interviews is that both workloads and levels of happiness were extremely high across the board. Almost all the faculty members interviewed reported that they work almost all the time, and that remains true across rank—although a few said they have learned to put some boundaries on their work. What is remarkable, however, is that despite their heavy workloads, all those interviewed reported being happy in the public sense, including all eight associate professors, a marked contrast from those in the *Chronicle* article.

<p style="text-align:center">❧</p>

The Benefits of Civic Involvement

Student Learning

ONE THEME THAT CAME UP OVER AND OVER is the belief that civic-engagement work provides huge benefits for students, so being civically engaged helps faculty do their jobs better. For example, in one of my first interviews, I asked the faculty member how he got into civic engagement, and he explained how experiential learning improved the quality of this teaching:

> This notion of public happiness [for me relates to my experience] that in the classroom, there's a fair amount of fear, a fear of being exposed as someone who doesn't know everything, who isn't perfectly wise and all knowing . . . [who by not having all the answers] was made to look the fool. . . . And I can remember experiencing that very early on in my life in classrooms, a sort of feeling, like, if you didn't know the answer, it was really bad. . . . So the way that I dealt with that on a personal level was just to try and kind of control what went on. If you did the perfect PowerPoint or the perfect lecture and carefully managed what went on in the classroom, you minimized the risks. . . . It wasn't like I was some dictator, but on the edge of kind of trying to manage things to avoid some of that vulnerability.
>
> [As] I was going through some deep reflections about my work as a teacher . . . I realized that that way of handling things in the classroom was not working for anyone. There was very little space for the students to be directly involved. And it took a huge amount of effort and energy on my part to kind of manage that. So, I realized that on some level what I needed to do was just let go . . . I relate that to a notion of developing a more public space, a freer space in the classroom for genuine discussion and deliberation and dialogue that is riskier.
>
> And that notion of public happiness, I think, as I understand it, really has to do with that sense of being able to connect and need each other on very human terms in ways that really wasn't happening much in that standard lecture format. . . . [Students] felt like they had more space to contribute genuinely to the discussion. (#4)

This professor feels more fulfilled not only because his teaching is better but also because he now has "a more genuine interaction with [his] students and with the world." Both pedagogical and public work contribute to the sense of meaning he gets from his work.

Many faculty members emphasized the positive impact civic-engagement work has on student learning, and most faculty who discussed the topic specifically mentioned connecting students to public life as part of what makes them feel so fulfilled. Several faculty members are worth quoting:

> I was often frustrated in my discipline teaching because I wasn't reaching my students. As a PhD from a major research university in [the sciences]—how much opportunity do I have

in a [typical] undergraduate classroom to make a difference? But when I started having those students do community-based projects, seeing the difference that can make, I just thought that my teaching became alive again with purpose. So I'm more fulfilled that way. (#36)

Personally, it makes me feel so satisfied in terms of helping students understand what it means to be a citizen, that we have a voice . . . oftentimes [community narratives] suggest that you don't have a voice because you're poor, or you don't have a voice because you're a minority. . . . So I feel gratified at the end of the day, having worked with them, and they now know that as citizens, irrespective of their background, they have some ownership of not only this democracy in which we live; they have some ownership of their lives, and they can help build the kind of world that they dream of. (#26)

If you're a faculty member that is motivated to have students be involved with politics, and thus involved in civic activity, I think that when you see students doing that, that's tremendously fulfilling. . . . It really does leave me hopeful about the future and about what I feel like I'm contributing. (#16)

[I am] very [happy]. I've got a wonderful job. My provost likes to say that inspiration is job one, and on my best days, that's what I get to say: "I inspire young men and women for a living." How awesome is that? I mean, it's a dream job in that way. (#35)

To see the student flourish, and then the people at [my] County Adult Education . . . and the excitement they get that what they do has value. (#39)

I think what our project is doing with this is something that is more engaging for students, something that is a more meaningful education experience for them, something that is a high-quality interdisciplinary experience. (#37)

> To launch a student out into the world who you just know is going to make a difference . . . how could you not be satisfied? I just get chills thinking about it.

Clearly, these faculty members have established a sense of connection with students that exceeds anything that can be measured by student learning outcomes.

"Human Beings Are Social Creatures": Community

As if in direct response to the unhappy faculty article, the civically engaged faculty I interviewed recounted that their work provides them with strong connections with students, other faculty, and/or the larger community. Some of the faculty said they value seeing students blossom as they engage in public life:

How satisfying could it be, though, to launch a student out into the world who you just know is going to make a difference? . . . I just remember her as this very quiet, shy college freshman, and then by her senior year, she's this incredibly competent and capable 21-year-old, who is feeding people in Africa and gathering together people to talk about a very divisive [state] farm bill and hosting a series of conversations on everything on the history of farming in [our] county . . . that's so much more than seeing [a student] make an A on a paper. . . . How could you not be satisfied? I just get chills thinking about it. (#37)

Other faculty agree that engaging together in civic work allows faculty to connect with students more deeply than they can in a traditional classroom setting:

> That ability to get to know students so personally—and to me, civic-engagement work allows me to do that. . . . It was just amazing. (#20)

Moreover, connecting deeply with students causes some faculty to feel a sense of pride similar to the way they feel about their own children:

> I look at my students who are in grad school, who are mayors of towns, state representatives, lobbyists, political consultants, and I'm proud of them, like they were my own children. (#35)

A lot of parents who put their children through college probably hope they will form those kinds of tight bonds with their professors. Indeed, some liberal arts colleges pride themselves on that kind of connection—institutions where faculty routinely invite students into their homes for class parties and run into them around town. Civic-engagement work with students helps create that experience.

The collaborative work done by civically engaged faculty also leads them to form strong relationships with their colleagues:

> It's really exciting to be on a team where nobody is on this project who doesn't want to be on this project, and nobody's on this project who's not wanting to contribute. So that's exciting. It's very energizing to get together with this group of colleagues . . . In a largely satisfying career, this is the most satisfying point. (#37)

> [It's] definitely contributed to my happiness that I have colleagues to work with, and I know that I have people above me that have my back . . . it can be a really lonely position, but it doesn't have to be . . . and it might mean switching institutions to find a supportive institution. (#22)

In other words, my interview data reveal that having relationships with other people makes people feel fulfilled, and illustrates the concept of public happiness articulated by Arendt and others.

In addition, civic-engagement work, in particular, allows faculty to connect with others in a deeper way:

> I feel that a large part of the Kettering [deliberative] process, and one reason I like it so much, is because it engages people, not just intellects, but full people with lives and values and relationships. And I do believe that human beings are social creatures, and we are happiest when we are fully engaged on all of those levels.

> A good, well-crafted discussion allows people to feel they are using all of the parts of themselves in productive ways . . . [My work at the Center and in the classroom] is hugely, hugely gratifying because it meets all of that. (#14)

Civic engagement adds something valuable to faculty work:

> I'm thrilled to be doing this kind of work. . . . it would be depressing for me to go back to just teaching philosophy. . . . I'm totally happy . . . I'm doing what I really love, and I think it's needed, and people appreciate it. (#18)

> [I am] turning the time that I am at work and on campus into the kind of work that I find most satisfying and fulfilling, which is at that intersection between scholarship and application, between reflection and action, between campus and the wider community, between faculty and staff . . . in those spaces of intersection and collaboration is where I found myself . . . happiest in that [public sense]. (#4)

While these faculty members love teaching, civic engagement makes their work even better.

Civic-engagement work also makes faculty feel more connected to the local community, creating the possibility of roots, instead of, or in addition to, rungs. Really connecting with other human beings plays an important role in their sense of fulfillment.

> For me, in order to be happy and flourish . . . I had to be doing something in my community. . . . I just found it was something that really enriched my work. (#30)

> I feel like I'm part of the community, part of something bigger than myself, and I think that that's probably the most rewarding thing of all, you know, establishing a sense of identity as part of a larger whole. (#38)

Some prefer community work over traditional academic research:

> If I had to choose between that kind of frenetic activity [that goes on at academic conferences] versus working with the local [community], I'm going with the local community any day. (#4)

A lot of faculty want to feel a strong sense of community, but the way the academic job market is organized can make that prospect difficult. Applicants in search of an assistant professor position are expected to move to wherever the job is. If you want a tenure-track position, you cannot expect to live where you otherwise might. The connections faculty make through civic-engagement work can ameliorate the sense of isolation that comes from relocating to a place where you have no roots. As one young woman put it:

> I have no life. Really. I don't mean that facetiously. I'm a single woman in an urban industrial rustbelt city . . . [But] I think the public engagement work helped connect me to the community and give me kind of a sense of grounding and belonging in the community that I might not otherwise have. (#9)

Without that sense of connection, that rising academic star might start looking for another job, and it would be her university's loss.

Feeling a sense of community matters greatly to human beings, as evidenced by philosophical and psychological studies. Interestingly, O'Meara commented in her study that faculty sometimes describe the relationships they make through their civic-engagement work in terms reminiscent of a romantic relationship. In my interviews, I only heard that type of framing once, yet three different people told me that their work allowed them to find their "people." In the first case, an associate professor at a research university noted that the civic-engagement work "brought together professors from all over campus in one room for a week. And it was like everybody in there said, 'Oh, we found our people.'" Next, a full professor at a community college commented that she attended an academic conference of engaged faculty and "was really excited because . . . 'These are my people.'" A third

person said, "I have a colleague that said, 'You have to find your people. You need your people.' Like you need people to do research with." Yet only this latter person used romantic terminology, referring to a colleague she does civic-engagement work with not simply as a fellow traveler: "I call her my other, better half—and that's definitely contributed to my happiness that I have colleagues to work with, and I know that I have people above me that have my back."

Work That Is Meaningful

In addition to achieving a stronger sense of community, civically engaged faculty find their work to be very meaningful, and that makes the increased workload worthwhile:

> It's a lot of meetings. It's a lot of extra writing. But to me, it certainly has been satisfying. I would say it has increased the meaningfulness of the work I do I think because I see it as having direct relevance . . . to our community and to the wider world. (#4)

One public philosopher, who just got promoted to full professor at a private liberal arts college, responded this way when asked if she is happier now that she feels freer to do civic-engagement work:

> Absolutely. I have been waiting for this time really for years . . . biting my tongue and waiting for the time when I can start saying "look, I want to do something non-traditional, academically, with my own work" . . . It really does have connection to that Arendtian sense of happiness, you know, that part of leading a life as an adult is having a sense of how the work you take up is meaningful for you and meaningful for other people as well. (#27)

She found public happiness after years of playing the game according to the rules of academia-as-usual.

Another woman I interviewed, an associate professor at a research university, has a different view, and believes that faculty can and should organize their careers in accordance with core values, instead of waiting until they are full professors:

> Faculty has to find the agency in themselves, that they can ask, "What are my core values here?" And "what is the reason why I have this job?" and use that as a constant rubric for evaluating what committee assignments you're taking on, what classes you're starting to teach . . . and finding that alignment also just helps with the work-life balance. . . . I'm really committed ethically to being a scholar that continues to be productive, as I move to full professor . . . but that work has to have a meaning to me in terms of being related to values and goals that I have for myself and for my students and things that I want them to understand in classes, and to teach in communities, where I feel like they're aligned with something of value. So it doesn't always work out that way, but it should most of the time, or else the whole happiness thing's not going to happen. (#22)

> It really does have connection to that Arendtian sense of happiness . . . a sense of how the work you take up is meaningful for you and meaningful for other people as well.

A full professor at a regional university also believes in the importance of doing work that has meaning:

This is not a job that you do for glory, that you do for pay, that you do for prestige. So if you can't do it to leave a legacy, find something else that you dig more. I think most people run into the problem where they're . . . just doing it for a paycheck, and they're not inspired by their job. (#35)

"Something in It for Me"

Faculty members feel deeply fulfilled by the benefits they bring to their students, by the relationships they form with other people, and by the sense of meaning they derive from their work. As one man put it, "I don't know that I could sustain myself if there wasn't something in it for me." While doing their jobs better, having great relationships, and doing meaningful work are clearly things that benefit faculty directly, there are other benefits as well. For example, one professor stressed how civic engagement bolsters her sense of agency and has also helped her career:

> Honestly, [my civic-engagement work is] a little ego driven too. I kind of like it when an organization calls me and says, "Hey, we have an issue. Could you help us?". . . And it's helped me build, I guess, legitimacy, not just in the community, but within the field. So it's created all sorts of opportunities for me, from getting these grants to being invited to write particular things, being connected with these practitioner networks. (#9)

While she technically gets no credit for doing civic engagement, the work has helped advance her academic career.

Others cite the joy of learning something new as a major, albeit less tangible, benefit for them:

> I can't point to one dramatic moment when, you know, my world turned around. But I am a really curious person. And so finding new ways to do my work, or new outlets for my work, or new people to meet who are somehow related to my work, all of those things are very appealing to me. And so I think that probably a lot of my personal motivation is that this just gives me a new way to think about learning and development, and with a new group of people, and that's really satisfying to me. (#12)

> I've actually had a colleague say to me . . . "Why are you doing all of this? You don't have to." I said, "What? Because I don't just come and teach. If I just came and taught, what am I teaching? I'm not learning anything new." (#34)

It is not surprising that professional intellectuals want to learn, and civic-engagement work often involves learning something new every time you do it.

Another less tangible benefit that came up over and over in the interviews is how much "fun" civic-engagement work is:

> One thing that keeps me going forward is that . . . way more times than not, I have a really good time doing it. (#30)

> Compared to discussions in mainstream analytic epistemology, this stuff is so much more interesting. It's so much more fun. I mean, you know, if all I was guided by was having a good time and letting my brain play delightful games . . . this is where I'd go . . . I don't think I could sustain it, if it wasn't enjoyable. (#28)

It's a lot more work to teach classes like this than it is to just teach a [traditional] class straight up out of the textbook. . . . but it's also way more fun. . . . I would be really bored if I was just teaching the regular way all the time. (#13)

It's the way people talk about, you know, being "in the groove" . . . a kind of delight and a kind of engagement . . . it's really what I wish for my students . . . And then to find it in a way that does put them in right relation to the world in moral and political terms. (#28)

For the group of faculty I interviewed, very heavy workloads do not sap their sense of fulfillment.

While I was not surprised that faculty enjoy doing civic-engagement work, I was surprised at the very high level of pleasure some experience doing it. This man's comment was particularly memorable:

I love the opportunity to go in and teach students every day. It's my favorite part of the job.

[How do I feel when I teach?] Having never taken drugs, I could imagine it's how junkies feel when they get a fix, because there's this great adrenaline rush . . .

And when I can get a student to have the light bulb go on over their head or to take that latent interest and activate it, that's when the endorphins rush all the way to the maximum. (#35)

Clearly, not everyone experiences such joy doing their work, but for those who do, it must be extremely motivating.

"It's What Feeds My Soul": Spiritual Dimensions of Civic-Engagement Work

One of the most surprising things that came up during interviews is how many faculty use spiritual or quasi-religious terms to describe their work. The second person I interviewed mentioned spirituality, but at that point I considered the issue idiosyncratic, yet it came up, unsolicited, throughout the study. Consider the following series of quotes:

There's sort of a spiritual dimension about that process of making and creating things with people and communities. (#2)

[It equates] to a large part of my spiritual path . . . that we as humans share with each other. (#19)

I'm a very introspective kind of spiritually driven person. . . . You know, it's two things. One is that I know that I've found work that suits me. I get a little high when I teach. I know that sounds weird, but I actually come out of class feeling [euphoric]. So, I get a really great energy rush teaching. It's kind of like one of the few times I absolutely lose myself, like the self-consciousness and am fully engaged in what I'm doing and feel really amazing about it. . . . I almost can't even consider not doing it because I don't know where that would leave me as far as feeling good about my daily life . . . I feel really blessed to find something that I really connect with. (#7)

There's also this collegial element of . . . feeling that you're part of something that's larger than you could possibly be. And I do think that that's the key to happiness. (#1)

I was brought up with a very strong sense of Jewish identity, which had nothing to do with being religious . . . that gives us . . . an obligation to fight for justice. . . . I can't imagine being in the world in any other way. (#28)

There is, to me, an incredible kind of public happiness . . . There are a million opportunities, when you connect with people the right way . . . I do believe the world is just full of potential, and it's almost a little bit mystical in a sense. . . . And so it's when you connect with people and with possibilities in the world that there's just this charge . . . and it's pleasureful, and it's energizing . . . On the days where that is what's going on, I can work all day and not feel tired. (#11)

That sense of mission . . . I'm not a religious person, but a lot of what other people get from religion, I get from politics, kind of sense of purpose in life. . . . It's what feeds my soul. . . . Our purpose in life actually is to repair this broken thing that is the world we live in. (#8)

There's something that [students are] longing for. And I think I'm longing for that too, and I'm longing for something to fill my heart up, and to make me feel whole and good in this completely messed up world. . . . I think we need a better world, and it seems to me like one way to do that is for people to be able to have more say over the kinds of lives that they live and the options that they have. And so I feel like this is one way to contribute to that. (#25)

It's more of a calling in that sense than just a nine-to-five job. (#38)

I'm at a public university . . . but I see a parallel between the ministry and my civic work. In my view, citizenship is likened to the theological term "discipleship." . . . It's being concerned about the common good and using your scholarship. (#24)

I was raised in a very political family and protest was kind of our religion. . . . I was raised with that expectation [that] questioning and participation in a political process from a grassroots perspective is an important part of who you are as a citizen. (#22)

That human community is that thing beyond myself that I'm connected to. (#39)

The issue of spirituality definitely haunts civic-engagement work, at least for the faculty members I interviewed.

Synthesis and Synergy

Faculty clearly enjoy their civic-engagement work, and they report that, despite heavy workloads, the work energizes them:

It's just very rewarding and satisfying in many ways, which makes up for a lot of the extra work that it takes to do this stuff. (#38)

There's something really energizing about being with people . . . who have very, very different life experiences, and just talking about philosophy and philosophical ideas and concepts . . . I can't tell you how many times I'm driving to an outreach initiative, and I'm tired, and I'm like, "I just wish I didn't have to go to this today," then at the end of the session, I feel completely different. It just happens all the time. (#30)

Clearly, the work is tiring but it provides tremendous energy to those involved.

In addition, civic-engagement work can also help faculty members synthesize the disparate parts of their jobs, which also makes them feel more productive:

> [Because of the civic-engagement work] I actually feel surprisingly allowed to be fully who I am. (#8)

> It really has allowed me to unify my work life and my civic life and my civic aspirations. . . . In my first years as a college professor I really felt like my life was somewhat compart-mentalized. . . . I wanted to live a more integrated life. . . . The quality of my work life has definitely improved, because now almost all of my scholarship is connected to this kind of political and civic-engagement work. All of my teaching incorporates it in some way or another. And my identity as citizen is kind of wrapped up in all of that. (#5)

> [Doing civic-engagement work is] more work than not doing it. What I really wanted to do . . . is kind of marry my teaching person, my research person, and my service person. . . . And if I could do that, you know, wouldn't I have it made? It took me more hours to plan for [my service learning] course than I usually put in, but at the same time, I was really making that course better. . . . I can recall a colleague who visited in the fall. You know, her reaction was, "So I guess you're just happy to get less research done than before." And I said, "Well, I'm not actually getting less research done than before." (#12)

> Civic engagement isn't really an extra mile for me . . . I just don't know another way to be. I just think it's part of who I've become and who I am. (#25)

The Role of Administrators

The anti-civic aspects of academic culture can be emphasized or down-played by higher education administrators who have the final say about who gets rewarded and who does not. In several interviews, faculty shared with me stories of being directly undermined by administrators who are unsympathetic to civic work:

> The associate provost of the college came in . . . she said, "You will no longer teach the Public Achievement course." . . . It was a phenomenally successful course. It made a huge impact in the community. It helped to really garner a lot of respect between the public schools and the university, which had not always had the best relationship. . . . I was just outraged. . . . You can work really, really hard to do good things, and they can be eliminated at the snap of a finger for no reason (and it happened with two other courses as well). (#24)

Yet despite being undermined, this man kept going, reworking his other course material to incorporate civic themes. And his case is not an outlier: civically engaged faculty, in general, are so committed to doing their work that they will do it against all odds.

On the flip side, it was also clear in the interviews that administrators can play a positive role when they support civic-engagement work:

> I really feel like if I didn't have a provost who was so committed to civic engagement himself, then these things wouldn't happen. . . . And I wouldn't have the opportunity to serve in a national coordinator role if I didn't have a provost who was willing to say, "Why don't you serve on that role, and we'll give you a stipend and give you reassigned

time so that you can make this happen, and we'll pay for your travel so that you can make this happen," because he believed it was important. (#37)

Indeed, many faculty members began civic-engagement work because their administration supported the American Democracy Project, which some feel is creating a movement:[46]

> You just feel that you and the people you're working with are moving something. You're moving institutions . . . you believe that the universities, by engaging the communities in new ways, make a much greater difference in the communities that they serve. And we see this over and over again . . . in cities throughout the country. (#36)

The decisions made by administrators, from chairs to presidents, can really make a difference when it comes to civic-engagement work. While many faculty will do the work no matter what, imagine how many others might join the movement if the price for doing so were not so high.

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Conclusion

THIS ESSAY BEGAN WITH A PARADOXICAL SITUATION: as higher education has moved further away from public life, faculty across the country are increasingly engaging in all kinds of incredible civic work, from experiential learning and deliberative pedagogy to major engagements with local communities. My study sought to figure out what motivates faculty to do public work at institutions that do not reward, and sometimes even penalize, it, and I discovered some remarkable similarities in their stories:

- The faculty members I interviewed have very heavy workloads, some claiming to work almost all the time, yet despite their heavy workloads, all those interviewed reported being happy in the public sense that they are doing meaningful work.

- Remarkably, given that the *Chronicle of Higher Education* article reported associate professors as being the most unhappy of all, none of the eight associate professors I interviewed said they were unhappy.

- Faculty members believe their public work provides huge benefits for their students, so being civically engaged helps them do their jobs better.

- Many reported that they are more productive because their civic-engagement work creates synergy.

- Faculty feel a strong sense of community, connecting with students, other faculty members, and/or the larger community, when they do civic-engagement work.

- They find their work meaningful and important, which contributes to their sense of public happiness.

- Many reported that their lives are more unified now, although a few said they still feel their work is bifurcated into public and professional sides.

- Multiple people discussed their work in spiritual terms.

- While some faculty came to civic-engagement work because of their long-standing commitment to social justice, many discovered the work when it was introduced to them on the job by colleagues or administrators.

- Some came to civic-engagement work because of books they read or people they studied with, so it makes a difference when civically engaged people tell others about their work.

- Many do the work even though they get no credit from their institutions.

- The pressure to publish—the "publication treadmill"—seems to be the key challenge faced by civically engaged faculty.

While my sample size was small, I find it astounding that every single faculty member I interviewed reported being deeply fulfilled and happy in the public sense. If civic engagement generates public happiness, from a management perspective, the question should be how do we bottle that energy? Of course, we don't have to bottle it because it is available to anyone who wants it free of charge. Faculty members who do civic-engagement work will likely discover its joys and that will motivate them to continue their public work, sometimes against all odds. They will reap multiple benefits for themselves, their students, and their institutions, including improved student learning, increased productivity, a sense of connection to campus and community that could keep them at their institutions, a sense of meaning that makes work worthwhile, a sense of spiritual fulfillment, and a whole lot of fun.

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Notes

1 For additional reading, see R. Claire Snyder, "Should Political Science Have a Civic Mission? An Overview of the Historical Evidence," *PS: Political Science and Politics* XXXIV, no. 2 (2001): 301-305.

2 David Mathews uses this analogy in *Ships Passing in the Night?* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press, 2014).

3 Marguerite Shaffer interview with David Brown, *Higher Education Exchange* (2008): 24.

4 Mathews, *Ships Passing in the Night?*, 1.

5 John Bennett, *Collegial Professionalism: The Academy, Individualism, and the Common Good* (Phoenix, AZ: American Council on Education and the Oryx Press, 1998), vii.

6 Harry Boyte, *Going Public: Academics and Public Life* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation Press, 2004).

7 Robin Wilson, "Why Are Associate Professors So Unhappy?" *Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 3, 2012), http://chronicle.com/article/Why-Are-Associate-Professors/132071> (accessed July 5, 2015).

8 Discussed most explicitly by Hannah Arendt, the concept has roots in Aristotle and was modernized by Thomas Jefferson. My use of the term in this paper expands the concept beyond the explicitly political into the realm of civic engagement, more generally.

9 The total comes to more than 41 because 2 adjunct professors taught at more than one type of institution.

10 Kerry Ann O'Meara, *Because I Can: Exploring Faculty Civic Agency* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation, 2012), https://www.kettering.org/blogs/new-kf-working-paper-because-i-can-exploring-faculty-civic-agency (accessed July 6, 2015).

11 Deborah L. Rhode, *In Pursuit of Knowledge: Scholars, Status, and Academic Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006) and Ellen Schrecker, *The Lost Soul of Higher Education: Corporatization, the Assault on Academic Freedom, and the End of the American University* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

12 Rhode, *In Pursuit of Knowledge*, 9.

13 Cited in Bennett, *Collegial Professionalism*, 7.

14 Rhode, *In Pursuit of Knowledge*, 32.

15 Scott Jaschik, "Rethinking Tenure—and Much More," *Inside Higher Ed* (December 8, 2006), https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2006/12/08 (accessed July 2, 2015).

16 Schrecker, *The Lost Soul of Higher Education*, 187.

17 Ibid, 187.

18 Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

19 Boyte, *Going Public*.

[20] Cathy A. Trower, "A New Generation of Faculty: Similar Core Values in a Different World," *Peer Review*, (Summer 2010), http://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/new-generation-faculty-similar-core-values-different-world (accessed July 6, 2015).

[21] Wilson, "Why Are Associate Professors So Unhappy?"

[22] Bennett, *Collegial Professionalism*, 5-6.

[23] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 119.

[24] Ibid, 127.

[25] Richard K. Matthews, *The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson: A Revisionist View* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1984), 89.

[26] Cited in Matthews, *The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson*, 89.

[27] Bernard Yack, *The Problems of a Political Animal: Community, Justice, and Conflict in Aristotelian Political Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 7.

[28] Ibid, 65. Jurgen Habermas makes a similar claim in his discussion of deliberative democracy.

[29] Yack, *Political Animal*, 63.

[30] Ibid, 76.

[31] Ibid, 251.

[32] O'Meara, *Because I Can*.

[33] Ibid, 4.

[34] Ibid, 4.

[35] Ibid, 6.

[36] Ibid, 6-7.

[37] Ibid, 9.

[38] Ibid, 9.

[39] Ibid, 9-10.

[40] Ibid, 10.

[41] Ibid, 10. For an explanation of the ways in which professional training undercuts public work, see Harry Boyte, *Going Public*, and Harry Boyte, "Against the Current: Developing the Civic Agency of Students," *Change* (2008), http://www.csuchico.edu/civic/documents/Against%20the%20Current.pdf (accessed July 6, 2015).

[42] O'Meara, *Because I Can*, 12.

[43] Ibid, 21.

[44] Ibid, 31.

[45] Ibid, 29-33.

[46] For a critical assessment of that claim, see John Saltmarsh and Matthew Hartley, *To Serve a Larger Purpose: Engagement for Democracy and the Transformation of Higher Education* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

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