

Review of Hoy, A., & Johnson, M. (Eds.). *Deepening Community Engagement in Higher Education: Forging New Pathways*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

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In her review of *Higher Education And Civic Engagement: Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Lorraine McIlrath, Ann Lyons, and Ronaldo Munck published in Volume 5, Number 2 of this journal, Maria Avila notes, “In a field where engagement practices and methodologies, as well as the ultimate purpose of engagement, are still contested, the book assists readers in situating their own engagement work within a larger, international, theoretical context. The book also helps readers appreciate that while engagement practices will always vary, depending on geographical, political, economic, and social contexts, there are significant commonalities across countries and regions” (Avila, 2013, p. 2). Avila was correct in her assessment of this timely and important volume because of its international scope. Nevertheless, similar statements could be written about other notable publications that explore higher education’s community engagement work and how changes are transforming both institutions and communities. In recent years, the literature has expanded in a way that invites us to turn a critical eye towards this work.

One such notable publication is *Deepening Community Engagement in Higher Education: Forging New Pathways*, in which editors Ariane Hoy and Matthew Johnson view the current state of higher education and civic (they prefer to the term “community”) engagement this way: “The community engagement *movement* in higher education, or some might say *field*, is at a critical moment. As the chapters in this volume make clear, scholars and practitioners reflect on both the achievements of this collective work and the obstacles that lie ahead” (Hoy & Johnson, 2013a, p. xvi).

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While framed around the work of the Bonner Foundation and its network across the United States with various colleges and universities, the volume speaks to the broader civic engagement movement and should not be narrowly identified as being about institutions aligned with the Bonner Foundation. Yet even if the contributors only spoke to the experiences and practices of institutions with Bonner Scholar or Leader programs, it would still point to some of the most relevant issues and topics when thinking about how to deepen civic engagement. As Wayne Meisel notes in his Foreword, “Some have referred to the colleges and universities that have a Bonner Program as Bonner schools. Whenever I hear that, I correct the statement by explaining that there is no such thing as a Bonner school. Rather, there are schools that have invited the Bonner Foundation to partner with them, over years and even decades” (Meisel, 2013, p. xii). The commitment by colleges and universities to host Bonner programs points to institutional commitments to furthering and deepening civic engagement efforts, both through curricular and co-curricular channels.

This volume includes chapters focusing on topics such as student development, spiritual exploration, partnerships, faculty development, and new epistemologies for academic community engagement. It also includes a section on the role of centers of community engagement (or similarly named offices and institutes) and the issues related to building institutional infrastructure and support for such entities. This focus on centers is important since the field of community engagement has grown so much in the last number of decades. For that reason, I will focus on this part of the edited volume.

As more universities seek to implement civic engagement, the institutional structure is critically for the success of such efforts. In their chapter, Marshall Welch and John Saltmarsh offer a study of the “[d]efining features” and best practices of community engagement centers such as “organizational structure, reporting lines, funding, student programming, faculty professional development, community partnership development, policy, and procedures” based on the Elective Community Engagement Classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in the United States (Welch & Saltmarsh, 2013, p. 184). What they

identify in their survey of institutions is the important role that centers play in shaping campus cultures as well as more clearly articulating what higher education institutions are attempting to do with community partners.

Offering a case study of their efforts at Washburn University, Richard B. Ellis and Kristine Hart provide an important perspective on the development of institutional commitment. For them, the core of their community engagement efforts has been and continues to be focused on the role of students. Importantly, the authors speak to the transformation of community-based experiences and learning from “a student organization to an independent academic unit” (Ellis & Hart, 2013, p. 208). Like many colleges and universities that began to take seriously the impact they were having on students and on the broader community, Washburn developed a structure that elevated its status and provided necessary resources beyond what was and continues to be available and appropriate for student organizations. This leads to the benefit of strategic planning for community engagement, a topic addressed by Ariane Hoy and Mathew Johnson. By using strategic planning, institutions and community partners are, as much as possible, able to envision together what their collective work is and how they will proceed (Hoy & Johnson, 2013b).

Notably, the volume also includes “critical insights and reflections,” offering perspectives that value civic engagement, but question the ways in which we are furthering this work in today’s world and how deeply colleges and universities embrace the necessary practices the align with often lofty rhetoric. Dan Butin, in his critique, states that higher education has reached an “engagement ceiling.” He is critical of many of the other contributors and notes that even a highly successful model such as the one employed by the Bonner programs across campuses “succinctly highlights how capacity building and organizational change are extremely difficult endeavors with very low success rates in postsecondary institutions” (Butin, 2013, pp. 245, 246). Even at institutions committed to community engagement, transforming higher education is going to require moving away from traditional models of service-learning and civic engagement. Instead, in Butin’s words, “It will do so, instead, through the tenacity, vision, and

serendipity of individuals finding new, dynamic, and powerful ways to make our education matter to our local and global communities” (Butin, 2013, p. 250). Community engagement cannot simply be the continuation of past practices, if for no other reason than that place-based higher education is being altered dramatically and the constitutive elements of this experience must change as well.

As with most edited volumes, the multiple voices and perspectives included highlight the breadth of the field of community engagement and what it means for institutions to be committed to deepening their community engagement work. Yet, as with any scholarly volume, there are many places where the contributions only point us to where we are going with regards to understanding the complexity of civic engagement and do not get us there. But this is a critique that should always be present; what else can and should we know? What next steps are necessary? Importantly, this edited volume contributes yet another set of essays to the maturing field of civic engagement.

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