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Power to the People: Libraries as Third Spaces for Civic Dialogue and Collaborative Empowerment

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and Collaborative Empowerment

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Abstract

The United States is experiencing deep divisions and lack of political will to address inequities impacting people's lives. Pathways to convergence are needed to build bridges amongst community members for solidarity and community action to address these. Civic dialogue in Third Spaces is a method for cultivating understanding across differences to make change possible. Public libraries possess democratic missions committed to equitable access to resources, open exchange of ideas, and self-empowerment. Public librarians facilitate civic dialogue and engagement; little scholarly attention is given to their efforts. This project brought together public librarians interested in civic dialogue to explore understandings of public librarianship in the context of Democratic Professionalism through concepts of social capital and Third Space. Through collaborative activities assessing library assets, their connection to cultivating Third Spaces and social capital, and a World Café dialogue simulation, all participants reported gaining new insights about civic dialogue. All participants expressed a belief in public libraries' capacity for Third Space, an increased interest in tracking the benefits of civic dialogue they facilitate, and a likelihood to address barriers to engagement. Workshops for librarians and community partners addressing barriers to civic dialogue in public libraries and preserving Third Space will support participatory democracy.

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"In some ways the 20th century can be called the century of war and bloodshed. The challenge for us, therefore, is to make the next century, a century of dialogue and of peaceful coexistence."--His Holiness the Dalai Lama (1997).

Considering this quote from His Holiness the Dalai Lama inspires the question: What methods, skills, and structures does the United States need to actualize dialogue across differences amongst the general public to find avenues for progress on matters of social justice? In reading Putnam (2000) today, younger generations may find his analogy of decreased participation in bowling leagues as a quaint, if not dated, metaphor for the symptom of diminishing civic engagement and social capital in the United States. Putnam's work, metaphor aside, is ever more prescient today, though diminishing rates of civic participation and social capital creation account for only part of the dilemma Americans now find themselves in. In particular, it cannot account for the strategies needed for catalyzing and supporting social bonds to create social capital in today's fraught socio-political contexts.

Over the past two decades since Putnam's thesis, political polarization in the United States has increased exponentially (Najle & Jones, 2019), with a majority of U.S. residents identifying the experience of discussing politics with those possessing different viewpoints as being increasingly difficult (Pew Research Center, 2019). We are also becoming less and less likely to befriend or stay friends with others whose beliefs contradict our own (YouGovAmerica, 2020). A politics of grievance and disintegrating trust in American institutions (Pew Research Center, 2019) has played out against the backdrop of massive changes to society brought about by globalization and information technology that have rendered much of daily life starkly

different to what life in the U.S. looked like just two decades ago when Putnam crafted his

thesis.

Concurrent with this increase in political entrenchment and polarization are warnings

from scholars and journalists that the democratic foundation of the U.S. is under threat

(Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020). The symptoms they list for their prognosis are many, and

include, but are not limited to: steady erosion and suppression of voting rights, influence of

money on politics, adversarial elections and discourse, significant population drift toward

authoritarian populism, and a waning faith in democracy as a system of government (Moyo,

2018). Considering the dire warnings from across the political spectrum (Kagan, 2021; Snyder,

2021; New America, 2021) about what the current state of our democratic republic portends, we

are overdue for attending to our differences and the lack of viable political will to make real

improvements on a range of social justice issues. Changes in how we understand and see one

another, in how we re-determine and define our collective values, are critical if we are to find

points of convergence that enable us to work together to address the numerous deep and complex

issues we face as a collective.

What is called for now is a participatory democracy founded on common ground, shared

values, and increased social bonds. As the title and message of Peter Levine's (2013) book on

participatory democracy plainly states, "We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For". Shifting

the tide is not out of the question, nor is it out of our control: Social justice education offers

compelling alternatives for intergroup exchange to bridge our cultural divides. Today's political

and social landscape calls for civic dialogue. While there is no silver bullet for taking out the

sum of our problems, we do have tools. One of those tools is civic or intergroup dialogue:

structured, intentional, and based on respect and equity. Civic dialogue must expand, from small

towns, to cities, to our national stage, such that all people's voices are part of a choral

conversation about what is needed, and what is just for all accompanied by collectively devised

solutions to social problems. We must situate civic dialogue in spaces that are freely accessible

and open to all. Public libraries are an ideal space to situate our civic dialogues due to their

inherent commitments to civic life through education, democratic ideals, and the free and fair

exchange of ideas.

Carefully situated dialogue is needed to repair the degeneration of our public square. The

time-honored, American tradition of *debate* has us at a loss--at least what debate has come to

look and sound like (Pew Research Center, 2019). Televised or "Twitterized" debate has

devolved into a zero-sum exercise, where "opposing sides" of an issue are, indeed, *opponents.*

This form of communication precludes nuance, encourages binary thinking, and false

equivalencies. In debate, one is encouraged to double down in their beliefs, lest they appear weak

in their position (or letting down their "side"), while public spectators cheer and wince along the

sidelines of our live-feeds. Changing one's mind is not encouraged through this modality.

Shouting at each other from our digital silos, as has come to be the de facto form of engagement

with those we disagree with, is not getting us anywhere.

Shaffer and Longo (2019) define dialogue as "a collaborative and relational process to

engage with others and co-create meaning" (p.21). The sister to dialogue is deliberation. As

defined by Shaffer and Longo, it is the process that builds upon and intersects with constructive

dialogue by guiding "a diverse group of people [toward] a collective decision on a difficult or

complex public issue" (p.22). In 2002, the executive director of *Everyday Democracy*, Martha

McCoy, asked "What kind of Talk Does Democracy Need?" (p.117). Her answer is a process of

public conversation that is carefully structured and aimed toward action for progressive change:

Deliberative Dialogue. Deliberative dialogue is a process that inspires participatory democracy (McCoy, 2002). She contends that deliberative dialogue--a sustained conversation over time whereby social bonding and connections are forged and strengthened, self- efficacy is engendered--is the best form of civic engagement for working with community members to actualize change because its ultimate aims are empowerment and action-oriented toward achieving real change.

How can we start to build a dialogue movement? Where can we situate our dialogues? What kind of space or infrastructure do we need to begin building a national dialogue that permeates the national psyche? Shaffer and Longo (2019), like Klinenberg (2018), argue for supporting civic dialogue in as many spaces as possible such that the dialogue may be woven throughout our public and social infrastructure. While deliberative dialogue is a process that builds toward collective empowerment and a pathway toward agency and change (i.e., the ideal), there are numerous forms of civic dialogue. Various practitioners make the case for their suitability based on the needs, culture of a population/community, purposes and context for the engagement, and the desired outcomes of participants (Shaffer & Longo, 2019). Today, learning circles (sometimes referred to as "story circles" or "neighborhood circles"), are still widely used in social justice education. Organizations such as Conversation Café, Essential Partners, National Issues Forum, the World Café, and numerous other organizations, have produced curricula and delivered training on variations of dialogue and deliberation that include storytelling and listening circle components.

In *Palaces for the People* Eric Klinenberg (2018) observes that American universities have more frequently been designed to dissolve social boundaries, that college campuses serve as spaces where humanity experiences itself in manifold expressions, and where connections and

understanding are given the opportunity to blossom between people who would otherwise not have interacted. Kranich (2019) further notes, academic libraries hold tremendous promise to serve as "civic agents" and should work in tandem with ongoing civic efforts on campus while also cultivating civic engagement by offering themselves up as "safe/brave spaces that connect academe with community and global issues" (p.200). These are fine examples of how campus entities can foster civic engagement, but how to engage the larger public outside of the Academy?

Public libraries hold tremendous promise for stimulating and expanding civic engagement, by the very nature of their civic missions and the democratic ideals they embody through the equitable and inclusive access to free spaces, learning materials, and programming they provide. They serve as social infrastructure linking community interests and needs with learning. Time spent in public libraries exposes patrons to a wide array of people from varied social identities, ages, ethnicities, and belief systems, hence improving the likelihood for heterogeneous and pluralistic intergroup experiences to occur. Moreover, libraries are "anchor institutions," and as such, have placemaking capacities.

According to the Anchor Institutions Task Force (AITF), anchor institutions hold particular importance for communities because they are "enduring organizations that are rooted in their localities. It is difficult for them to leave their surroundings even in the midst of substantial capital flight" (Marga, Inc., 2021). Given their roots within and interdependence with the communities they serve, anchor institutions are uniquely poised to serve as partners in change to community movements seeking to address issues in health, housing, education, and transportation, to name a few (Marga, Inc., 2021). While public libraries are no monolith, are

public librarians considering their physical spaces, and the purposes they could or should serve? Library scholars' work offers evidence that some in the profession have considered this deeply.

Buschman (2020) argues that neoliberal capture of civic institutions and the public sphere exacerbated economic and political inequities and dominated the library profession for far too long. Friedriksen (2015), meanwhile, asserts that public libraries need to be recognized as "spaces for social reproduction" since they provide a mechanism for upholding and reproducing social relations, information access, and knowledge production attributed to viable employment and sustaining livable conditions for individuals. Elmborg (2011) advocates for public libraries to shift away from the neoliberal constructs that diverted them from their civic missions. He calls upon the profession to embrace a *Third Space* identity as a means to both interrogate the commodification of place and support the work undertaken by public libraries with diversifying communities. "Third Space library practice" represents a cultural borderland where immigrants, migrant workers, multinationals and marginalized groups may utilize library space as a zone between cultures allowing for the co-creation of new knowledge and meaning (Elmborg, 2011). A "neutral zone", Third Space, is unbounded by hierarchical power dynamics and inherently more democratic. Friedriksen holds that libraries are at once politically neutral (given their democratic policies and accessibility), and intensely political (as their services and clientele reflect inequities of the greater social framework). Her stance, that libraries serve as "spaces for knowledge and as a dimension of social policy" (p.142) supports Elmborg's concept of public libraries as Third Spaces.

Despite the fact that many public libraries and librarians across the United States are involved with facilitating civic dialogue and other forms of civic and community engagement, there is a serious dearth of scholarly analysis and study of public libraries' efforts, capacity, and

effectiveness with this crucial work. The reasons for this oversight are beyond the scope of this paper and project. The absence of librarian-practitioners' civic dialogue work from the scholarly conversation on social justice and civic engagement, however, constitute a missed opportunity for both understanding the democratic education that takes place in these settings as well as the potential public libraries (as spaces) and librarians (as social justice educators) have for cultivating a more participatory and just method for facilitating intercultural understanding and consensus on pressing social problems.

This project will bring together public librarians from various geographic regions with an interest in civic dialogue in public library settings to explore understandings of public librarianship in the context of civic engagement and Democratic Professionalism through educational materials around civic dialogue, public libraries' history of social justice efforts, empowerment, and social capital. The workshop will feature a structured dialogue and activities focused on instructing participants about the concepts of social capital, civic dialogue, Democratic Professionalism, and empowerment. An essential aim of this workshop is to educate and explore the extent to which public libraries may serve as civic infrastructure for building a dialogue movement that helps to build bridges amongst community members resulting in increased solidarity and community action.

There are various terms used interchangeably to constitute different approaches to civic dialogue. For the purposes of this project, I am utilizing *Essential Partners'* definition of this practice, or what they term *reflective structured dialogue,* as it best speaks to the essence of the research, theory, and concepts explored in this project: *"Reflective Structured Dialogue relies on preparation, conversational structures, question design, facilitation skills, and reflective practices to encourage people to engage meaningfully across differences. This approach allows for

groundbreaking conversations that restore trust, deepen mutual understanding, and lay the foundation for collaborative action" (Essential Partners, 2021, Reflective Structured Dialogue, para. 3).

Within the overarching research purpose of the project are numerous lines for inquiry to be addressed. Do participants see public libraries as having a responsibility to facilitate civic engagement? Do public libraries possess the capacity for embracing the position of "third space"? What, if any, are the barriers they identify to fulfilling a civic dialogue mission?

The conceptual framework for this project utilizes various theoretical premises for the instructional activities and content to be delivered to participants. Theories from social psychology include Allport's intergroup contact hypothesis (1979), Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1971), and Knowles's Adult Learning Theory (1978) and will guide the workshop design and inform workshop content. Sociological theories and concepts applied within this framework will inform both project design and post-workshop evaluation and assessment. These include theories and applications of the forms of capital (Bourdieu,1986; Gittell & Vidal, 1998; Svendsen, 2013), Elmborg's (2011) conceptualization of Third Spaces, and Dzur's (2018) concept of Democratic Professionalism. Undergirding the purposes of this study are theories and concepts from Democratic Education (Friere, 1970; hooks, 2003) and Fast's (2016) iteration of Empowerment Theory. Working together, the above concepts and theories will illuminate and enrich the observations made in this project, specifically with regard to analyzing forms of social capital production, and the overall effectiveness of building awareness and empathy through civic dialogue amongst adult participants in public library settings. The interlocking facets of each concept and theory, as they correspond to the current project, will be defined and illustrated in detail in the literature review.

Literature Review

Civic dialogue offers the potential to build awareness and find common ground across differences (Magjuka, 2018). It can be a vehicle for both generating critical consciousness and strengthening social movements (Horton & Freire, 1990). These are conditions for building solidarity and partnerships for empowerment, capacity building, and community organizing that are at the heart of community engagement (Shaffer & Longo, 2019). Public libraries are uniquely poised to serve as the civic infrastructure (neutral space and a commitment to providing facilitation) needed for building a dialogue movement. This literature review will establish several important premises for understanding and approaching the promising role civic dialogue, provided through fertile Third Spaces (i.e., public libraries), has to play for building coalitions that actualize change and participatory democracy.

Dialogue as Civic Engagement for Social Justice

One may look to the work of the Highlander Folk School for one of the earliest inceptions of civic dialogue practice in the U.S. that was keenly focused towards actualizing positive change for equality and social justice. Founded in 1932 by Myles Horton in the Appalachian region of Tennessee, Highlander began as a school primarily focused on adult education and exploring concerns related to labor relations and conditions. It was central to the Labor movement of the 1930's (Longo, 2005). Later on, it drew upon influences from Danish folk schools. From there, it became more focused on race relations and occupied a central role in the Civil Rights movement of the 1950's and 60's (Horton & Freire, 1990). During the 1950's Highlander was one of the few places where integrated adult instruction could occur. Highlander's Civil Rights alumni included Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, John Lewis, Septima Clark, and Ralph Abernathy, to name a few. These students, and others, catalyzed their

learning from Highlander to take actions that are, by now, well documented in American

history.

Highlander developed a technique for engaging participants using a dialogic form they

called *learning circles,* whereby participants would engage in storytelling from their subjective,

lived experiences. Active listening was paramount, and empathy was the goal. The format for

Highlander's story circles, described by co-founder Myles Horton as a "circle of learners",

involved sitting in the round and alternating listening with personal storytelling. It is still a

preferred mode for civic dialogue in social justice education today (Longo, 2005). The

transformative nature of Highlander's methods is poignantly illustrated in a remark made by

Rosa Parks about her experience there as having, for the first time, shown her that it was possible

to trust a white person (Horton, 1966). Aside from aiding in relations between different social

groups, trust is both a requisite ingredient for the formation of social capital (Gittell & Vidal,

1998) and a sense of belonging in communities (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Various forms of civic dialogue employed today are also referred to as *intergroup*

dialogue. According to Zuñiga, et al., (2018), intergroup dialogue, a popular modality for social

justice education, "addresses both difference and inequality while seeking to foster the

dispositions and skills that may be needed to work together to address social injustices" (p.645).

Best practices for intergroup dialogue emphasize structured interaction between heterogeneous

groups of people that are scaffolded to facilitate understandings across differences; according to

Zuñiga, et al., this complex, challenging practice requires experienced, knowledgeable

facilitators and the ability of participants to be able to withstand a high degree of discomfort in

order to engage in difficult conversations. These principles for intergroup exchange are derived

from the seminal work of social psychologist Gordon Allport's groundbreaking work *The Nature*

of Prejudice, first published in 1954. His interrogation of the psychological and sociological

components of discrimination and prejudice gave way to his assertion that a particular type of

contact between different social groups was necessary in order to dispel prejudice--otherwise

known as his *intergroup contact hypothesis* (Allport, 1974).

Librarians as Civic Agents and Defenders of Civil Rights

American librarians have a history of civic engagement and activism for civil rights.

When vast numbers of individuals were reeling from an economic downturn that equated access

to reading materials with luxury, the "packhorse librarians" (also referred to as "the book women

of Kentucky") went out into the wilds of Appalachia for "remote" library services (Boyd, 2007).

Equipped with saddle bags filled with reading materials for children and adults with no means to

access information, these librarians guided their horses over rough terrains to deliver the

comforts and benefits of reading to isolated individuals. In the years following WWII, the

American Library Association (ALA) adopted a Library Bill of Rights and the "Freedom to

Read" policy statement when intellectual freedom was under attack by McCarthyism (Robbins,

1996).

Public libraries became staging grounds for the Civil Rights Movement in numerous

Southern cities. Sit-ins protesting segregation in libraries were not uncommon. While many

southern librarians acquiesced to Jim Crow, there were many quietly subverting it through

cooperation with activists and providing Black citizens access to collections denied them by the

racist laws of the time period (Fiore, 2017). The traditional demographics of the library

profession have influenced its civic engagement. Since librarianship is a female dominated

profession, the field has been shaped by personal, political forces. Hildenbrand (2000)

demonstrated that library feminism has been a consistent force woven throughout library history

since the 1960's. And since the 1960's, the ALA and state library associations have lent crucial

support to those defending their freedom to read as book challenges arise in school libraries and

classrooms. Librarians continued to fight for library patrons' intellectual freedom vis a vis their

right to privacy by condemning and challenging several provisions of the USA Patriot Act

(Drabinski, 2006). The provisions gave the National Security Administration power to obtain

patrons' library card records and data from IP addresses associated with library computers and

imposed a gag order that criminalized public disclosure of records requests. Several librarians

(most notably, "the Connecticut Four") filed suits with the ACLU asserting that both the gag

order and the provisions allowing access to library card records were unconstitutional (Wiegand,

2016).

Librarians as Democratic Professionals

Examples of librarians' civic engagement shared herein represent what Dzur (2018) calls

Democratic Professionalism in action. According to Dzur, democratic professionals are people

who leverage their skills and expertise to collaborate with their patients, students, and clients to

resolve problems. They acknowledge lay people's understanding of issues and have faith in their

ability to harness self-efficacy in order to address the issues affecting their lives. Dzur contends

that democratic professionals play the long game: their work is done day-to-day through small,

incremental tasks building towards long term goals shared with the community members they

work with (e.g., grassroots community development work). Dzur advocates for increasing the

visibility and the value we assign to Democratic Professionalism and for more people to embrace

this style of professionalism such that they can make the institutions they work in "fields of

social action" (p.24) by employing various civic engagement strategies. Dzur outlines five

primary criteria for this professional approach: "Commitment to knowledge" *with* "co-direction

of services", source of social responsibilities (training and experience are tied to collaborations

with the public), perceptions of laypeople (the public has a shared stake in professional decision

making), their roles--politically (act as a bridge or link to between the public and institutions)

and idealized in society (authority and knowledge are shared), overall (p.4). To this last point,

Jaeger and Sarin (2016a) assert that "all librarianship is political", eschew notions that public

libraries and librarians should assume politically neutral positions and call on their colleagues to

acknowledge and declare the "political nature of libraries and their goals" (2016b, p. 325).

Libraries in the Early 2000's: An Identity Crisis

To an extent, Democratic Professionalism within librarianship was supplanted at the turn

of the twenty-first century with the entrenchment and dominance of neoliberal constructs which

marketized the public sphere (McMenemy, 2009). The predominant messaging coming from

American Libraries and Library Journal (ALA) publications during the early 2000's was one that

pitted libraries in competition with companies like Barnes and Noble, and the internet at large

(Buschman, 2020), at a time when library budgets were under increasing threat due to a trend

towards austerity budgeting, and what Lingel (2012) refers to as the "myth of the technological

death of the library." Public library discourse from 2000 to 2010 reflects a fear that libraries

would cease to exist if they did not move with the times and embrace a business model for

operations (McMenemy, 2009). Librarians were implored to think of patrons as "customers", and

data to validate libraries' existence was a central imperative. Summer Reading program

participation data was deemed an important data point to support city libraries' budget

negotiations with city halls (Buschman, 2020; McMenemy, 2009; Friedriksen, 2015). The pithy

"@YourLibrary" advertising slogan was a ubiquitous campaign gamely taken up by ALA and

state library associations across the US as a not-so-subtle way of trying to forge, within the

public consciousness, the idea that libraries and the internet were one in the same (Friedriksen, 2015). Libraries as community centers, it seems, was not a sexy advertising angle.

Research on Public Libraries, Civic Dialogue, and Community-Driven Change: A Disconnect

Despite the fact that public libraries are anchor institutions with a long-standing commitment to intellectual freedom that provide free materials and inclusive services to all, along with a field of professionals clearly committed to democratic education and civil rights, there is an underwhelming amount of scholarly research on public libraries as centers for community dialogue and facilitators of social capital in the service of social justice. It is, indeed, "paradoxical" (Audunson et al., 2019) that prominent civic scholars extolling the virtues and prescient need for civic engagement in the public sphere to bolster democracy and democratic learning (Levine, 2013; Dzur, 2018) have yet to turn their attention to public libraries. One notable exception is Klinenberg (2018), who dubbed public libraries "palaces for the people." Additionally, the scholarly literature studying these phenomena within American public libraries is curiously lacking. Compelling research on public libraries' potential for playing an instrumental role in nurturing the public sphere, building social and cultural capital, and cultivating participatory forms of democracy and social action has been undertaken by researchers from other nations.

Svendsen's (2013) empirical survey of 62 rural libraries in Denmark demonstrated that public libraries provide opportunities for building both human and social capital on both the micro-and meso-levels in society which has a direct impact on societal bonds, institutional effectiveness, and local economies. In turn, Svendsen found, increased partnership and cooperation between the libraries, their community members, and other public institutions local to them enhanced the institutional capital of the libraries. His research identified specific areas

that were enhanced through libraries' community engagement, resulting in both collective and

individual benefits within communities, including, but not limited to: trust (social and

institutional), reciprocity, economic growth, social bonds, civic discourse, and collective action.

  In their comprehensive review of research into libraries as an essential part of the public

sphere, Audunson et al. (2019) identified several key themes that establish libraries as vital to the

public sphere: social inclusion, libraries with meeting spaces located centrally to encourage

public discourse and democratic engagement, and libraries as bridging the digital divide.

Audunson et al.'s (2019) findings have particular relevance to the concept of Third Space and

how it has the potential to function through libraries.

Third Spaces

  Elmborg (2011) advocated for public libraries to shift their perspective with the rapidly

increasing globalization, technological advancements, and the subsequent fragmenting of

cultural landscapes of the 21st century to embrace a *Third Space* identity. Borrowing from

Anzaldua's (1999) work on cultural borderlands as spaces where migrant workers and

multinationals navigate a space between two cultures, Elmborg (2011) asserts that public

libraries may also be considered "borderlands" that lend themselves to Bhaba's (1994) concept

of *Third Spaces*. Bhaba (1994) holds that a Third Space is a space where multiple cultures--along

with their attendant power dynamics, and positionalities--coexist and give rise to

hybridity...giving those in this in-between space the chance to create new meanings and new

culture, and ultimately, the ability to "elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of

ourselves" (p.50). In agreement with Bhaba, Elmborg (2011) posits that the theory of Third

Spaces is a response to post-modern phenomena (e.g. technological changes, ascendancy of

multinational corporations, migratory populations in search of employment and increased quality

of life) and that the Third Space is one where "people with less obvious social, political, or military power can still exert influence on space by resisting the structures of dominant cultures...by simply occupying space and appropriating it for their own purposes" (p.345).

The 2011 *Occupy Wall Street* movement, or simply *"Occupy"* as it gathered momentum and claimed space in other American cities, embodied the Third Space concept. The first Occupy site, Zuccotti Park in New York City's downtown financial district (September 2011 through November 2011), was a makeshift village where hundreds of protesters of different nationalities, races, and ethnicities appropriated it for the purpose of building awareness of class inequities, corporate greed, and the abuses perpetrated by late-stage capitalism. The Occupy encampment in Zuccotti Park included community medical outposts, lectures and talks by speakers related to the cause, and, notably, a library, aptly named the "Peoples Library" (Lingel, 2012). Lingel, one of numerous librarians who volunteered at the People's Library, noted the puzzled reactions of passersby when observing the People's Library. She quotes a frustrated librarian's post on the People's Library website as illustrative of a disconnect between librarians' understanding of the purpose of a public library and their profession with those of some in the general public: "One of my least favorite questions ... is, 'WHY IS THERE A LIBRARY?' To this I say, 'Why is there a food station?' These are basic necessities ... THERE IS A LIBRARY BECAUSE WE ARE HERE AND KNOWLEDGE IS NECESSARY FOR SURVIVAL" (Marisa, 2011, as quoted in Lingel, 2012; emphasis in original).

Lingel (2012), asserts that librarianship is rooted in activism on behalf of social justice efforts through collection development. Since the 1960's, she points out, librarians have demonstrated a strong commitment to curating collections of books, pamphlets, zines, etc. and making these accessible to marginalized groups seeking representation, knowledge, and support

for their experience. This, at numerous points of time, and for many different social groups, has

arguably been a political act in itself. Through collection development efforts, librarians have

built trust with the communities they serve.

Data from the Pew Research Center (2016) show that public libraries rate significantly

higher in public trust for access to trustworthy information, higher than news outlets,

government, health care providers, and even family and friends. A majority of American adults

expressing a belief that public libraries could help them find trustworthy information remained

stable the following year, with an overwhelming majority of millennials polled--87%--reporting

a high degree of trust in public libraries (Pew Research Center, 2017). The evidence that we, as a

nation, possess a valuable, untapped supply of trusted Third Space in our public libraries staffed

by willing activist educators (aka librarians) during a time of decreasing trust in American

institutions and leaders (Pew Research Center, 2019), overall, is compelling. It appears that

public libraries can be our national Third Space for civic engagement; and it seems that the

Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS) thought so.

"Librarians Transforming Communities" Initiative

In 2013 through 2016, the IMLS partnered with the American Library Association (ALA)

and the Harwood Institute through "Libraries Transforming Communities" (LTC) initiative to

engage in capacity building and training for library professionals in civic dialogue and

community engagement. Susan Hildreth (2013), who served as Director of IMLS for this period,

recognized not only that public libraries are "community anchors," but that they serve as places

where human capital can be built through access to career counseling, digital communications,

health and financial literacy. She noted that despite the fact that many in library leadership

positions felt public libraries often do (and should) participate in civic engagement activities with

their communities, libraries were not considered active players in the civic engagement field

(p.44). Echoing Elmborg (2011) and Bhaba (1994), Rich Harwood, founder and CEO of the

Harwood Institute and a partner in the LTC initiative, observes "Libraries are uniquely

positioned at the heart of the local, campus, and school communities...libraries are 'boundary

spanning' organizations, organizations that can span boundaries and dividing lines to bring

people together, incubate new ideas, hold up a mirror to the entire community, and build true

collaborations" (Hildreth, 2013, p.32).

LTC (2016) was a broad transformative effort in that it undertook broad institutional

change within the ALA and a wide-scale reframing of libraries' collective institutional missions

from spaces and services to engaged partnership with community members (American Library

Association, 2016). It involved the Harwood method of "turning outward" on two levels: to the

communities' libraries serve work with *and* to ALA members. While the central objectives of

LTC include important shifts toward intra-engagement for the organization and enhanced public

messaging to communicate a reinvigorated commitment of libraries' roles in their communities,

the objectives centering on civic and community engagement are more pertinent for the purposes

of this review.

"Intensive Cohort Work" involved library leaders and community partners from ten sites

in various locations across the country who received training, support, and tools to apply

community engagement strategies for developing sustainable programming (American Library

Association, 2016a). The goal being that these participants would not only be successful as

"agents of change" in their communities, but would serve as exemplars and mentors for library

colleagues across the nation. "Scalable learning", the other community-focused objective, is

represented by the LTC's website containing a "rich array of resources and information for the

library field's long-term use" (American Library Association, 2016a, p.ii). The website tools

serve as resource infrastructure for community engagement which may be scaffolded according

to program objectives, phases of partnership development, and level of engagement experience.

  Major findings, assessed by third party evaluator New Knowledge Organization, Ltd.,

with respect to both objectives are promising (American Library Association, 2016). Cohort

members displayed a strong commitment to authentic forms of community engagement practice

and demonstrated a propensity to share their learning knowledge with and encourage their

colleagues to adopt community engagement strategies. Importantly, they expressed a vision of

their libraries as change agents in their communities. In terms of scalable learning, the LTC

website received just under 25,000 views and 10,700 individual downloads of tools and materials

over the lifespan of the initiative. Moreover, it was evidenced that library leaders in the cohorts

adapted them periodically in response to input gained through cohort meetings and library

conferences. These results suggest that public libraries possess capacity for community and civic

engagement. The ALA continues to provide ongoing support and funding for civic engagement

projects in libraries through available grants (American Library Association, 2021).

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

  The theoretical frameworks informing and supporting this project include multiple

theories of learning addressing the age and dispositions of the participants, human psychology,

and, in general, includes Democratic Education, Adult Learning Theory, and Social Learning

Theory. Undergirding all of them are Allport's (1974) intergroup contact hypothesis and Fast's

Empowerment Theory (2016). Allport's hypothesis is central to understanding why and how

civic dialogue is utilized to achieve a critical aim of social justice education: enhanced

understanding across differences. Empowerment--individually and collectively--is the idealized

endpoint for social justice education as it leads to greater degrees of the self-efficacy and agency

necessary to enact positive change. Lastly, intergroup dialogue in public library spaces has

particular intersections with Bourdieu's theories of the Forms of Capital (1986) with regard to

how social, cultural, and institutionalized forms of capital may be produced. Gittell and Vidal

(1998) extended Bourdieu's and Putnam's (1995a; 1995b) theories to produce a conceptual

understanding that identifies and analyzes the mechanisms through which social capital is

produced. The learning theories share many elements and complement each other harmoniously

on multiple levels. This theoretical framework will inform the conceptual design of the project,

along with selection and stages for utilizing various tools and strategies.

　　　Allport (1974) made the distinction that the quality and execution of intergroup contact

was paramount in order to get "beneath the surface" of our differences. Thus, what Allport

termed "casual contact" —living and intermingling day-to-day in the same city or town as people

of other races or religions—is a form of "superficial" contact such that it would not provide the

meaningful interactions necessary for truly getting to know and understand people different from

ourselves. Allport acknowledged the importance of pluralistic communities for creating

enhanced relations amongst different social groups. Familiarity, he demonstrated through his

interrogation of the literature associated with race relations of the time, did indeed breed comfort

across differences. However, he held, more frequent contact ("acquaintance") was merely a pre-

condition for laying the groundwork necessary for breaking down prejudices such that they

would alter prejudicial thinking in the long term. Allport provided compelling evidence that long

term benefits of engaging groups across differences were possible when the engagement

involved the "pursuit of common objectives": "[O]nly the type of contact that leads people to *do*

things together is likely to result in changed attitudes" (Allport, 1974, p.276). Moreover, he

found that "goodwill contact" (e.g., neighborhood committees undertaking "community relations" without authentic objectives and intentional, thoughtful processes), was ineffectual where bridging group divides is concerned.

Similar to "casual contact", Allport (1974) found the "informational approach" to dispelling stereotyped thinking and historical misunderstandings about groups, to be more of a foundational premise for more active types of engagement between groups. Lectures, film, and books presenting accurate historical facts were important, but did not go far enough to allow agent groups to "place themselves in the shoes" of those in target groups. Information transmitted was often easily forgotten, subject to distortions through protective, cognitive processes, or easily siloed in the brain due to decontextualization from life experiences. In short, Allport (1974) found that meaningful intergroup contact yielded long term learning when it incorporates hands-on activities and simulations. His research demonstrated that role playing, simulations, team efforts, community projects, and exploratory discussions were more effective at building empathy and creating new thought paradigms--essentially, the very techniques and applications we find in theories of Democratic Education and sound social justice education today.

Allport (1974), like Zuñiga, et al. (2018), hold that discomfort is central to the process of unlearning bias. Facilitators, according to Allport, should expect to observe an "unsettling effect" in agent participants. He determined that this was both a logical and necessary reaction considering participants' prior epistemological paradigms, attached to family relationships and learned over many years, would be called into question during intergroup contact experiences. According to Allport, this discomfort is necessary because "people who are aware of, and ashamed of, their prejudices, are well on their way to eliminating them" (1974, p.508). The

principle of discomfort as a necessary part of the intergroup dialogue process informs the

conceptualization of spaces for intergroup dialogue as *brave spaces* (Arao & Clemens, 2013)*,* as

opposed to "safe" spaces. The default language used to indicate the atmosphere and climate

social justice educators endeavor to create for intergroup dialogues has been the latter. However,

this is misleading terminology.

Arao and Clemens (2013) advocate distinguishing intergroup settings as brave spaces.

Courage is necessary for approaching the phenomenon of discomfort--sometimes referred to as

cognitive dissonance in its more extreme expression--for both agent *and* target groups, but for

different reasons respectively. Arao and Clemens (2013) observe that there can be a tendency for

agent groups to invoke safety to enable "denialism" and, essentially avoid discomfort. They

argue that this can have a detrimental impact to target groups by reinforcing systems of power

and oppression.

At the heart of social justice education lies *Empowerment Theory* and the praxis of

democratic education. Empowerment Theory (Fast, 2016) offers a process where power sharing,

collaboration, and consciousness development are emphasized and encouraged. It is focused on

all levels of a person's experience—intrapersonal, interpersonal, and community. In educational

settings, the empowered student's critical consciousness is awakened to allow for reflection and

action (Freire, 2000). Freire's concept of a democratic education is that of a liberating process,

whereby students are active, co-creators of their learning experiences. He asserts that raising

critical consciousness and breaking the cycle of oppression should be the central aims of

education, and that this process is required of both the oppressed and the oppressor in equal

collaboration to root out injustice. For the oppressor, this requires continual self-examination; for

the oppressed, careful avoidance of dehumanizing themselves. Freire's vision for Democratic

Education emphasizes equitable dialogue structures, critical reflection, and active learning. "Conversation," according to hooks (2003), or "talking to exchange ideas is the central location of democratic education" (p.44). For both Freire and hooks, the student-teacher relationship is of primary importance. As opposed to what Freire refers to as the "banking model" of education, Democratic Education seeks to provide conditions whereby teacher and student co-create meaning and knowledge. Likewise, hooks (2003) deems the banking model "authoritarian" in that it subjugates learners, thwarting their freedom. For social justice and Democratic Education, then, intergroup dialogue is a "critical-dialogical praxis" as it incorporates both a critical interrogation of oppressive forces and social conditions through a vehicle of communication aimed at consciousness raising (Zuñiga, Lopez, & Ford, 2018, p.646).

Principles of Democratic Education and best practices for civic dialogue and deliberation are aligned with the central tenets of adult learning theory, or *andragogy* (Knowles, 1978) in crucial ways. Knowles's bases his theory of andragogy on several major assumptions, or conditions: Changes in self-concept, the role of experience, readiness to learn, and orientation to learning. Adults have formed their identities and are self-directed, hence teaching methods where condescension or belittling are perceived by adult students will be unsuccessful. Adult learners, according to Knowles, have solidified their learning styles and bring their life experiences with them to learning contexts making them more "highly differentiated" than children (p.56). Teaching methods must account for these differences. In agreement, hooks (2003), as many social justice educators do, states that democratic educators value pluralism. This, she contends, is connected to the "fact" of learners' diverse experiences. Engaging others to bring their diverse experiential backgrounds to bear in the educational context, she holds, is vital to the learning process in the democratic classroom.

Andragogy postulates that adult learners' "readiness to learn" is dependent on their need or desire for direct experience and application of concepts, rather than their developmental paradigm. Knowles (1978) finds adults possess a problem-focused orientation to learning, whereas children's learning is primarily focused through a subject-orientation. Echoing Knowles, McCoy (2013) stressed the use of particular methods and optimal conditions for adult participants engaging in deliberative dialogue: experiential opportunities, problem-solving, and a discernible, relevant value (i.e., practical). Provoking critical reflection and increasing understanding across differences through intergroup dialogue carries an inherently social component illuminated by Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971).

Bandura (1978) found that "attentional processes" played a large role in learned behaviors and attitudes. The people with whom individuals associate with the most often define our learning through repeated observations. Attentional processes hold significance when considering intergroup contact since the contact experience is intentionally, fundamentally different; intergroup dialogue is purposefully constructed so that participants represent a heterogeneous mix of social groups. The dialogue experience, thus, grants the opportunity to *unlearn*. One's background, or power positionality, Bandura observed, may inhibit or disinhibit what is said or done in a shared space. Environment and behavior, according to Bandura, interact to reinforce learning, such that, "Behavior partly creates the environment and the resultant environment, in turn, influences the behavior" (Badura, 1978, p.40). If we consider Bandura's theory, we will apply not only care and thoughtfulness to the environment or setting for intergroup dialogue, but also to prescriptions or "ground rules" for interacting within it, while considering group power dynamics.

Bourdieu (1986) differentiates between two different, intangible forms of capital for individuals which he argues influence one's status and social mobility through access to opportunities and power. Social capital is dependent on a person's social networks, or 'who you know'. One's social network includes both relationships inherited (familial) and those developed over time (friendships, colleagues, teachers/mentors). Social capital is generally shared between people within the same networks. Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu, can be described as what you know and what you have. This is often referred to as "human capital" (skills, expertise, knowledge). Bourdieu identifies three forms of cultural capital: Embodied, Objectified, and Institutional. *Embodied* cultural capital confers social prestige and influence; some examples would include comportment (demeanor, dialectical speech), exposure to travel and world cultures, knowledge, and taste. *Objectifed* cultural capital consists of material belongings. As such, it confers social status and prestige. Status symbols such as luxury brands of cars, clothing, and homes fall into this category. *Institutional* capital can be held by individuals--through credentials and qualifications associated with institutions (universities, medical establishment, the Law profession), or it can be accumulated by institutions through the work of their associated professionals. When considering their own work in community development, Gittell and Vidal (1998) identified the mechanisms through which social capital is produced: *bonding, bridging, and linking*.

Through their observations, and subsequent naming of the actions involved with relationship building (i.e., generating social capital), practitioners in the civic, social work, and community engagement fields have the tools to empirically test which situations/settings and activities can aid in the service of building social capital in communities. Gittell and Vidal's (1998) definitions and concepts will be highly useful for the purpose of this project, as they were

for Svendsen (2013) in establishing how public libraries can be "breeding grounds for bonding,

bridging, and institutional capital" (p.69).

The Case for Combining Civic Dialogue and Public Libraries

As discussed, a significant body of research establishes the history and centrality of

public libraries as particularly invested in preserving and enhancing civil rights and, by

extension, democratic principles. The hallmarks of Democratic Professionalism, as outlined by

Dzur (2018), are reflected in the outcomes of *Libraries Transforming Communities* initiative

(2016) demonstrating engagement capacity, as well as the numerous, ongoing resources and

training made available via ALA's Center for Civic Life (2021b) and the Public Library

Association (2021). These dynamics, in concert with the established history of librarian activism,

suggest potential for libraries to operate as Third Spaces. Further, they present a compelling case

for investment in public libraries' present and future capacity to facilitate dialogue and

deliberation to produce intercultural understanding--publicly and professionally. Historical and

scholarly evidence demonstrate that civic (or *intergroup)* dialogue is an effective tool to promote

increased understanding across differences, and librarians have demonstrated a capacity for this

work. However, while evidence of public libraries' capacity to serve as civic infrastructure

abounds online and in grey literature, scholarly investigation of the impact of libraries as

institutional partners for social justice education, through community and civic engagement, is

woefully lacking.

The design and execution of this project are informed by years of learning theories,

insights from social theorists and social work on the formation of social capital, and the praxis of

social justice and democratic educators. "Brave spaces" will be a concept practiced and explored

in this workshop, such that through our courage to engage in civic dialogue for social justice we

create and occupy libraries as Third Spaces. Best practices that consider power dynamics, structure, and ground rules for engaging people in intergroup contact scenarios will guide the structure and activity choice for the project.

In order to instruct future research and praxis for civic dialogue in public libraries, the project seeks to explore the potential for libraries to facilitate civic engagement and collaboratively create resources to support and encourage the development of "brave spaces" in public libraries.

Project Plan

This project will bring together public librarians from varied geographic regions to explore understandings of public librarianship in the context of civic engagement and Democratic Professionalism through educational materials around civic dialogue, public libraries' history of social justice efforts, empowerment, and social capital. The workshop will feature a structured dialogue and activities focused on librarians' experiences facilitating civic dialogue and civic engagement, in general. While many public librarians are currently involved with numerous forms of social justice education, civic and community engagement, these are not documented in the scholarly literature. Moreover, public libraries as settings for this work are not often identified as civic engagement infrastructure by prominent scholars of civic engagement and discourse. Deeper understandings of librarians as practitioners of civic engagement and their perspectives on the utility of civic dialogue based on their experiences, along with perceived barriers to execution, will lend crucial insights to determining public libraries' capacity for occupying a Third Space conducive to building understanding and action across heterogenous social groups.

Situation Statement

　　If the United States is to achieve progress on matters from health care, to housing,

education, the environment, and a host of other social problems, residents must find ways to talk

to one another. We need pathways to convergence on issues that will not be resolved by

politicians and the power-play of divisive politics. Political divides in the United States are

growing increasingly wider (Pew Research Center, 2017). Pew Research Center has conducted

research in this area since 1994, and finds the gap today between opinions of Democrats and

Republicans wider than ever on pressing social matters such as government aid for economically

disadvantaged people (71% of Democrats polled were in favor, and 24% of Republicans were in

favor), perceptions of racial discrimination as a major force hindering social mobility (64% of

Democrats polled agreed, while 14% of Republicans polled agreed), and the belief that

immigrants' hard work, unique talents and skills add value to our nation (84% of Democrats

polled felt so, while 42% of Republicans polled felt so). This same study found that the partisan

divide cuts across all demographic categories and, moreover, has widened to such an extent that

fewer and fewer Americans possess a plurality of viewpoints. Instead, people are becoming more

entrenched in opposing ideological encampments, and the rate of this divergence has been

especially rapid since 2006. Pew Research Center (2019) later found most Americans found it

difficult to engage in political discussions, with half stating they find speaking with someone

holding different political opinions to them "stressful and frustrating". Yet, the same study

demonstrated a majority disliked the overall tenor of political debate and public discourse,

finding that it was less respectful (85%), less fact-based (76%), and less focused on actual issues

(60%). Most striking are results from a recent national survey that found 43% of Americans

believe that a civil war is likely in the near future (Gale and West, 2021). Some of us remain optimistic.

The Public Religion Research Institute (2021) found that 66% of Americans expressed feeling optimistic that people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds have the ability to come together to address our nation's problems. That optimism wanes, however, when political party is the variable targeted for overcoming differences; 59% of the same sample expressed pessimism that people of differing political affiliations could come together to work towards solving the country's problems. If politics and political rhetoric present formidable obstacles to social progress, we need to employ alternative structures to bridge our divides.

Civic dialogue offers the potential to build awareness and find common ground across differences and can be a vehicle for both strengthening social movements and generating critical consciousness. These are the precursors for building solidarity and partnerships for empowerment and social justice that are at the heart of community engagement. Public libraries and librarians occupy a unique and promising position as they possess knowledge of their communities, higher trust than other institutions in American society (Pew Research Center, 2017), and Third Spaces infused with civic missions.

Goals

- Goal 1: Participants will understand the concept of the Third Space, and its relevance to civic engagement.

- Goal 2: Participants will have a greater understanding of the concept and forms of social capital, and an increased interest in identifying how their engagement work may play a role in its production.

- Goal 3: Participants will walk away with a deeper understanding of the history of both social justice efforts by librarians, and civic dialogue as a tool for furthering social justice efforts.

- Goal 4: Participants will leave with an awareness of common barriers to facilitate civic dialogue at their institutions and develop an interest in seeking solutions to these.

Target Audience

My target audience is public librarians for several reasons. Public librarians have been the beneficiaries of training in methods of civic dialogue and deliberation methods, among other forms of community engagement. Despite their efforts with civic engagement in their communities, neither insights nor the results of those efforts have been formally documented. By engaging with public librarians around their experiences with civic dialogue and deliberation, and the extent to which they characterize public libraries as Third Spaces, I will be able to gain needed insights about how the profession sees the role of public libraries in civic engagement. Finally, through presenting my learning about Third Spaces, the history of public librarians' involvement in social justice efforts, and the potential for communities to build mutual understandings, social capital, and coalitions through civic dialogue I hope to offer public librarians new insights, justifications, and resources for advocating and building support for this work in the communities they serve.

Incentives for Engagement

This project will offer public librarians a low-stakes, judgment-free space to share their thoughts around the role of public libraries along with their insights and learning from civic engagement work experiences. Providing this space will also grant public librarians with opportunities to both network with other library practitioners of civic dialogue and learn from

each other's experiences. I will provide information that supports their efforts in these areas

which they may, in turn, utilize to advocate for more and deeper civic engagement efforts with

supervisors and board members, along with resources they can turn to for further developing

civic engagement efforts at their respective institutions.

Crafting a Clear Message

Public libraries can help bridge our divides! We as a nation are experiencing deep

divisions and lack of political will to address inequities and environmental issues that deeply

impact people's livelihoods and quality of life. A recent Pew Research Center report (2021,

October 13) found that Americans see our society as having much deeper conflicts based on race,

ethnicity, religion, and geography than do people other "advanced economies", while the

nonpartisan Public Religion Research Institute (2021, November 1) found that a staggering one

out of five Americans now feel violence may be necessary to "save our country". Intentional

civic dialogue, not debate, in Third Spaces, can serve as a civic engagement tool for cultivating

understanding and empathy across differences. Public libraries possess inherently democratic

missions, and staff committed to equitable access to resources and the means for self-

empowerment. Can they serve as civic infrastructure needed for building a dialogue movement

that helps build bridges amongst community members resulting in solidarity and community

action?

Outreach Methods

Through a combination of networking with former and newly established contacts within

public librarianship, emailing and posting to listservs (*very* popular amongst librarians) that cater

to public librarians, I hope to secure a participant sample of 10 to 12 public librarians for my

workshop.

- Networking: I have already begun the process of outreach through meeting with, and inviting, a children's librarian at Haverhill Public Library (HPL), to attend my workshop. He has offered to share information about the workshop with his professional network of public librarians spread out through New England. Additionally, HPL is a member of the Libraries Working Toward Social Justice (LTSW), a collective of public librarians in the Merrimack Valley.

- Additionally, through my fellowship work at Merrimack, I have begun building relationships with both the director and assistant director of Lawrence Free Public Library (LPL). LPL is also a member of LTSW. Between my contacts at both nearby institutions, I expect to be able to discuss my project with leadership at LTSW.

- Email & Listserv Outreach: I plan to write and send a compelling invitation to potential participants via email listservs and direct emails to identified, potential participants with an interest in the topic of my research. Those I plan on reaching out to will include, but are not limited to:

  o Email to: Librarians Working Toward Social Justice.

  o Post to Massachusetts Library System listserv ("all regions" listserv, covering all of Massachusetts).

  o Email to [Name Redacted], Leader on the Massachusetts Library System Consulting & Training Services Team; Publisher of MLS Community Engagement Blog (read widely by public librarians in both Massachusetts and New England).

  o Post to American Library Association's Social Responsibilities Roundtable Listserv (national membership and readership).

The requirement for participants is that they must be public librarians. All levels of experience with civic dialogue are welcome to participate. This workshop will not be recorded or open to the public due to the need for preserving confidentiality and assuring participants the space to freely express themselves.

Responsibilities Chart

| NAME	ORGANIZATION OR AFFILIATION	RESPONSIBILITIES	CONTACT INFORMATION
Laura Bishop	Merrimack College	Project Lead	bishopla@ merrimack.edu
[Name Redacted] Leader on the Massachusetts Library System Consulting & Training Services Team; Publisher of MLS Community Engagement Blog	Massachusetts Library System	Share information about my workshop via her Social Media networks and Community Engagement Blog (crucial to participant recruitment efforts)	Email address
[Name Redacted] Children's Librarian	Haverhill Public Library; Libraries Working Toward Social Justice Consortium (LWTSJ)	Will share information about my workshop via his professional network and his colleagues in the LWTSJ consortium.	Email Address
[Name Redacted] Head Librarian and my supervisor	Merrimack College	Sounding board for project plan, agenda, and activities! Take observational notes during the workshop.	Email Address
[Name Redacted] Librarian and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Liaison for McQuade Library	Merrimack College	Assist with monitoring chat for Q&A, tech troubleshooting, and take observational notes during the workshop.	Email address
[Name Redacted] Director of School Library	Columbia Grammar & Preparatory School	Assist with monitoring chat for Q&A, tech troubleshooting, and take observational notes during the workshop.	Email address

Tools/Measures to Assess Progress

Measurements to assess the effectiveness of this workshop will include responses to electronic activities (Jamboard, Google Documents), documented observations from a structured dialogue, captured responses from Zoom chat and Q&A tools, and documented observations from break-out groups. Data collected from these aforementioned modalities will be utilized to assess and analyze experiences and thoughts of workshop participants. Lastly, a post-workshop evaluation form will be emailed to all participants immediately following the event. Feedback from this evaluation form will be instrumental in assessing the degree to which the goals of the workshop were met.

Implementation Timeline

January 2022	• Week of Jan.3rd, finalize flyer advertising the workshop • Weeks of Jan.10th, Jan.17th & Jan. 24th: Recruitment push via listserv posts, emails, and following up with contacts in the public library profession. Field responses and answer questions from potential participants as needed. • Connect with [Name Redacted] for dialogue advising as needed via electronic communications • Design activities and plan dialogue structure • By Jan. 31st: Confirm all participants; construct a rough draft of workshop agenda and presentation slides
February 2022	• Feb. 1-4: Refine Workshop Agenda and share with [Name Redacted] for constructive criticism. • By Feb. 5th: If needed, complete 2nd round of recruitment • By Feb. 11th: Finalize activities • By Feb. 16th: Finalize Workshop agenda and lesson plan • By Feb. 24th: Complete all needed slides, and Jamboard for dialogue portion of workshop

March 2022	• Workshop date: Thursday, 3/3/22, 6pm-8pm.
	• If conducting workshop on 3/3, have all reflections and observations from the live session documented by 3/10; if conducting workshop on 3/10 have all reflections and observations from the live session documented by 3/13.
	• Due by 3/21: Complete analysis of qualitative feedback from evaluation forms
	• Due by 3/25: Draft analysis of all electronic activity participation/feedback
	• Due by 4/4: Draft conclusions/discussions/suggestions for future research and exploration
	• Due by 4/5: Complete all references, charts/graphs, and appendices.
April 2022	• 4/6: Full capstone draft due
	• 4/7-4/26: Editing and corrections as needed
	• 4/27: Submit final capstone paper for publication

Logical Framework
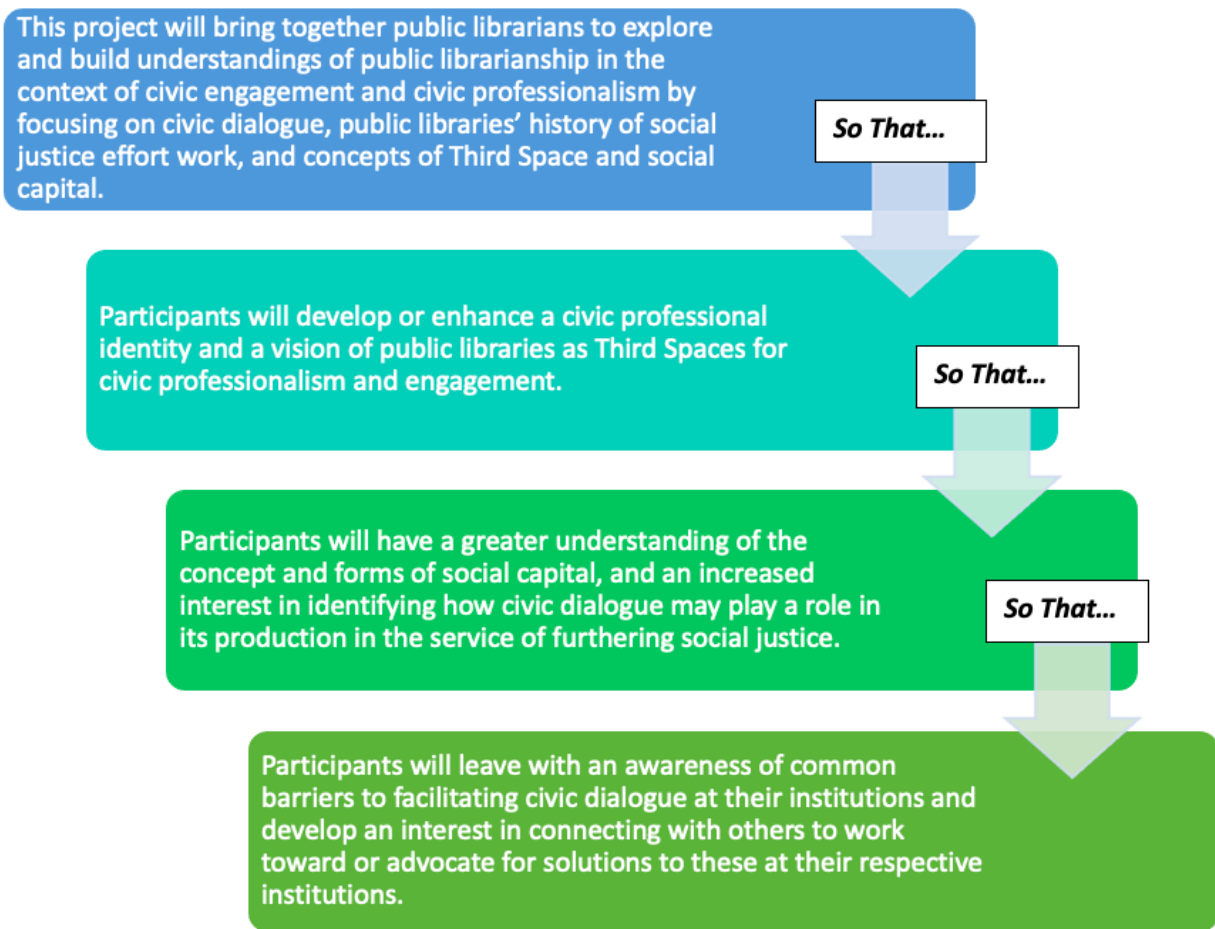
Methodology

This online workshop was held over Zoom in March 2022 and focused on bringing together public librarians from varied geographic regions to explore understandings of public librarianship in the context of civic engagement and Democratic Professionalism through educational materials around civic dialogue, public libraries' history of social justice efforts, Third Space theory, and social capital. The workshop was two hours in length and featured content delivery, interactive components, and a structured World Café dialogue simulation centered on public libraries and librarians as settings and facilitators for civic dialogue.

Participants

Recruitment for participants took place online via several library listservs and email sent to a Merrimack Valley consortium of librarians known as Libraries Working Toward Social Justice (LWTSJ), to reach both a local and national audience. Listserv outreach included the "all regions" group for Massachusetts Library System, and the Social Responsibilities Roundtable (a listserv with national membership and a division of the American Library Association).

The target audience for this workshop was public librarians due to the focus of the research questions on public libraries as possible civic infrastructure for building a dialogue movement. This professional designation was the sole demographic requirement for recruitment. While librarians with experience facilitating any number of civic dialogue forms were expressly encouraged to attend, such experience was not a prerequisite for participation. A national and regional audience was sought to recruit librarians from varied types of libraries: urban, suburban, and rural.

Materials

The materials utilized for this workshop included products specifically designed for activities and content delivery. These include: a Google slideshow (see Appendix A), two Google documents for shared activities participation (see Appendices B and C), and a set of three Google Apps Jamboards (see Appendix D). Recruitment posts to the listservs, as well as the outreach email to members of LWTSJ, included an overview of the workshop topic and goals along with a Google form that librarians could complete to express their interest in participating. Presentation slides were created for content delivery using Google Slides. A facilitator-created annotated agenda (see Appendix E) which included debrief prompts organized by topic and activity was shared with assistant facilitators for the purpose of simplifying the documentation of their observations of attendee responses and reactions. In the interest of expediting a smooth experience for assistant facilitators, a Google folder filled with directions and materials was shared with only them in advance of the workshop. These will now be subsequently outlined.

A "Parking Lot" was created using the Google App, Jamboard, a link to which was shared at the outset of the workshop for the purposes of capturing reactions of some participants in real time, and as means for documenting questions to respond to after the workshop. Jamboard allows users the ability to post virtual sticky notes; the purpose of a Parking Lot allows a space for attendees to document thoughts and questions that go unaddressed due to time constraints. For the workshop's opening activity, participants were given a series of three questions designed in accordance with the Appreciative Inquiry framework.

For activities one (*Third Spaces in You Life)* and two (*Your Library's Assets)*, a Google doc was shared with all participants to fill out collaboratively in the associated breakout sessions. Activity 3, the World Café Simulation, was the final interactive component. Workshop assistants

were provided with directions for the simulation and the "ground rules" for dialogue. A "Table

Hosting Guide", adapted from the "Café to Go" (World Cafe Community Foundation, 2015), a

reference guide for café hosts, and the book published by World Cafe founders (Brown and

Isaacs, 2005)*,* was created and shared with workshop assistants in advance of the workshop as

they would be assuming the role of "table hosts". For the purposes of this simulation, virtual

"cafe tables" were created for the participants using the Google app, Jamboard. Each "table" or

slide was designed in accordance with World Cafe's concept of "creating hospitable space" such

that each board contains a photographic background depicting a natural, aesthetically pleasing

scene. The essential questions for each round of the World Cafe dialogue were posted on each of

the tables, as were the ground rules for conversations.

Following the simulation, the Jamboards representing each of the "tables" served as a

gallery through which participants and the host walked through to collectively observe and

discuss themes, patterns, connections, and related questions. Lastly, a post-workshop evaluation

created with Google Forms was shared at the end of the workshop. Participants were encouraged

to fill out an optional section of the form where they could opt in to be added to a contact sheet

where they could share their contact info with other participants interested in keeping in touch

and connecting in the future. The day after the workshop, the contact sheet was shared via email

with all participants who indicated an interest in connecting with one another.

Procedure

After welcoming participants, conducting brief introductions and outlining the purpose of

the workshop, participants were advised they would be split into breakout rooms, in pairs, to

conduct short, three-question *Appreciative Inquiry* (AI) interviews for approximately seven

minutes adapted from AI best-practices methodology (Cooperrider Center at Champlain College,

2022). AI was developed by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivasta in 1987 as an approach to organizational development (Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2022). It is a strengths-based approach to improving leadership practices and positive change. Through positive ideation, AI empowers nonprofit organizations to develop strategic plans, shift culture, and create forward momentum on large-scale initiatives (Benedictine University, 2017). Participants were instructed to take notes during the activity as they may wish to return or reflect on their answers later on during the workshop, or afterwards. One of my assistants pasted the AI questions into the chat as I set up and opened the breakout rooms. The purpose of this twist on the "ice-breaker" activity was to allow participants the space to connect with their strengths, values, and perceived benefits of their work related to civic engagement. Moreover, it granted participants practice with an approach to building organizational capacity for implementing change by focusing them on what they want to grow more of at their libraries. Following this introductory activity, participants were returned to the group at large for a quick debrief about the activity led by instructor provided prompts.

Following the opening activity, I launched the content of the workshop with a brief overview of librarians as defenders of civil rights and social justice activists. From there, we transitioned to Dzur's (2019) principles of *Democratic Professionalism.* These were discussed as informing the civic mission and identity of librarians. We then shifted from the civic missions of librarianship to libraries as settings or *spaces* for civic engagement with an introduction to Third Space theory. After introducing participants to theorists' conception of Third Spaces and Libraries as Third Spaces, I introduced activity number one–*Third Spaces in Your Life*–by modeling a description of a Third Space I frequently utilize: my local café. I described why I utilize this space, the assets and resources I find there, and what I derive from utilizing it. I then

explained to participants that they would be split into three groups for five minutes (for Activity 1) to complete a shared Google document where they would collaboratively create a list of Third Spaces in their lives, what they offer, and their perceived purposes. After this quick activity, participants were brought back to the group at large and asked to share out any notable spaces or purposes served by these spaces, the meaning or purpose they serve in their lives, and why they matter.

It was then time to return to content delivery and delve into our second topical section: social capital, community assets, and asset mapping. We reviewed the basic concepts underpinning social capital, as defined in the sociological context, by Robert Putnam (1995). I presented examples of social capital, and the three types of social capital formation: bonding, bridging, and linking along with findings by Svendsen (2013) whose findings suggested all three of these modes of social capital creation were present in his study of 62 rural libraries in Denmark. This discussion provided a smooth transition to the subsequent subtopics of this section: the principles of Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and community asset mapping. I reviewed the central principles of ABCD in addition to the five types of resources for consideration when assessing community assets. We reviewed several samples of community asset maps before moving on to activity number two: asset mapping for participants' libraries.

For activity number two, participants were again broken into small groups to fill out the tables on a shared Google document with their library's assets and brainstorm how these might be harnessed to allow their libraries to operate as, or begin cultivating, Third Spaces. After five minutes with this exercise, I brought the participants back to the main room to share any notable observations or thoughts that came up and ask relevant questions.

Our final activity, a simulation of the World Café model for civic dialogue, required me to provide an overview of the purpose, utility, and underpinning principles of this dialogue modality. I also reviewed the logistics of how it would work for our purposes, the ground rules, and the roles of all involved which included my workshop assistants ("table hosts"), participants ("guests"), and myself ("main host"). Participants circulated from "tables" (Jamboard slides) one through three another in ascending order, as did the table hosts. Each round–or time at the tables–lasted approximately seven minutes. Each table carried with it a new discussion question with which the "guests" were to engage. After the third round, all participants were returned to the main room to reflect on the experience as a whole group. To facilitate this, I walked us through each of the tables, prompting participants to note any patterns, themes, connections, or highlight important questions shining through our collective, cross-pollinated ideation efforts. At some points, clarifying questions were asked in order to unpack comments when necessary.

In closing, I thanked all the participants for their thoughtful engagement and asked them to fill out the workshop evaluation survey (see Appendix F) that we shared in the chat box, emphasizing how important their feedback would be to my learning. Participants were informed of an item on the form where they could opt in to having their name and email placed on a contact sheet to be shared with other participants wishing to connect in the future.

Once the workshop concluded, I gathered all of the information from the activity observations and feedback as well as the post-event evaluation forms and entered them into a Google Sheet for analysis. Using a concurrent mixed method approach, I analyzed the post-event data quantitatively for descriptive information and the observations, activity feedback, and open-ended survey responses qualitatively for themes and reoccurring concepts.

Results

There were 33 registrants, 15 workshop participants, and 9 evaluation survey responses.

Post Event Evaluation

The evaluation survey was administered through a Google Form shared with participants through the Zoom chat toward the end of the workshop, and again in a follow up email the next morning along with materials and resources for further learning about the topics explored. The survey included both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection. All 9 respondents identified as female. Of the respondents, 5 identified themselves as White (55.5%), 1 (11.1%) identified as Black, 1 (11.1%) identified as Black American and Afro-Latina, 1 (11.1%) identified as White and Latinx, and 1 (11.1%) opted not to self-identify their race or ethnicity. In terms of the respondents' years of experience in library settings, 2 (22.2%) respondents indicated they possess 0-2 years of experience work in library settings, 3 (33.3%) indicated they have 5-10 years of work experience work in library settings, 1 (11.1%) indicated they have worked 11-15 years in library settings, 1 (11.1%) indicated they have worked 16-20 years in library settings, and 2 (22.2%) indicated having worked more than 20 years in library settings.

Reporting on their level of experience with facilitating civic dialogue, 3 (33.3%) respondents rated themselves as "beginners", and 6 (66.6%) rated themselves as "intermediate". When rating their level of experience with civic engagement programming, in general, 1 (11.1%) respondent rated themselves as "advanced", 4 (44.4%) respondents rated themselves as "beginners", and 4 (44.4%) respondents rated themselves as "intermediate".

Figure 1: Experience Level with Civic Dialogue (n=9)
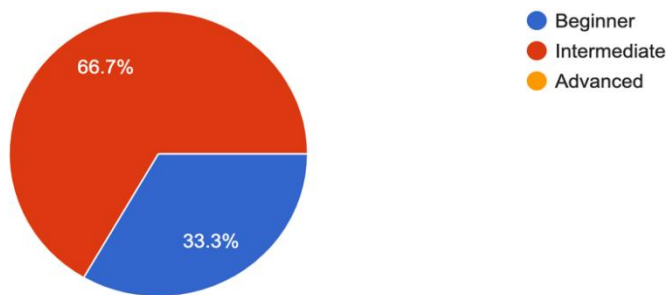
In gauging their respective communities' comfort level with civic dialogue, on a scale of 1 (very uncomfortable) to 5 (very comfortable), 1 (11.1%) respondent ranked their community at a level 2 (uncomfortable), 2 (22.2%) respondents ranked their communities at level 4 (comfortable), and 6 (66.6%) respondents ranked their communities at level 3, or a mixture of comfort and discomfort. When assessing the overall political orientations of their communities, 1 respondent selected "Liberal" (11.1%), 1 respondent indicated they were "unsure/still figuring it out" (11.1%), and 7 respondents (77.7%) identified the communities they serve as "Moderate/Mix of conservative and liberal leaning constituents".

When rating the workshop, overall, 3 (33.3%) respondents gave it a rating of "excellent", 4 (44.4%) respondents rated it as "very good", 1 respondent (11.1%) rated it as "good", and 1 respondent (11.1%) gave it a rating of "fair".

Figure 2: Overall, How Would You Rate This Workshop? (n=9)
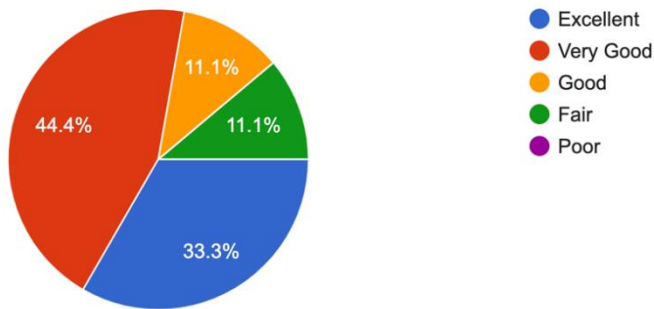
Respondents were then asked a series of questions asking them to rate the various

components of the workshop by ranking their level of agreement with a series of 13 statements

pertaining to clarity of presentation of concepts and content; relevance of the content to their

work and interests; their identification as "Democratic Professionals" and alignment with the

principles of "Democratic Professionalism"; the degree to which the tone set at the outset of the

workshop was "hospitable" and allowed for "open engagement"; the degree to which activities

aided understanding of content; the degree to which workshop discussions and debriefs were

"meaningful" and helped "understanding"; whether they learned more about concepts only

somewhat familiar with prior to the workshop; their interest in tracking benefits or positive

outcomes of civic dialogue they facilitate; their interest level in learning more about new

concepts introduced; the degree to which they gained a deeper understanding of the barriers

associated with facilitating civic dialogue in public libraries; the degree to which they are eager

to explore strategies and practices for maximizing administrative and community investment in

civic dialogue programming; their assessment of pubic libraries' potential to serve as Third

Spaces for civic dialogue and engagement; and the likelihood they would work to address

barriers to facilitating civic dialogue at their respective institutions.

Five respondents (55.5%) *strongly agreed* that the concepts and content were clearly presented, 3 respondents (33.3%) *agreed* that the concepts and content were clearly presented, and 1 respondent (11.1%) disagreed what the concepts and content were clearly presented. Six respondents (66.6%) *strongly agreed* both that the content was relevant to their work and interests and that they learned about new concepts they plan to look into further, while 3 respondents (33.3%) *agreed* with the same statements.

Four respondents (44.4%) *strongly agreed* both that the activities granted them new insights about civic dialogue *and* that they identify as "Democratic Professionals" and the principles of "Democratic Professionalism", while 5 (55.5%) respondents *agreed* with the same statements. Six respondents (66.6%) *strongly agreed* that the tone set at the outset of the workshop was "hospitable" and "allowed for open engagement" *and* that they learned about concepts they were "only somewhat familiar with", 2 respondents (22.2%) *agreed* with the same statements, and 1 respondent (11.1%) *disagreed* with both of these statements. Five respondents (55.5%) *strongly agreed* that the activities helped them "understand the content better", while 3 respondents (33.3%) *agreed* that the activities helped them "understand the content better". Lastly, 5 respondents (55.5%) *strongly agreed* that the "discussions and debriefs were meaningful and helped my understanding", and 4 respondents (44.4%) *agreed* that the "discussions and debriefs were meaningful and helped my understanding".

Five respondents (55.5%) *strongly agreed* that they have an "increased interest in tracking the benefits or positive outcomes of civic dialogue [they] facilitate" *and* that they are "eager to explore strategies and practices to maximize administrative and community investment in civic dialogue programming", while 4 respondents (44.4%) *agreed* with both of these statements. Three respondents (33.3%) *strongly agreed* that they had "gained new insights about

how to set the tone and the ground rules for a civic dialogue activity, and 6 respondents (66.6%)

agreed with this statement.

Lastly, 3 respondents (33.3%) *strongly agreed* that they have a deeper understanding of

the barriers associated with developing, promoting, and facilitating civic dialogues in public

libraries, while 4 (44.4%) *agreed* with this statement, and 2 (22.2%) *disagreed* with the

statement.

The survey included a series of questions related to participants' prior knowledge and

plans for engaging with civic dialogue and other concepts presented in the workshop. When

asked to rate their awareness of librarians' history of working on behalf of social justice efforts

prior to the workshop on a scale of 1 (unaware) to 4 (highly aware), 6 respondents (66.6%)

reported that they were somewhat aware (3), 2 respondents (22.2%) reported being "highly

aware", and one respondent indicated they had been somewhat unaware (2). Prior to the

workshop, 8 respondents (88.8%) indicated being previously acquainted with the concept of

social capital, 7 (77.7%) indicated being previously acquainted with the concept of Third Spaces,

6 respondents (66.6%) indicated being previously acquainted with Asset Based Community

Development and Asset Mapping, and 3 respondents (33.3%) indicated being previously

acquainted with the concept of "Democratic Professionalism" while another 3 (33.3%) reported

having been previously acquainted with "Various modes of civic dialogue practice and their

relevant/appropriate contexts and applications". When indicating the likelihood that they would

share learning and understandings of the concepts covered in the workshop with colleagues on a

scale of 1 ("highly unlikely") to 4 ("highly likely"), 8 respondents (88.8%) selected 4, and 1

respondent (11.1%) selected 1.

Figure 3: How Likely Are You to Share Concepts from the Workshop with Colleagues? (n=9)
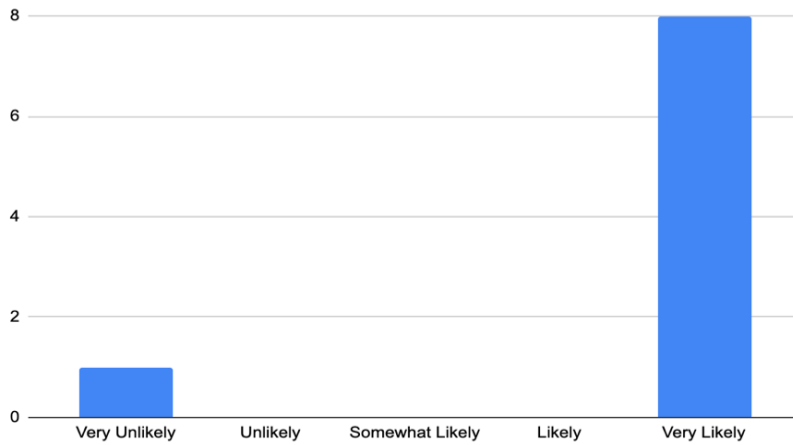
In applying the same scale to the likelihood that they would work to address barriers to facilitating civic dialogue at their institutions and advocate for solutions or strategies for overcoming these, 7 respondents (77.7%) indicated they would be "highly likely" (4) to do so, and 2 respondents (22.2%) ranked themselves at a level 3, indicating they would be "likely" to do so.

Figure 4: How Likely Are You to Address Barriers to Facilitating Civic Dialogue? (n=9)
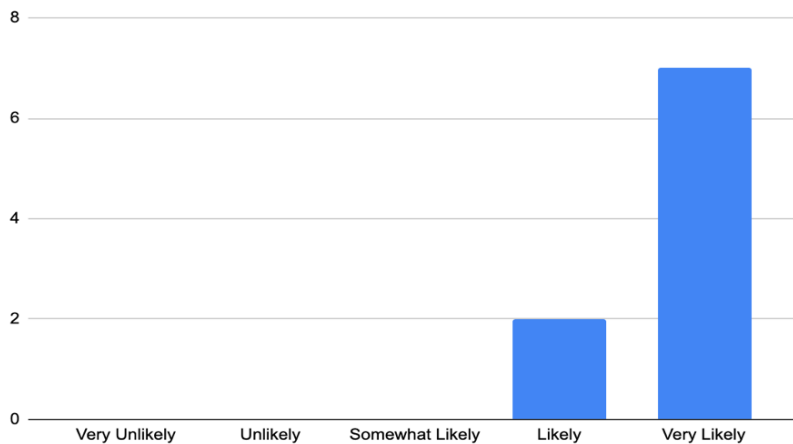
Respondents were asked to rank the extent to which they feel public libraries possess the potential to serve as "Third Spaces" for civic dialogue and engagement to bridge divides and

make progress on social justice issues on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "low potential" and 5

being "high potential". Seven respondents (77.7%) ranked public libraries potential for this role

at a 5, or "high potential" and 2 respondents (22.2%) ranked it at a 4, indicating it as having

potential.

Figure 5: Public Libraries' Potential to serve as Third Space? (n=9)
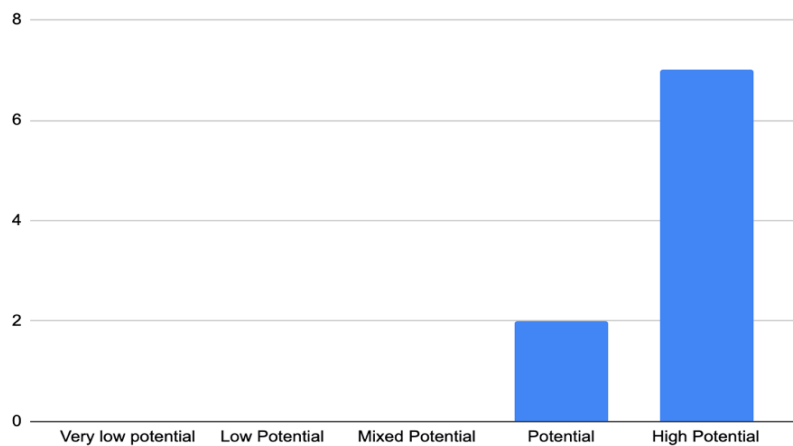
There were two means through which qualitative data was captured for this workshop.

Firstly, through engagement with Activities 1 and 2, and responses to the three questions posed

via three rounds of the World Cafe simulation (referred to as the "Community Connections" cafe

for the purpose of the workshop) via the Google Jamboard application's "sticky notes" feature.

Secondly, qualitative feedback was solicited through two questions in the post-workshop

evaluation survey. The latter will be addressed first.

With regard to the open-ended survey questions, respondents were first asked to indicate

what their favorite part of the workshop was. The majority of respondents (5) listed the World

Cafe simulation (referred to as the "Community Connections" cafe during the workshop) as their

favorite part of the workshop. Two respondents listed the content delivery as their favorite

aspect, with one respondent also citing how the theory was presented and accompanying

examples of theory in action was "excellent". "Learning about appreciative inquiry" got one mention, as did the "discussion about types of assets", "connecting with other librarians", and the "wide cross-section of geographic regions and realms of librarianship represented among participants", each from three different respondents.

When feedback was solicited as to how to improve upon the workshop, several themes emerged. First and foremost, four out of the 9 participants indicated that they would have liked more discussion time, or time to engage with one another around the concepts and their related experiences. Three of the 9 participants felt more focus or time should have been spent on the World Cafe simulation, with two of these respondents suggesting that other activities be cut from the agenda in order to focus more time and energy on that portion of the workshop. Lastly, 2 respondents expressed that content or activities could have been frontloaded or "flipped" prior to the workshop, to make the workshop less content driven.

Observations and Feedback from Workshop Activities

There were several themes that emerged from Activity 1, *Third Spaces in Your Life.* Firstly, the majority of the spaces identified fell into four categories: outdoor, natural spaces (parks, the dog-park, pond/lake, and sidewalks); spaces for exercise and team sports (gym, basketball court, intramural sports team practices and games); and special interest group meetings (knitting, parenting, book, and cooking groups). Coffeeshops, church, an art studio, and the library were also among the Third Spaces mentioned. When listing why they seek out these spaces, three themes emerged: connection was the overarching, major theme (be it with old friends, new friends, likeminded individuals, or community); mental well-being (through finding a sense of calm or peace, the ability to take a "mental stepping aside", or channeling one's aggression or negative feelings positively); openness (spaces that are openly accessible to all,

"neutral", or not corporately owned, and provide an opportunity for open expression and sharing of ideas). In reporting on what they gained from the Third Spaces in their lives, some of the themes that transpired from their answers paralleled their reasons for seeking these spaces out: connection, again, was the major theme (through finding commonality, friendship, mutual support and building relationships); mental health (by gaining comfort, tranquility, a sense of calm, and a "break from the usual";) and learning (through sharing ideas, obtaining information, and being exposed to different perspectives).

In Activity 2, *Your Library's assets,* participants were asked to fill in a table listing three categories of their libraries' assets (individual, associations/organizations, and physical), and then find connections with these to possibilities for cultivating Third Space at their libraries. Where listing individual, association, and physical assets were concerned, participants named many. "Individual" assets listed included: library staff, children's librarians, therapy dog volunteers, patrons, a board game designer, students, parents, and town officials. "Association", or organizational, assets listed included: friends groups, the Parks and Recreation Department, community groups/partners, historical societies, schools, and environmental groups. Among the physical assets listed were: the library collection, technology, internet access/WiFi, various spaces in their buildings (for quiet study, community meetings, programming, and gatherings), outdoor spaces, charging stations, restrooms, a "library of things", local history resources, and a makerspace. There were far fewer "connections to Third Space" listed. Among those identified included: spaces to "just be" and not have to buy anything, convenience (charging devices), spaces that allow for community connections to be made, and networking opportunities (whereby connections between individuals leads to "identifying needs or generating ideas").

The World Café dialogue simulation was the third, and final activity in this workshop. For the first Jamboard slide, or "café table", participants addressed the question: *Do public libraries and librarians have a responsibility to facilitate civic engagement? Why/Why not?* Six of 13 sticky notes exclaim a resounding "YES" to this question, while others took on a more nuanced approach to the question. With regard to the latter, 2 of the comments made addressed particular aspects of the question. One commenter stated that "DEI conversations as starting point for community." The other commenter specified that libraries play a role in "[s]tarting conversations that need to happen because the tension and disagreements are there in the community, but we can help make sure different perspectives are being shown and voices heard". Two of the sticky notes appeared to address barriers to acting on this responsibility. In one, the commenter stated they, "Need community willing to engage in dialogue. People self-select. You need people who aren't showing up", while the other commenter remarked that "for some libraries" it "may not even be an option. BPL experience - an eye opener." Finally, two sticky notes appeared to veer away from the question. In one, the commenter seemed to pose a rhetorical question, perhaps voicing exasperation or frustration: "What do we do as librarians? Sometimes I don't know." In the other, the commenter appeared to be making a connection to public libraries' role as a civic space when they stated, "Library as a foundational place to get people registered to vote - vital to democracy".

In the second Jamboard slide, or "café table", participants addressed the question: *Do public libraries possess the capacity for embracing the position of "Third Space"? Why/Why not?* There were 15 sticky note responses, in total, to this question. Seven out of the 15 sticky note responses directly answered the question in the affirmative. Five of these cited reasons of support for their answer such as the fact that all services and resources are free, the inherent

neutrality of the spaces, and the fact that they are open and available to everyone. One respondent who commented in the affirmative, stated that serving as Third Space was "vital to democracy", while another remarked that the Third Space concept "drew me to the profession". A second major theme that emerged in the answers to this question ran through 4 of the posts shared. Each was tied to discomfort around how the role of Third Space is interpreted–or misinterpreted–by different library constituents.

One of these directly referenced recent incidents at the Boston Public Library: "Masking mandates at BPL - recent situation made it difficult to be Third Space when it's not feeling welcoming to all or to staff." Two other comments were playing off this theme. One commented, "Yes, but to be mindful that it is a shared space as well as a third space. There is a responsibility to stop/discourage destructive use of the space (support needed for this.) No bullying!" The third note on this theme explains, "Third Space versus being a blank canvas. Everyone's right is not everyone's right to be disruptive and keep others from using the Third Space." Finally, the fourth bluntly stated, "Some libraries already forced to become those spaces." One commenter responded to the idea that public libraries have the capacity to embrace the position of Third Space by highlighting a barrier. They stated, "Not every library has the resources."

For the third and final Jamboard slide, or "café table", participants addressed the question: *What barriers exist to fulfilling a civic dialogue mission? Are these surmountable? How?* There were 18 sticky note responses engaged with this question. As with the other World Cafe questions, several themes emerge from respondents' feedback. The most prominent theme involved responses corresponding to intra-professional issues. These may be further broken down into two sub-topics: Capacity and Reluctance/Resistance. Respondent comments falling into the former category (capacity) reference a lack of "bandwidth to put it all together–partners

stretched to the limit", a lack of "funding and staffing," "some not feeling equipped to do the work," and "vocational awe." Falling into the latter category (reluctance/resistance), one respondent commented, "Some feel like they don't think they should have to teach the topic (belief that they should know)." Another remarked, "Thinking we know what the issues are without asking the public."

A second theme that emerged from respondents' answers to this question implied a sentiment that public libraries could be doing better, and that this is a barrier to fulfilling a civic dialogue mission. One respondent proclaimed that libraries "Need more languages being spoken/used by staff!" Another stated that libraries "Need more multiculturalism!" Lastly, one respondent noted that "Library cards only go to folks with proof of address." The third theme to emerge from respondents' reactions to this question was tied to the idea that public libraries should be enlisting the assistance and engagement of others with the aim of fulfilling a civic dialogue mission. One participant stated that libraries should "Engage others to do the work." Another stated that there are "Echo chambers in community," and this elicited a response from another respondent offering a strategy to overcome this: "How: Invite other groups in."

The fourth and final theme to emerge from this dialogue exercise echoed previous comments made by respondents to the first two questions explored in the World Cafe activity: accommodating patrons who act in bad faith and create contentious environments for civic dialogue to occur. One respondent noted, "Bad actors, disrupters. Ex: school board meetings getting disrupted by angry people" while another lamented that "Sometimes staff members can feel unwelcome by - patrons, admin, usability, etc."

Discussion

There were two essential aims of this workshop. Firstly, to educate and explore the extent to which public libraries may serve as civic infrastructure for building a dialogue movement that helps to build bridges amongst community members. Secondly the workshop sought to explore the potential for public libraries to facilitate civic engagement and collaboratively create resources to support and encourage the development of "brave spaces" in local libraries.

Content presented to support the first aim was well received by respondents to the workshop evaluation form as indicated by the fact that the majority of the 9 respondents rated the workshop, overall, as either excellent (n=3) or very good (n=4). Further, the majority of respondents agreed the concepts and content were presented clearly (n=8), and that they were highly likely to share their learning from the workshop with colleagues (n=8).

Lastly, the majority of participants indicated that the activities presented helped them understand the content better (n=8), and that the discussions and debriefs were meaningful and helped their understanding (n=9). Quantitative and qualitative data yielded from the workshop highlight a belief in public libraries' potential to serve as Third Spaces for civic engagement, as well as a desire to develop capacity for them to serve as brave spaces, and public librarians to act as civic agents, or Democratic Professionals, in the service of this vision.

In service of these aims, four goals were established for the workshop: 1) Participants will understand the concept of the Third Space, and its relevance to civic engagement; 2) Participants will have a greater understanding of the concept and forms of social capital, and an increased interest in identifying how their engagement work may play a role in its production; 3) Participants will walk away with a deeper understanding of the history of both social justice efforts by librarians, and civic dialogue as a tool for furthering social justice efforts; and 4)

Participants will leave with an awareness of common barriers to facilitate civic dialogue at their

institutions. These were met with varying degrees of success.

      Responses to the post-workshop evaluation survey indicate participants possess

understanding of the concept of "Third Spaces", the first goal, since both the overwhelming

majority of respondents had prior awareness of the concept, and the majority ranked public

libraries as possessing "high potential" to serve as Third Spaces for civic dialogue demonstrate

that they perceive its importance to civic engagement work. Evidence that goals 2 and 3 were

met is demonstrated through various responses to the post-workshop evaluation survey as

illustrated by the highly favorable response rates regarding the clear presentation of concepts,

along with their perceived efficacy of workshop activities, debriefs and discussions, in granting

new insights and deepening understanding about civic dialogue and Democratic Professionalism.

Moreover, with regard to the second goal, it is especially notable that all respondents expressed

an interest in tracking the benefits or positive outcomes of civic dialogue facilitated in their

libraries. This indicates an acknowledgment of the role dialogue may play in social capital

production.

      With respect to the fourth goal of the workshop, results are more mixed. While two of the

nine respondents stated they did not have a deeper understanding of the barriers with developing,

promoting, and facilitating civic dialogue in public libraries (contrasted with four who

emphatically felt they did, and three who simply agreed they did), all respondents expressed a

likelihood that they would work to address barriers to facilitating civic dialogue and advocate for

strategies to overcome them at their institutions. Considering that all respondents possess a desire

to work toward addressing barriers to civic dialogue at their respective institutions, it could be

surmised that they have a solid grasp of what those barriers are, though an understanding of these, or how to overcome them, may not have been deepened as a result of this workshop.

For the World Café simulation portion of the workshop, participants engaged with three essential questions tied to the content and overall subject matter of the workshop. The answers to these, as illustrated in the commentary recorded in the Google Jamboard app, yielded agreement, overall, as well as important insights about the complex nature of these questions and offer compelling implications for future research and exploration.

Participants' overall agreement with the essential question for round one of the café dialogues–that public libraries and librarians have a responsibility to facilitate civic engagement–demonstrates an embrace of the Democratic Professional identity. Further, the majority of participants expressed agreement with the essential question in round two of the café: public libraries possess the capacity to embrace the position of Third Space. However, both nuance and hesitancy are also expressed in the comments posted to the Jamboard "tables" associated with these two questions. It is also in these first two Jamboard slides that a theme is emerging, particularly on the second Jamboard or "round" of the World Café simulation. That being, that Third Space is vulnerable to being misinterpreted, or even co-opted, such that certain constituents perceive a more legitimate ownership of the space which allows them to disrupt and intimidate, or "bully", others using or working in it. "Mask-mandates at BPL" were referred to as creating a contentious atmosphere. Comments were made that Third Space should not be confused with a "blank canvas" and that "some libraries" had "already been forced to become those spaces." This theme came into clearer focus in the final board of the Jamboard/World Café activity when similar comments were unpacked with the group as a whole during the "gallery walk" (i.e., processing and debriefing on the activity) after the café simulation had ended.

Some predictable barriers arose during the third and final round of the simulation activity. For example, funding, staffing, adequate training or preparation, and stakeholder exhaustion were all cited as barriers to facilitating civic dialogue. However, the striking elements of this feedback came in the form of the continuation of a "bad actors" theme and, interestingly, the concept of *vocational awe.* During our gallery walk we unpacked the comment on the third Jamboard slide, "Bad actors, disrupters. Ex: school board meetings getting disrupted by angry people" with regard to its connection to similar comments made on the previous slides. Unbeknownst to the researcher, the February weeks leading up to the workshop had been a trying month for librarians in Boston as numerous branches in the Boston Public Library (BPL) system grappled with a series of "hateful incidents" in Children's Rooms (Boston 25 News) where library patrons and staff reported being harassed and acts of vandalism. During this same period, a right-wing group called *We the People* entered numerous branches without wearing masks (indoor mask mandates were still in effect in Boston) to protest the libraries' mask policies and refused to leave (Liberation News). It is unclear whether the mask protests and Children's Room incidents were connected with one another.

The BPL situation clearly reverberated through the World Café dialogue comments and considerations of the questions posed. Thoughts on public libraries as Third Spaces were tempered by a reticence to fully embrace this position due to how recent "disruptive" and "destructive" behaviors might co-opt this concept, in effect allowing for disruptors' voices to overpower others further disenfranchising various segments of the population who rely on library services and spaces for affordable education and enrichment. Unsurprisingly, these concerns are reflective of our current, politically polarized climate, and the degree to which the COVID-19 pandemic safety measures have been politicized. The politicization of the pandemic in a public

space represents a societal fissure in the nation dividing the public into two camps: those who accept responsibility for maintaining the welfare of all community members, and those who value their own personal comfort and independence over the safety of their community members as a whole.

It is understandable that given the current socially fraught times, fully embracing the role of Third Space may give some public librarians pause. However, is it enough to abandon deeply held professional ethics and principles related to library space? How might public librarians approach handling factions threatening the integrity of library services and a civic dialogue mission without compromising the value they as professionals have to add in support of community members' self-determination and aspirations? This is a substantial topic for public librarians to engage with, and it lends support for the idea that public librarians should pursue a "brave spaces" positionality. It could become all the more crucial if political tribalism persists or worsens over the coming years.

The concept of "vocational awe" was introduced as a possible barrier by one of the participants during the third and final round of the café dialogue. It was a new concept for this researcher. Ettarh (2018), who coined the term, defines vocational awe as "the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in beliefs that libraries as institutions are inherently good and sacred, and therefore beyond critique" (para.1). Ettarh cites numerous examples of how libraries as "sacred" places, and librarianship as a sacred "calling" in service of grand values (intellectual freedom, democracy, community, and sense of belonging) overshadow the ways in which libraries, as institutions, possess a past marred by white privilege. According to Ettarh, library segregation and immigrant prejudice in the 19th and 20th centuries, for example, made libraries a tool of institutional oppression, despite

lofty statements from the ALA of the time proclaiming libraries' mission to provide equitable

access to information and services. Moreover, she asserts, acceptance of librarianship as a sacred

calling works against librarians themselves by contributing to professional burnout and

compounding under-compensation. The issues posed by this concept represent a complex, or

"wicked" problem for librarians. A participant's response to vocational awe as a barrier, "How:

Persistence!", simultaneously acknowledges a commitment to address the flaws of public

libraries while hinting at the common "institutional response to burnout" observed by Ettarh.

That being, when grappling with burnout, librarians are encouraged to give more of themselves

in response to their depletion, or an "output of more love and passion" (Ettarh, 2018, Part Three:

Martyrdom is not a long-lasting career, para. 4).

During this final round of the café dialogue participants began to formulate responses to

some of the barriers they identified and expressed the belief that more needed to be done to fully

inhabit the Third Space for civic dialogue. Engaging more diverse constituents (i.e., the

homeless, non-English speakers, and an increased emphasis on multiculturalism) and inviting

other groups in to assist with dialogue facilitation demonstrated both a willingness to confront

how their engagement with marginalized and diverse patrons could be improved upon and

consider looking outward for assistance by partnering with local community partners or

organizations. It is clear from these comments that at least some of the participants in the

workshop are indeed working against the concept of *vocational awe.*

The virtual modality of this workshop was, in a few key ways, critical to its success.

Firstly, it was accessible and inclusive being freely available through Zoom. Public librarians

earn modest salaries, work with limited library budgets, and staffing shortages making it difficult

to obtain professional development funding and time away from their branches. In light of this, it

served as an important opportunity to allow public librarians the opportunity to engage with one

another around a topic that both speaks to their principles as "Democratic Professionals" and the

barriers they face to fulfilling this aspect of their professional mission and perceived

responsibilities. The virtual format also enabled a degree of geographic diversity amongst

attendees; participants hailed from Iowa, Florida, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and New York.

      The workshop activities proved valuable as a means for providing participants the ability

to connect with one another around a topic that they were deeply interested and invested in.

When considering the outcomes of activities 1 ("Third Spaces in Your Life") and 2 ("Your

Library's Assets"), it appears that though the respondents were able to effectively identify the

purposes and import of Third Spaces in everyday life, as well as numerous assets their libraries

possess, their lack of connections between these two in Activity 2, they would benefit from more

frequent and deeper consideration of the connections between these two ideas. Specifically, this

particular group of librarians must engage with strategies for harnessing their assets to

effectively cultivate Third Space in their libraries in service of establishing an understanding of

their patrons' needs, deeper trust with their communities, and increased community bonds. These

are, after all, requisite ingredients for facilitating authentic civic dialogue and engagement. Only

two groups offered ideas (one from each) for how their assets might be harnessed in service of

Third Space (one from each). Moreover, this lack of ideation suggests either a possible lack of

comprehension of the concept of social capital as a byproduct of civic dialogue and engagement

in Third Spaces, communicated during content delivery, or the need for a different approach for

teaching this concept. It is also possible, however, that the lack of ideation was due to not enough

time being allotted for these exercises, as noted by several respondents in the workshop

evaluation. More time with this activity may yield a more thoughtful, robust ideation process.

The World Café stands out as being the most favored aspect of this workshop experience. Qualitative feedback gleaned from the workshop evaluation demonstrate the overwhelming majority of participants were both highly engaged and wished for more time with the World Café simulation. Six of the nine evaluation respondents identified the simulation as their favorite part of the workshop, and five respondents expressed the desire for more time with that activity. The simulation proved effective at stimulating "constructive brainstorming", as mentioned by one evaluation respondent. Another respondent expressed gratitude for the café exercise as it provided an "opportunity for us to learn from one another's experience".

Questions posed in the café related directly to civic engagement and dialogue praxis in libraries. It spoke to the values and interests of this self-selecting group of participants, and thus fostered a deep investment in engagement. Breakout group discussions through the asset listing and Third Space activities were also cited as being particularly meaningful and helpful by five of the nine respondents. One respondent stated, "The small group discussions were the most valuable aspect of this workshop for me." Another commented, that "connecting with other librarians" was their favorite aspect of the workshop. It is notable that all nine of the evaluation respondents opted to share their contact details in the evaluation form so that these could be shared by the facilitator afterwards for the purpose of maintaining connections and getting in touch with participants in the future. This suggests a desire to stay connected with professionals in their field with an interest in public libraries serving as Third Spaces and civic dialogue to further their learning.

Limitations of the Project

While the virtual format was helpful in gathering folks from across various states, it was, conversely, the virtual format that limited engagement and, as a result, overall effectiveness of

the workshop discussions. Despite an appeal to participants at the outset of the workshop to make every effort to have their cameras on, many of the attendees did not comply. Many participated with their cameras off and this depersonalized the experience, making authentic engagement challenging. It is reasonable to surmise that some participants with their cameras turned off were multitasking during the workshop. For example, there were times when several of these participants did not join the breakout groups they were assigned to for activities, and did not respond to the researcher directly asking them if they had a question or if they were experiencing any technical difficulties. There was a silent lack of response. When the researcher followed up by asking if they were still there, silence persisted. While the virtual format might be an effective medium for some types of social justice programming, this workshop demonstrated the superiority of the in-person experience for highly interactive workshops where participants are meeting for the first time and engaging in dialogue and discussion.

Zoom functionality itself has its limitations. The process of quickly shifting breakout rooms for different rounds of the World Café simulation was cumbersome and did not go smoothly due to the limitations of the breakout room features (i.e., these cannot be reset to re-mix the attendees such that they will be switched from one breakout room to another without having to first return to the main Zoom meeting room first). The World Café method for dialogue requires completely changing the composition of who is sitting together at a table to encourage effective cross-pollination of ideas. Switching the rooms so that there was a different mix of participants for each round of the cafe proved much more challenging than anticipated. As a result, many participants often wound up with several of the same group members from the previous round.

Time featured prominently as a limiting factor for this workshop. As mentioned, numerous respondents expressed a desire for more time for the World Café dialogue, and more time for discussions, in general. More than one respondent suggested cutting some of the content and even some of the activities to allow for more discussion time. It is also notable that the participants were reticent in the whole group debriefs and discussions. It is possible this reticence was related to the time of day the workshop took place (6:00 PM to 8:00 PM) and the day of the week (Thursday); an evening workshop toward the end of the work week might have meant that participants were less energetic, and therefore less willing to verbally engage. This, too, may have also accounted for the low-response rate to the workshop evaluation.

The small sample size and response rate for the workshop evaluation survey mean that it is not possible to interpret the thoughts or orientation of the participants here as representative of public librarians across the country, region, or even the state, for that matter. Moreover, the self-selecting nature of the group–librarians with a deep interest in the topic of civic dialogue and public libraries as Third Spaces–suggests a bias in favor of the concepts and praxis explored in the workshop. Interestingly, despite the fact that the majority of the 33 registrants (22) identified as never having facilitated a civic dialogue, and just over half of the registrants (17) identified as never having taken part in a civic dialogue, the majority of those who turned up to participate ranked themselves at an "intermediate" level of ability with civic dialogue facilitation. In this case, the more experienced, more invested public librarians turned out. As such, this workshop cohort represents library professionals with a commitment to civic dialogue and engagement in public library spaces.

Implications for Future Projects

Given the small sample size represented by the participants in this workshop, and the fact

that not all geographic regions of the state or nation were represented, a more extensive survey

comprising a larger sample size from across the nation that is not entirely self-selecting based on

the subject matter is advised. This could yield a more credible understanding of where most

public librarians stand on matters of public libraries as Third Spaces and the civic responsibilities

of libraries and librarians to facilitate civic dialogue. In considering the qualitative dialogue data

from this workshop, at least some public librarians require more opportunities for low-cost/no-

cost, and low-stakes engagement with each other to creatively and strategically approach

problem-solving and needs around the topic of civic engagement and dialogue.

These would be best approached through differing pathways that are dependent on the

experience-levels and needs of participants. Given the notoriously tenuous nature of library

budgets and modest salaries for public librarians, it would be beneficial to offer more workshops

on this topic for little to no fee involved to allow for equitable accessibility to professional

development in this area. Since an optional workshop that is self-selecting will always result in

an unpredictable number and type or "level" of participant, assessing audience familiarity with

concepts and skills more thoroughly at the time of registration would do little to inform

presenters of how to prepare materials more suitably aligned with the experience and knowledge

bases of the prospective participants.

Ideally, a series of workshops would be best such that participants have the opportunity

to either engage with as much of the conceptual groundwork prior as they feel they need. A

series of workshops allowing participants extended periods of discussion and peer-learning time

would be beneficial. This would offer ample time for exploring barriers to offering and

facilitating civic dialogue, co-creating strategies to address these, and determining what

strategies have are effective for public librarians facilitating civic dialogue in public libraries.

If approaching the same workshop subject matter again as a "one-shot" experience in the

future for an audience comprising mixed levels of experience with both civic dialogue and

content concepts, a more flexible approach is necessary. For instance, workshop participants

might be offered the ability to opt in for pre-workshop engagement by being provided with

readings and videos, along with reflection questions tied to major themes and concepts.

Additionally, if offering this as a "one-shot" workshop again for an audience representing mixed

levels, less content delivery, and more time for discussion and interaction is advised.

Given how this workshop's participants expressed a fervent belief in public libraries'

potential to serve as Third Spaces for civic dialogue and engagement, coupled with their desire to

work against barriers to achieving this work in both their dialogue contributions and the post-

workshop survey, professional development opportunities allowing for more in-depth

conversations around strategies to overcome barriers to facilitating civic dialogue is highly

recommended. Considering the cultural and political divides of our current moment, as

illustrated by recent incidents at BPL, training with enforcing appropriate ground rules and

norms of behavior for engaging in structured dialogue across differences is also a necessity. The

degree to which vocational awe is a barrier to fulfilling a civic dialogue mission is worthy of

further exploration, as are the mitigating efforts librarians might take to lessen its influence on

not only the mission, but their own well-being. Additionally, when considering the lack of

connections made between their libraries' assets with the ability to better cultivate Third Space,

more conversations and collaborative brainstorming is suggested for this group of librarians.

Possessing a belief that public libraries have the capacity to act as Third Spaces is only the first

step toward actively working to create and enhance Third Space potential through harnessing assets and partnering with community members on programming and services reliant on Third Space.

Two compelling recommendations were made by respondents to the post-workshop evaluation. Firstly, one suggested communicating the concept of Third Spaces, and why it is important, to community members. This same commenter identified a failure to clearly communicate this value as a potential barrier to fulfilling a civic dialogue mission. Engaging with community stakeholders around the most adequate and meaningful way to communicate this concept to communities is a strategy well worth pursuing.

Secondly, a respondent suggested creating a follow-up conversation to this workshop that engages other library stakeholders (volunteers, patrons, program leads, etc.). Both suggestions offer compelling strategies for more effectively including public library patrons and community members in the goals and missions of public libraries. Harnessing the talents, wisdom, and commitment of library communities to enhance community relations and more fully own the process of civic dialogue would create a bridge between library staff members and their patrons, potentially opening the door to strengthened investment in civic engagement for all parties. Both recommendations resonate with the principles of meaningful community engagement, specifically those of reciprocity and partnership. They offer a compelling pathway to overcoming vocational awe, creating solidarity between library staff and community members around shared values, and strengthening the self-determination and self-efficacy of all involved. This kind of effort emphasizes an ethos of power sharing *and* power *to* the people.

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Appendix A: Presentation

AGENDA

- INTRODUCTIONS
- Opening Activity: Appreciative Inquiry Interview
- Topic 1: Civic Professionalism, Third Space, & Civic Dialogue: BASICS
- ACTIVITY 1: 3rd Spaces in Your Life
- Topic 2: Social Capital & Asset Based Community Development
- ACTIVITY 2: Asset mapping: Where libraries fit in
- ACTIVITY 3: World Cafe Simulation
- Debrief the dialogue experience
- Closing thoughts and remarks

3

Appreciative Inquiry

In pairs, you will interview one another with 3 Questions...

Take notes on your answers and hang onto them! We will have 10-12 minutes for this exercise

4

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is:

"Appreciative Inquiry is a worldview and a process for facilitating positive change in organizations, groups, and communities....Every human system has something that works right–things that give it life when it is vital, effective, and successful. AI begins by identifying this positive core and connecting to it in ways that heighten energy, sharpen vision, and inspire action for change."

–Center for Appreciative Inquiry, 2022

5

The 4 Phases of Appreciative Inquiry:
A Path to Growing and Building What You Want MORE Of...

Phase 1: DISCOVERY	Phase 2 DREAM	Phase 3 DESIGN	Phase 4 DELIVER
Identify high-point experiences and corresponding strengths, capabilities; together these form the "positive core."	Imagination is used to collectively envision positive possibilities/ outcomes	Examine what can be done to practically build capacity. What should be done?	Commit to an exploration of learning, innovation, and delivering real results pertinent to all stakeholders. (AKA the "Destiny" phase)

6

Librarians, Civil Rights, & Social Justice

"Packhorse Librarians"
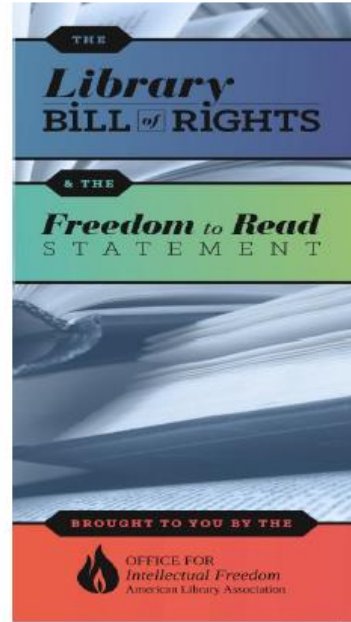
Response to McCarthysm

"Connecticut 4"

"The People's Library": Occupy Wall Street

5 Criteria for Democratic Professionals
(Dzur, 2019)

◎ "Commitment to knowledge" with "co-direction of services"
◎ Act as a source of social responsibilities
◎ Faith in self-efficacy of laypeople
◎ Possess an idealized vision for their role in society
◎ Possess a political role in society

9

Inter-group Dialogue
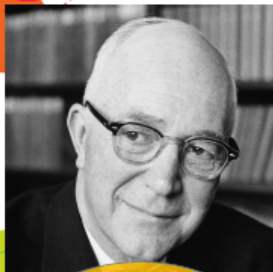
Allport:
The Nature of Prejudice. (1954)

"Intergroup Contact Hypothesis"

Effectual contact
Pluralistic communities create enhanced relations amongst heterogenous social groups
Engagement across differences in the pursuit of common objectives includes authentic objectives, intentional and thoughtful processes
Hands-on activities, simulations, or role-playing allowing one to experience walking in someone else's shoes; Exploratory discussions

10
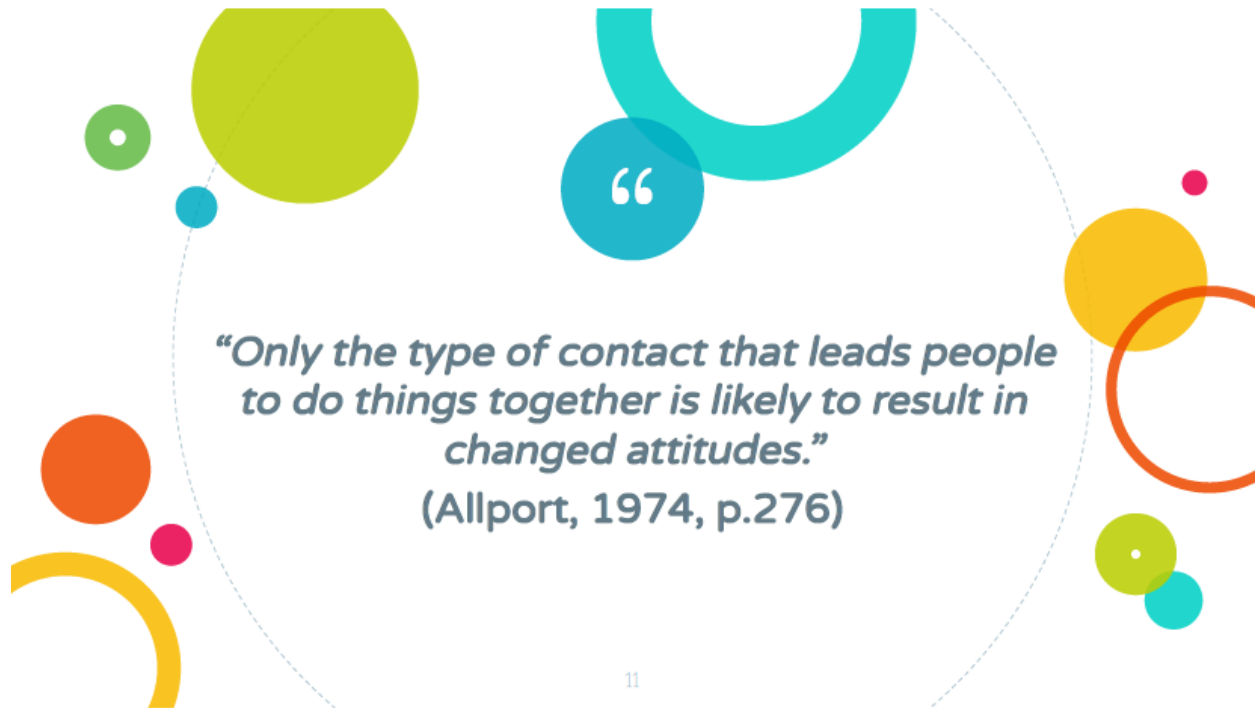
"Only the type of contact that leads people to do things together is likely to result in changed attitudes."
(Allport, 1974, p.276)

11

Allport's Legacy

❖ Discomfort central to unlearning bias—logical, necessary reaction to paradigm shifts/cognitive dissonance.

❖ Ground rules for discussions that establish thoughtful, intentional protocols for exploratory dialogue

❖ Structured interaction between heterogeneous groups of people that are scaffolded

❖ Experienced, knowledgeable facilitators

12

Brave Spaces

Arao & Clemens (2013)

- Courage is necessary for approaching discomfort and cognitive dissonance.
- Notion of "safety" may be misused by participants seeking to enable denialism or avoid discomfort
- Gives the false impression to participants will <u>not</u> feel discomfort

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Civic Dialogue: Common Aims

- ❖ Vehicle for generating critical consciousness to strengthen social movements

- ❖ Build awareness, understanding & common ground across differences ("convergence")

- ❖ Increase capacity for creating solidarity, forging partnerships, & community organizing

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LEFT: A Highlander Folk School workshop, date unknown. Source: https://www.jacobinmag.com/2019/04/highlander-folk-school-tennessee-organizing-movements
RIGHT: Highlander founder Myles Horton (right) with civil rights leader Rosa Parks and labor leader Ralph Helstein in 1957. Nashville Banner Collection, Special Collections Division, Nashville Public Library, CC BY-SA

FORMS OF CIVIC DIALOGUE & THEIR APPLICATIONS BASED ON CONTEXT

Exploration	Personal and Group Transformation	Working through Issues	Collaborative Action
Conversation Café Council Process Open Space World Café	Public Conversations Difficult Dialogues Sustained Dialogue Wisdom Circles Intergroup Dialogue	21st Century Town Meeting Consensus Conference Deliberative Forums	Appreciative Inquiry Future Search Study Circles

Source: National Coalition of Deliberation and Dialogue; Heierbacher, 2007, p. 108, adapted

Creating Space
for Democracy

A PRIMER ON
Dialogue and Deliberation
In Higher Education

EDITED BY
Nicholas V. Longo
AND
Timothy J. Shaffer
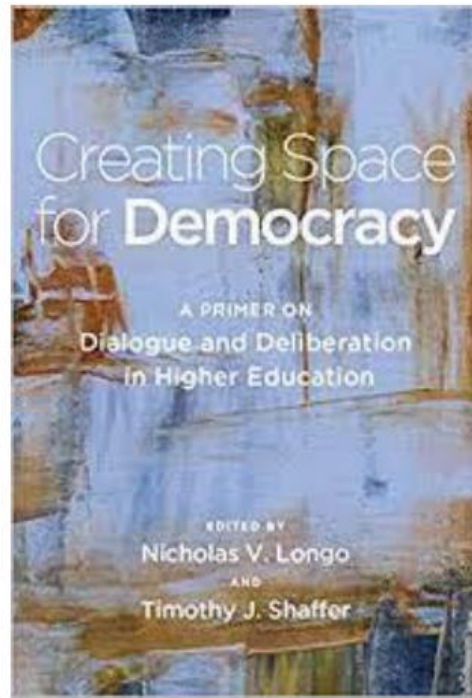
Dialogue vs Debate

Debate

❖ *Goal: Win the argument*
❖ *Focus on flaws of opposing viewpoints*
❖ *Combative atmosphere*
❖ *Assumptions defended*
❖ *Someone possesses one right answer*

SOURCE: National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, Heirerbacher, 2007, p.4.
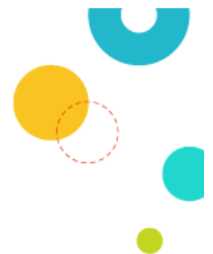
18

Dialogue vs Debate

Dialogue

- ❖ Find common ground
- ❖ Participants' open to change; point of view expanded
- ❖ Atmosphere designed for building trust; clear ground rules established
- ❖ Assumptions reevaluated
- ❖ Many people have pieces of the answer

SOURCE: National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, Heirerbacher, 2007, p.4.

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Dialogue vs Debate

Dialogue

- ❖ Find common ground
- ❖ Participants' open to change; point of view expanded
- ❖ Atmosphere designed for building trust; clear ground rules established
- ❖ Assumptions reevaluated
- ❖ Many people have pieces of the answer

SOURCE: National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, Heirerbacher, 2007, p.4.

19

Dialogue vs Debate

Dialogue

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- ❖ Atmosphere designed for building trust; clear ground rules established
- ❖ Assumptions reevaluated
- ❖ Many people have pieces of the answer

SOURCE: National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, Heirerbacher, 2007, p.4.

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Deliberative Dialogue

Essential Partners: *"Reflective Structured Dialogue* relies on preparation, conversational structures, question design, facilitation skills, and reflective practices to encourage people to engage meaningfully across differences…allows for groundbreaking conversations that restore trust, deepen mutual understanding, and lay the foundation for collaborative action"
(Essential Partners, 2021).

Third Space Theory

Third Space is a space where which multiple cultures--along with their attendant power dynamics, and positionalities--coexist and give rise to **hybridity**...giving those in this in between space the chance to create new meanings and new culture, and ultimately, the ability to "elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves" (Bhaba, 1994,p.50)

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Third Space & Libraries

Libraries are "borderlands" where "people with less obvious social, political, or military power can still exert influence on space by resisting the structures of dominant cultures...by simply occupying space and appropriating it for their own purposes"
(Elmborg, 2011).

Public libraries need to be recognized as "spaces for social reproduction"...they serve as "spaces for knowledge production and as a dimension of social policy" (Frederiksen, 2015).

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Third *PLACES* (Oldenburg, 2014)

"Places where people spend time between home ('first' place) and work ('second' place)..." they are in-between spaces where "we exchange ideas, have a good time, and build relationships"
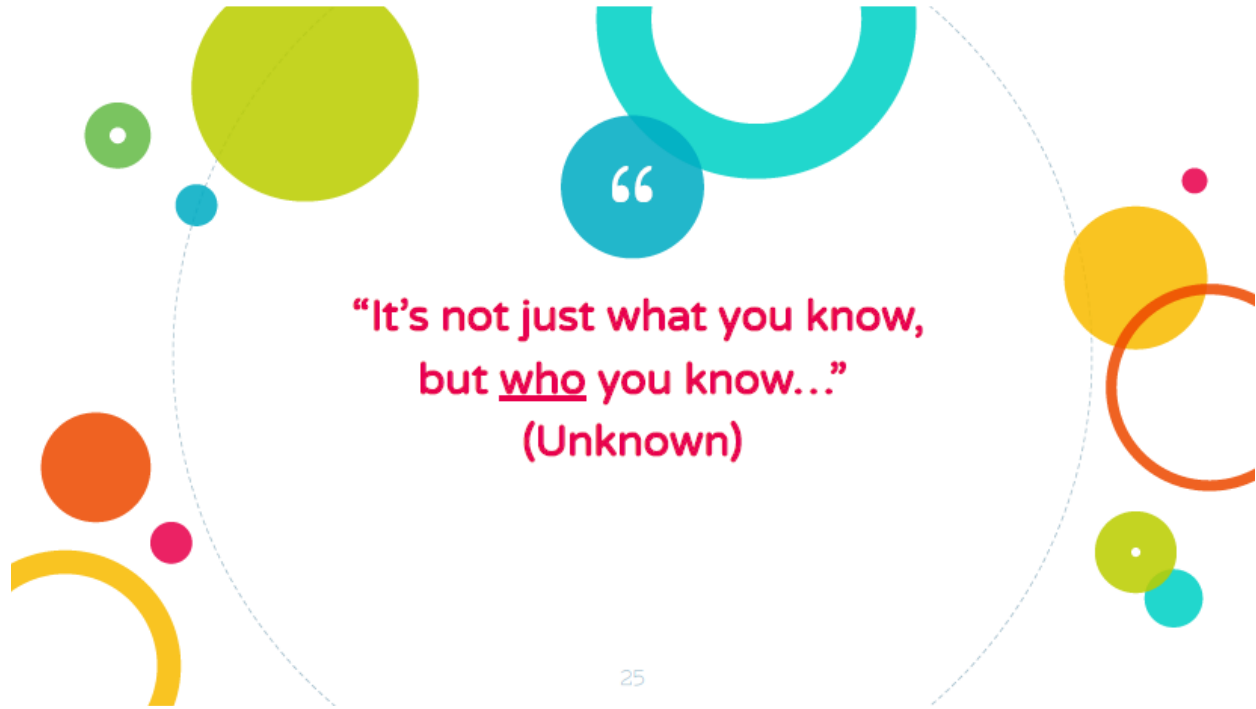
(Butler and Diaz, 2016)

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ACTIVITY 1: Third Spaces in Your Life

Directions:

Using the shared Google doc—with ONE PERSON ONLY serving as note taker:

- List the Third Spaces in your life

- Indicate the purposes of these Third Spaces in your lives (i.e. Why and how you utilize them).

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"It's not just what you know,
but <u>who</u> you know…"
(Unknown)

25

Social Capital is…

'features of social organization such as
networks, norms, and social trust that
facilitate coordination and cooperation
for mutual benefit'
(Putnam 1995, p. 67)

26

EXAMPLES of Social Capital

John, the accountant

Laura, the graduate student

27

Svendsen (2013):
Public Libraries are "breeding grounds for bonding, bridging, and institutional capital"

Bonding	Bridging	Linking
Connections within a group/community characterized by high levels of similarity in demographic characteristics, attitudes, etc. . Exists between 'people like us' who are 'in it together", or who typically have strong close relationships.	Connections that link people across a cleavage that divides society (race, or class, religion, etc). It is associations that 'bridge' between communities, groups, or organisations	Networks of trusting relationships between people interacting across explicit, formal or institutionalized power or structures. Networks and ties between individuals/ groups with agencies, organizations, schools or corporate actors.

Social Capital Creation: Gittell & Vidal (1998)

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ASSET BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
–created by community organizers
John Kretzmann & John McKnight

"Asset Based Community Development's premise is that communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognized assets. Thereby responding to challenges and creating local social improvement and economic development."--(Nurture Development Ltd, 2018)
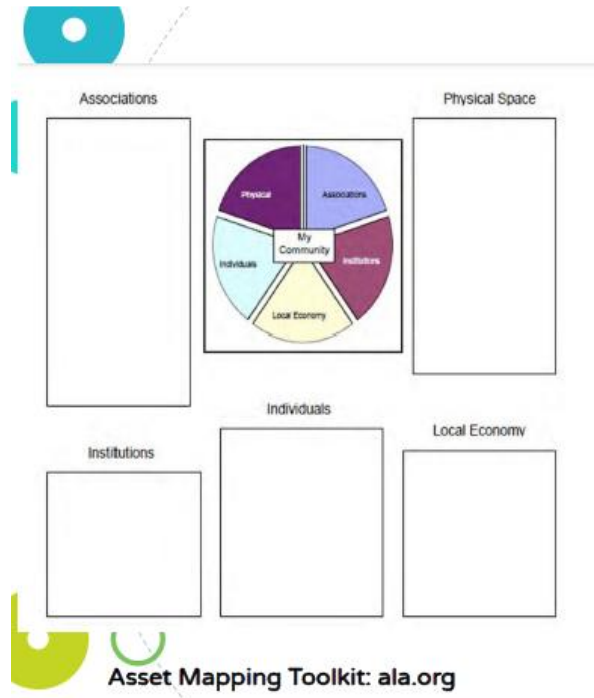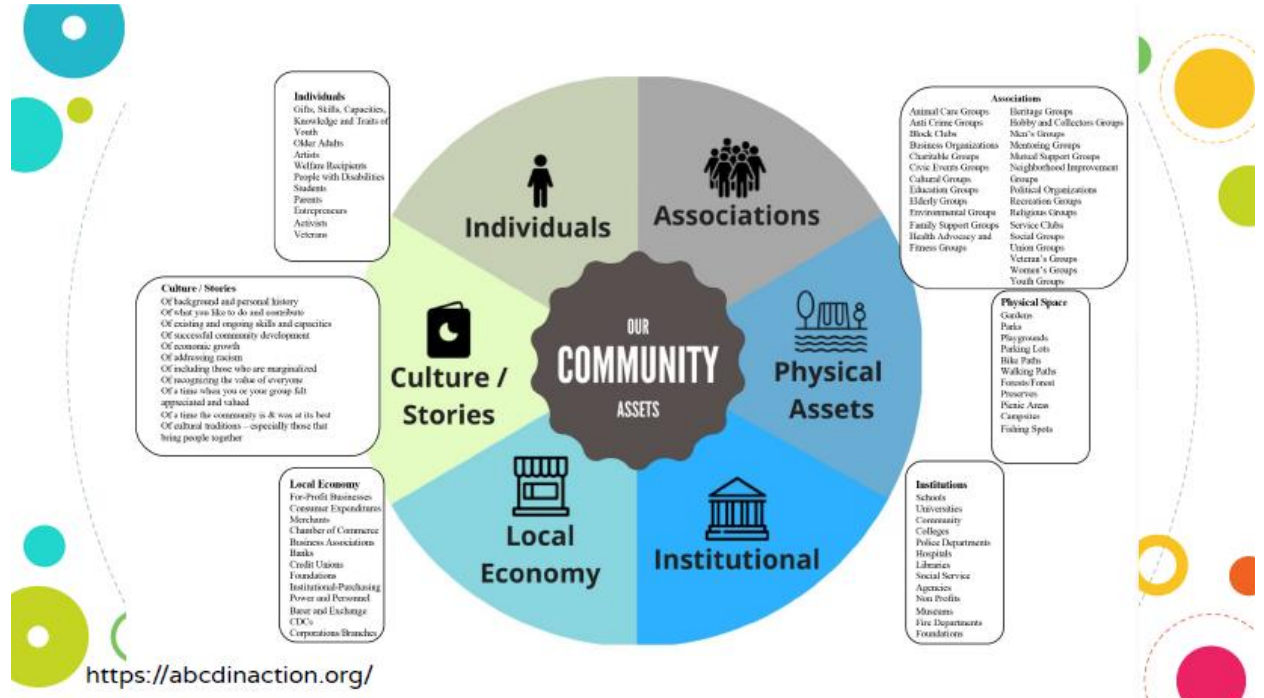
29

Weaknesses/Needs of a Community

Strengths of a Community

Connectors

5 Types of Resources For Considering Community Assets:
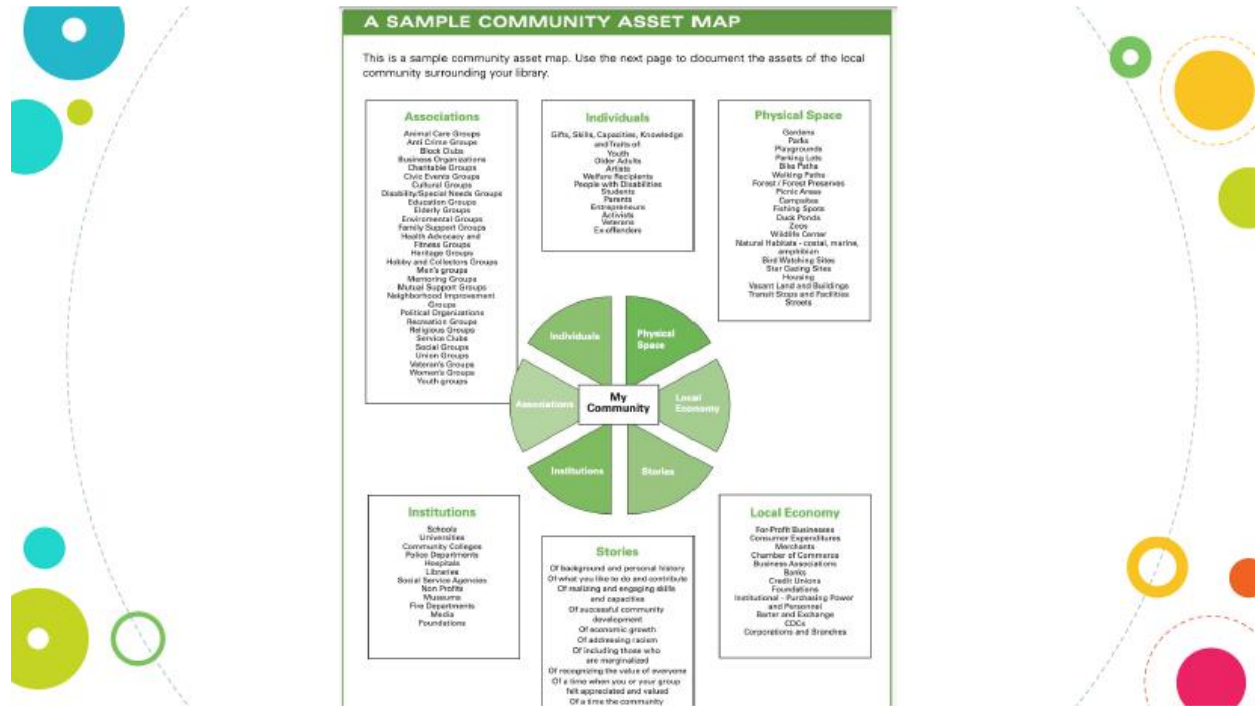
◎ Individuals (experts, talent)
◎ Associations (groups of individuals)
◎ Institutions (formal and professional groups of people like government agencies)
◎ Physical OR "place-baced" resources (like land, buildings, equipment or money)
◎ Connections (relationships between assets).

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Asset Mapping Toolkit: ala.org

Community Assets Map

31   S.Rengasamy, American Institutes for Research

https://abcdinaction.org/

A SAMPLE COMMUNITY ASSET MAP

This is a sample community asset map. Use the next page to document the assets of the local community surrounding your library.

Associations

Animal Care Groups
Anti Crime Groups
Block Clubs
Business Organizations
Charitable Groups
Civic Events Groups
Cultural Groups
Disability/Special Needs Groups
Education Groups
Elderly Groups
Environmental Groups
Family Support Groups
Health Advocacy and
Fitness Groups
Heritage Groups
Hobby and Collectors Groups
Men's groups
Mentoring Groups
Mutual Support Groups
Neighborhood Improvement
Groups
Political Organizations
Recreation Groups
Religious Groups
Service Clubs
Social Groups
Union Groups
Veteran's Groups
Women's Groups
Youth groups

Individuals

Gifts, Skills, Capacities, Knowledge
and Traits of:
Youth
Older Adults
Artists
Welfare Recipients
People with Disabilities
Students
Parents
Entrepreneurs
Activists
Veterans
Ex-offenders

Physical Space

Gardens
Parks
Playgrounds
Parking Lots
Bike Paths
Walking Paths
Forest / Forest Preserves
Picnic Areas
Campsites
Fishing Spots
Duck Ponds
Zoos
Wildlife Center
Natural Habitats - costal, marine,
amphibian
Bird Watching Sites
Star Gazing Sites
Housing
Vacant Land and Buildings
Transit Stops and Facilities
Streets

My Community — Individuals, Physical Space, Local Economy, Stories, Institutions, Associations

Institutions

Schools
Universities
Community Colleges
Police Departments
Hospitals
Libraries
Social Service Agencies
Non Profits
Museums
Fire Departments
Media
Foundations

Stories

Of background and personal history
Of what you like to do and contribute
Of realizing and engaging skills
and capacities
Of successful community
development
Of economic growth
Of addressing racism
Of including those who
are marginalized
Of recognizing the value of everyone
Of a time when you or your group
felt appreciated and valued
Of a time the community

Local Economy

For-Profit Businesses
Consumer Expenditures
Merchants
Chamber of Commerce
Business Associations
Banks
Credit Unions
Foundations
Institutional - Purchasing Power
and Personnel
Barter and Exchange
CDCs
Corporations and Branches

ACTIVITY 2: Asset Mapping & Your Library

Directions

Using the shared Google doc—with ONE PERSON ONLY serving as note taker—fill in the chart with:

- Assets—individuals, associations, physical, connections—your library possesses

- List any connections you can make between these assets and their relationship to Third Spaces

Not there yet? Build Capacity...

Map Assets & Associations

Start with community partner forums to explore aspirations and identify common goals

Identify the "Connectors"

Conduct Outreach to establish communication and build relationships with targeted institutions/

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WORLD CAFE SIMULATION

Roles

How it Works

Ground Rules

36

"The World Café is built on the assumption that people already have within them the wisdom and creativity to confront even the most difficult challenges; and that we are wiser together than we are alone" (World Cafe Community Foundation, 2015).

Why...

◎ Meaningful conversation for people meeting for the first time

◎ To achieve a deep exploration of challenges and opportunities

◎ Meeting with a group >12 where granting space for all voices is a goal

*Use when at least 90 min can be allotted   37

"Community Connections Café"

How...

◎ Name your café

◎ Create "hospitable space"

◎ Establish context/purpose

◎ Communicate "hoped for" outcomes

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How this will work...

Logistics	Roles	Ground Rules
Switch tables for rounds of conversation	"Guests"	Keep an open mind
	"Table hosts"	Listen to/Respect all viewpoints
We will have 3 rounds; approx 5-7 min each	"Main Host"	Be curious/Explore: ask questions/seek clarification
Collective Reflection & Debrief		Use "I statements"
		Brevity

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Patterns, Themes, Connections, Questions, Notable Insights

DEBRIEF

◎ What have we established?

◎ What do we have more questions about?

◎ What do we wish to address moving forward?

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Thank You!

Let's wrap up by sharing one seed idea from our time together that we'd like to take home, plant, and grow…

Appendix B: Activity 1

Third Spaces in our lives…

GROUP 1:

Space	Why go there/utilize it?	What do we gain from this space?

Third Spaces in our lives…

GROUP 2

Space	Why go there/utilize it?	What do we gain from this space?

Third Spaces in our lives…

GROUP 3

Space	Why go there/utilize it?	What do we gain from this space?

Third Spaces in our lives…

GROUP 4

Space	Why go there/utilize it?	What do we gain from this space?

Appendix C: Activity 2

GROUP 1

TYPE OF ASSET	LIST OF ASSETS	CONNECTIONS to 3rd Space?
Individuals		
Associations/groups		
Physical Resources		

GROUP 2

TYPE OF ASSET	LIST OF ASSETS	CONNECTIONS to 3rd Space?
Individuals		
Associations/groups		
Physical Resources		

GROUP 3

TYPE OF ASSET	LIST OF ASSETS	CONNECTIONS to 3rd Space?
Individuals		
Associations/groups		
Physical Resources		

GROUP 4

TYPE OF ASSET	LIST OF ASSETS	CONNECTIONS to 3rd Space?
Individuals		
Associations/groups		
Physical Resources		

Appendix D: Jamboards

Discussion Question: What barriers exist to fulfilling a civic dialogue mission? Are these surmountable? How?

TABLE 3

GROUND RULES: Keep an open mind, Listen to/Respect all viewpoints, Be curious/Explore: ask questions/seek clarification, Use "I statements" (your personal experience), & Brevity (allow space for others to speak)

Appendix E: Annotated Agenda

AGENDA for *Can Public Libraries Bridge Our Divides?*

Thursday, March 3rd, 6:00 PM TO 8:00 PM

20Mins or 6:00 PM – 6:20 PM	**Introductions**	**Materials List**

	• Brief overview of the agenda and "ground rules". Make sure participants are aware of the "parking lot" document.
	• Each person introduces themselves + two words to describe the positive outcomes of facilitating either civic dialogue or community education in service of social justice AND 1 word to describe the challenges you may have experienced with approaching this work
	Ice Breaker & Tone Setting:
	• **Appreciative Inquiry (AI)Activity:** In pairs or groups of 3, conduct 3-question AI interviews (questions provided; see right). Instruct participants to take notes during activity.
	    ◦ Purpose: Allow participants the space to connect with their strengths, values, and perceived benefits of their work related to social justice education/civic dialogue.
	    ◦ Purpose: Introduce participants to an approach to adult learning geared toward transformational change. Applications: building capacity for implementing organizational change (as this culture shift is needed for some public libraries in order to embrace civic dialogue in the service of social justice) and focusing the learners on what they want to grow <u>more</u> of at their libraries.
	• Return to group for a quick de-brief about the activity led by instructor provided prompts; inform participants to keep their shared notes close-by and that we will be referring to these notes later on in the workshop during our structured dialogue.
	• Introduce and share link to the parking lot.
		• Welcome slide and slide with outline of agenda and share questions for opening activity.
		• AI interview questions:
		1. Describe an experience you've had at some point in your professional experience where you felt most inspired and excited by your involvement in this experience. What aspects of it made it exciting/engaging for you? Who else was involved?
		2. Without being humble, what professional skills and qualities do you most value within yourself? When you are feeling most confident about your current job/position, what do you value most about it?
		3. If you had 3 wishes for your current library, what would they be?
		
		• Instructor prompts for debrief:
		    ◦ How did it feel to engage in this exercise?
		    ◦ What purpose does it serve?
		    ◦ How might it be applied to your work in libraries?
		• "Parking Lot" Jamboard link. Possible applications include: highlighting new thoughts, asking questions, connected concepts participants wish to delve into deeper at another point in time.
		• Materials in shared Google folder to be sent post-workshop: Articles and Links

15 Mins or 6:20 PM – 6:35 PM	**Topic 1: Democratic Professionalism, Third Space Theory, & Civic Dialogue--The Basics**
	• Key outcomes for participants:
	  o Participants will find resonance with the principles of Democratic Professionalism and view them as informing the civic mission of public librarianship.
	  o Participants will understand the concept of Third Space and its relevance to civic engagement.
	  o Participants new to facilitating civic dialogue will gain new knowledge and understandings of various dialogue modalities and their contextual applications.
		Materials List
		• Slide Show
		• Materials in shared Google folder to be sent post-workshop: Articles and Links.

10Mins or 6:35 PM – 6:45 PM	**Activity 1, Third Spaces in Our Lives:** Participants will be split into 3-4 groups to create connections between the purposes of Third Spaces, in general, their prevalence in their lives, and how and why we utilize them. They will do so by creating a list of Third Spaces in their lives, what they offer, and their purposes.
	
	Relevance to previous content:
	• Connects to Content presented in Topic 1
	• Facilitates thinking around the concept of Third Space Theory, how it is a natural phenomenon and need for both individuals and communities.
	• Sets the stage for what Third Spaces look like when applied to public libraries.
	• Debrief:
	  o Each group will report out to the whole group.
	  o Facilitator will offer question prompts depending on the level of dialogue after the activity.
		Materials List
		• Shared Google doc for each group to make their lists.
		• Debrief prompts: What did your groups determine about these spaces: What do they mean to you? What do they *do* for you? Why do they matter?

15 Mins or 6:45 PM – 7:00 PM	**Topic 2: Social Capital & Asset Mapping** • What is the key outcome or takeaway for participants? o Participants will gain an understanding of the concept and forms of social capital as well as an increased interest in identifying how their civic	*Materials List* • Slide show • Examples of community asset maps • Materials in shared Google folder to be sent post-workshop: Asset Mapping articles and links

	engagement work may play a role in its production. ○ Participants will gain a basic understanding of the practice of asset mapping and how using it can be applied to building capacity, partnership, and building audiences for civic engagement programming. ○ Spark ideas for how librarians can demonstrate value added to their institutions through building relationships with both community members & partner organizations to build social capital in their communities. **Provide a few minutes for questions and observations**	
10-15Mins 7:00PM- 7:15PM	**Activity 2: Your Library's Assets** • Pre-empt activity with Hallman's TEDx talk • Participants will break into groups of 3-4 to discuss and document the assets they see their libraries possessing and how they can be harnessed to allow their libraries to operate as Third Spaces? Relevance to previous content: • Builds off the concept of Libraries as Third Spaces with unique assets to offer. • Encourages participants to explore how their unique assets might be channeled into the creation of Third Spaces. • Connects to Topic 2: Generates thinking around "how-to" conduct asset mapping in the context of libraries • Facilitates the connection between library as a setting for social capital production AND the connection between library assets and community partners'/members goals. Debrief with the whole group. •	**Materials List** • Clips from Shamichael Hallman's TEDx talk entitled, "Reimagining the Public Library to Reconnect the Community" (TEDx Memphis). • Shared Google Doc w/table for group generation of asset listings pertinent to their particular institutions. • Debrief Questions: ○ Did anyone determine assets previously unthought of or unrecognized, underutilized? ○ What ideas or thoughts came up about how assets might be harnessed to build Third Space in your libraries? ○ What, if any, barriers do you see for harnessing library assets?

| 30Mins or 7:15 PM – 7:45 PM | **Activity 3:** Overview of the World Café Model for Civic Dialogue & Simulation: Roles, Logistics, Ground Rules, and "Situation Statement".

 • Relevance:
   o Previous content on civic dialogue modalities
   o Connection to Democratic Professionalism and civic missions of libraries via community education to serve intercultural understanding amongst all library patrons.
   o Offers a vehicle for exploring the essential questions underpinning the capstone project.
 • Key outcomes for participants:
   o Simulation will provide a hands-on practice with one form of civic dialogue allowing for greater familiarization with the practice.
   o Through engaging with one another, participants will cross-pollinate one another's thoughts gaining new insights, strategies, and potential problem-solving approaches focused on facilitating civic dialogue with one another.
   o Participants will make connections to other librarians pursuing civic dialogue and social justice aims through their librarianship which have the potential for creating future valuable, collegial support. | **Materials List**
 • Essential Questions for conversation:
   o Do public libraries and librarians have a responsibility to facilitate civic engagement? Why or why *not*?
   o Do public libraries possess the capacity for embracing the position of "Third Space"? Why/Why not?
   o What barriers exist to fulfilling a civic dialogue mission? Are these surmountable, and if so, how?
 • Slides: Ground Rules, Tone Setting, Instructions
 • Jamboard slides to serve as our "café tables" where participants will document their ideas and questions to the essential question.
 • Materials in shared Google folder to be sent post-workshop: List of civic dialogue resources (books, websites, articles.) |
| 15 mins 7:40PM – 8:00 PM | Debriefing the Simulation, Evaluation form distribution, and closing remarks. Questions will include:
   o Take a gallery walk through each of the Jamboards, encouraging observations of themes, connections, notable insights, or patterns.
 • Share link to evaluation form; note there is an option to share contact info if participants are interested in keeping | • 3 Jamboard slides to serve as "café tables"
 • Debrief discussion questions: Participants will actually drive the debrief by invitation from the facilitator to observe—out loud—themes, connections, notable insights, or patterns.
   o Other debrief questions: |

| | in touch. If your name is on there, you will receive a contact sheet of participants who also opted in. | ▪ What have we established? What do we have more questions about? What do we wish to address moving forward?
 • Post-workshop evaluation form |

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS / NOTES:

I have created a Google folder where I am gathering take-away resources and materials with relevance to civic dialogue, social capital, Third Space, appreciative inquiry, and Democratic Professionalism, to share with all participants immediately following the workshop.

Appendix F: Post-Event Survey

Section 1 of 3

Workshop Evaluation and Impressions

Thank you for attending my workshop! As a graduate fellow at Merrimack College, I am conducting this workshop for my Capstone project. Please take a moment to fill out these questions to help me in the research portion of my project. All answers will be confidential and analyzed in aggregate, NO identifying information will be shared. I appreciate you taking the time to support my learning by helping me to gain insights on my workshop.

Overall, how would you rate this workshop?

○ Excellent

○ Very Good

○ Good

○ Fair

○ Poor

Assess the following components of the workshop | Multiple choice grid ▾

Rows   **Columns**

1. The concepts and content were clearly pr… ✕   ◯ Strongly Agree   ✕

2. Content was relevant to my interests and … ✕   ◯ Agree   ✕

3. The activities granted me new insights ab… ✕   ◯ Disagree   ✕

4. I identify as a "Civic Professional" and the… ✕   ◯ Strongly Disagree   ✕

5. The tone set at the outset of this worksho… ✕   ◯ Add column

6. The activities helped me understand the c… ✕

7. The discussions / debriefs were meaningf… ✕

8. Add row

Require a response in each row   ⋮

Please identify the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements...

Multiple choice grid

Rows

1. I gained new insights about how to set th... ✕
2. I learned more about concepts I was only ... ✕
3. I have an increased interest in tracking th... ✕
4. I learned about new concepts that I plan o... ✕
5. I have a deeper understanding of the barri... ✕
6. I am eager to explore strategies and pract... ✕
7. Add row

Columns

○ Strongly Agree ✕
○ Agree ✕
○ Disagree ✕
○ Strongly Disagree ✕
○ Add column

Require a response in each row

To what extent were you aware of librarians' history of work on behalf of social justice prior to this workshop?

	1	2	3	4	
Unaware	○	○	○	○	Highly Aware

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "low potential" and 5 being "high potential", to what extent do you feel public libraries possess the potential to serve as "Third Spaces" for civic dialogue and engagement to bridge divides and make progress on social justice issues?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Low Potential	○	○	○	○	○	High Potential

Prior to this workshop, which of the concepts were you already acquainted with? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY TO YOUR PRIOR KNOWLEDGE/ UNDERSTANDINGS)

- ☐ Civic Professionalism

- ☐ Various modes of civic dialogue practice and their relevant/appropriate contexts and applications

- ☐ Social Capital

- ☐ Third Spaces

- ☐ Asset Based Community Development & Asset Mapping

How likely are you to share your learning and understandings of the concepts covered in the workshop with your colleagues?

	1	2	3	4	
Very Unlikely	○	○	○	○	Very Likely

How likely are you to work to address the barriers to facilitating civic dialogue in your institution and advocate for solutions to or strategies for overcoming them?

	1	2	3	4	
Very Unlikely	○	○	○	○	Very Likely

What was your favorite part of the workshop?

Long answer text

How could this workshop be improved?

Long answer text

How comfortable do you think your community is with civic dialogue? Use a scale of 1 to 5, where 1=Very uncomfortable and 5= Very comfortable

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very Uncomfortable	○	○	○	○	○	Very Comfortable

Section 2 of 3

Now, I'd like to know a little bit about you...

The following questions relate to your professional background and demographic background.

How would you rate your experience level with facilitating civic dialogue?

○ Beginner

○ Intermediate

○ Advanced

Select the political orientation that best encapsulates the community served by your library.

○ Conservative

○ Moderate/Mix of conservative and liberal leaning constituents

○ Liberal

○ I'm not sure/still figuring it out

How would you rate your experience level with civic engagement programming, in general (EXCLUDING dialogue practices)?

○ Beginner

○ Intermediate

○ Advanced

Race and Ethnicity: Please indicate here how you identify yourself.

Long answer text

Moving forward, do you have any interest in maintaining connections or engaging in further conversations with participants you met in today's workshop either informally (i.e. via 1:1 conversations, email) or more formally (i.e. via a "Community of Practice")?

○ Either

○ Formally

○ Informally

○ No, thank you

How long have you worked in library settings?

○ 0-4 years

○ 5-10 years

○ 11-15 years

○ 16-20 years

○ Over 20 years

○ Other

Which of the following best describes you?

○ I identify as female

○ I identify as male

○ I identify as nonbinary

○ Other

Section 3 of 3

Staying connected

Description (optional)

If you are interested in being placed on a networking, or "Keep in Touch" list to maintain connections with other workshop participants, please share your name and a contact email below...

Long answer text