Modern Universities, Absent Citizenship? Historical Perspectives

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The historical study of university campuses can tell us much about the changing character and presuppositions of citizenship. Likewise, the study of citizenship can shed considerable light on the nature of universities. Throughout American history, various elite institutions can be seen struggling to establish a semblance of order and control in political society—most clearly in the late 19th century with large numbers of immigrants changing the urban landscape, and with populist movements threatening elite cultural and political dominance, but equally in the face of early 20th century phenomena of mass society, propaganda, and global interdependence.[1] I find it helpful to think of modern universities, emerging in the late 19th century, as right there in the struggle, as new institutional arenas of public practice to shape new kinds of citizens. From this perspective, universities and modern citizenship are intertwined in ways mutually complicating and obscuring. With the aim of untangling some of these connections, this review covers a sample of formative texts on the broad topic of citizenship and the historical development of modern universities in the United States.

My focus is primarily on major research universities, with the rationale that these have had disproportionate cultural and institutional influence over the development of higher education as a whole. The university model of higher education in the U.S. is often distinguished as having stemmed from German traditions emphasizing specialization and research, as opposed to the 19th century collegiate model deriving from British traditions of training the whole person. This distinction between colleges and universities greatly oversimplifies their institutional histories, but points to the general direction of change in the latter 1800s toward research, graduate study, and specialization. Nineteenth century colleges clearly saw education for moral character, "mental and moral discipline," as one of their main objects. A student's training, for example, was typically capped by a yearlong mandatory seminar in ethics taught by the college president—who was, most likely, an ordained minister.[2] But modern research universities were a different sort of institution, one in which religion and character-building might be described, as they were by a Berkeley student in 1892, as "elective studies."[3]

Several developments stand out in the formation of the university model. Following Johns Hopkins' lead, institutions emphasizing research and science came increasingly to dominate higher education in the post Civil War U.S. Charles Elliot's elective system instituted at Harvard freed undergraduates to pursue their own interests rather than following a course set by the institution. Land grant universities emphasized practical training for farmers, mechanics, miners, engineers, as well as primary and secondary school teachers. New, more private and scientific notions of citizenship were gradually eclipsing the collegiate emphasis on moral character. Ostensibly handing the task of character development to secondary and lower schools, the university became more concerned with technical expertise, scientific research and professional development.

One persisting result of this transformation in higher education has been to make discussions of citizenship with reference to the university sound dated, restrictive, or peripheral. The concept pairs easily with 19th century collegiate traditions, but not with modern universities. For some, the idea of citizenship carries connotations of moralizing authority, of being disciplined to fit a good citizen mold, of sitting quietly and raising one's hand before speaking, and so on. President Robert Hutchins at the University of Chicago, for example, in 1933 asserted in no uncertain terms that "'education for citizenship' has no place in the university." (Ironically, the same Hutchins who later defined liberal education as most simply "the education that every citizen ought to have.")[4]

Note, however, the symbolic contrasts between community and society, integration and fragmentation, embedded in the simplified history of transformation above. Either pole in these contrasts can hold a positive or negative valence depending upon one's framework for understanding political society, and one's assessment of the current state of society. The college/community/integration link, for example, might connote anti-democratic, stifling conformity, as easily as it might suggest an antidote to a dysfunctional, fragmented society. These valences come up frequently in historical and sociological writing on universities, and, more to the point, play an important ongoing role in directing and legitimating choices within the institution. For example, Hutchins' 1933 argument that the true aim of the university was "the advancement of knowledge," was situated in a particular reading of the state of American political society which emphasized a need for intelligent direction, not conformity or unity.[5]

In contrast to their collegiate predecessors, the modern universities' relationship to citizenship was (is) less evident, more puzzling, and *perhaps* more contentious. I say perhaps because the character of appropriate instruction was often a heated issue in colleges, as well, with contention typically centering on religious matters.[6] However, my research on the development of modern higher education in the U.S. has led me to the view that citizenship was and is just as important to the university as it was to the older college model. The important difference is that citizenship here took on new meanings and adopted new practices.

The question of education for citizenship has recently seen revived interest, with several volumes and many more articles dedicated to the topic. This literature rarely refers to citizenship as a cultural influence already embedded in, and actively shaping, higher education. This is a problem because models of the public sphere and citizenship have long shaped universities and colleges. In effect, the institution "thinks" of its mission(s) in terms of received patterns of citizenship. Proposals for change are more likely to be effective if they acknowledge and respond to these models.

The single most influential model of the university/citizenship relationship in the 20th century, what I call the *modernist* model, emerged in the late 19th century and eventually culminated in the influential 1945 publication, *General Education in a Free Society*. Written by a Harvard committee of twelve, *General Education* surveyed the cultural and educational elements necessary for a modern democratic society. With the relationship between higher education and public practice as one of its central themes, the report was important in setting the terms of discussion of American higher education through the 1960s.[7] The committee clearly articulated a model of public practice that framed good citizenship as a matter of free individuals making informed, rational choices, individuals voluntarily forming a "free society" through mutual obligation. Universities were one of the vehicles, and one of the expressions, of this model of practice—chiefly, though not exclusively, through the universities' scientific leanings. Science, with its characteristic practice of forming "objective, disinterested judgments based upon exact evidence," was singled out by the authors for its "particular value in the formation of citizens for a free society."[8]

The Harvard committee's aim to develop a model of democratic citizenship, and the manner in which it addressed the topic, can in part be attributed to the historical moment in which it was written: in 1945, global concepts such as that of a "common fate" for humanity, and the threat of totalitarianism, were immediate and tangible. However, the cultural parameters of the "red book" (as the book became known for the color of its cover) were already being circulated and enacted early in the emergence of the American university. In a sense, the Harvard committee's report symbolizes the culmination of political and educational reform movements dating to the late 19th century. The result of these movements embracing science as a model of democratic polity was the eventual dominance—especially in research universities—of a modernist model of citizenship.

One of the ironies of modernist citizenship is that it tends to inhibit discussion of substantive moral aspects of public life. As a model emphasizing rational choice and non-coercive discussion among equals, citizenship is cast primarily as a matter of procedure or method. A modernist institution can thus speak volubly about promoting independent, critical inquiry, and is amply stocked with critical skills to detect any suggestion of interference with independent inquiry, free speech, or any distortions in communication. The notion of citizenship itself, however, becomes problematic here insofar as it suggests an element of loyalty or obligation to particular values, traditions, or groups. Modernist citizenship emphasized individual rational choice, as opposed to the highly partisan, physical and occasionally spectacular form of citizenship characteristic of late 19th century electoral politics.[9]

The shift in the meaning and practice of citizenship around the turn of the 19th century gradually gave the term "citizenship" a connotation of being somewhat outdated. By the 1930s, an ambitious academic leader could reasonably dismiss citizenship as something contrary to the spirit of a university, even though universities had worked very hard over the past several decades to institutionalize new, modern forms of citizenship. This historic shift toward modernist citizenship helps to explain why few historical studies of higher education place citizenship anywhere near the center of the institution: universities had distanced themselves from older models of citizenship. But the university's newly formed relationship to the realm of modern public practice has frequently been overlooked, disavowed, or unrecognized by university members.

Among the major historical studies of higher education written since 1960, Laurence Veysey's exhaustive and influential study, *The Emergence of the American University*, merits a close look. Veysey argues that by 1890 the modern university had consolidated around three aims: utility, research, and liberal culture. Veysey points out that educators throughout the Progressive Era used the terms 'democracy,' 'public service,' and 'public uplift' liberally to describe the purpose of the institution. However, he concludes that these appeals to democracy had little specificity and eventually became cheap coinage, with no significant impact on the structure of the institution.[10] Sorting out the various uses of "democracy" by educators, Veysey finds six different meanings linked only by a shared appeal to "the maintenance of a high standard of individual morality." None directly related to citizenship as public participation.

Citizenship clearly would not have worked as a fourth category alongside Veysey's three part model of utility, research, and liberal culture, nor could it have fit within any one of the three: a university's relationship to the public sphere cuts across and can almost be said to encompass these categories. However, if citizenship cannot be easily slotted into Veysey's framework, it nevertheless shows up in various guises throughout the book. In fact, *The Emergence of the American University* implicitly highlights the extent to which each of the three aims was saturated with notions of citizenship. The concept of utility, for example, incorporated the idea of serving public interests through professional training. Research was widely associated with moral progress and the cultivation of civility. And among advocates of liberal culture "the temptation remained overpowering to identify oneself with an ideal America, however great the discrepancy between it and the uncivilized reality." Thus scholars "usually persevered in seeking national uplift, even if by non-political means."[11] And so on. As Veysey describes it, the emerging university was very much situated within constructions of political society. The key is to look closely at what was taught about citizenship through these "non-political means"

Veysey saw the modern university as a bureaucratic shell, and emphasized institutional elements of conservatism and conformity as they worked against the possibility of critical, autonomous citizenship. The prevailing trend he identified in modern higher education was toward accommodation with non-academic demands in American society, such as by acting as an agent for individual success through technical skill training. The aim of utility for democracy, for example, had by the end of the progressive period "silently evaporated as an ideal, leaving bare a large institutional structure that functioned as its own end."[12] The institution succeeded in creating and protecting specialized departments, but the result was hardly democratic: "If the spirit of scientific investigation had any intrinsic effect upon the public role of the university, it was anything but subversive, for it led either toward apathy or toward a form of conservatism." The problem was that the habit of flexible thought associated with scientific pursuit "was bound to promote an acceptance of nature as it was, hence of man, as part of nature, as he was."[13] While early educators and scientists thought they were acting as a progressive force, contributing to a model public, they were actually reproducing the status quo. According to the model of public practice Veysey employs, the quality of citizenship in the early 20th century university fell short, as it lacked an element of moral-critical engagement.

The critical lens Veysey employed in *The Emergence of the American University* was common, but not new or specific, to social thought of the 1960s and later: this was a model of public practice in which good citizenship requires a coherent moral-critical vision to retain a quality of independence or freedom. Applied to the university, the argument was that vague definition of institutional purpose, and the flexible outlook of scientific thought, allowed business-like practices to "infiltrate" or "penetrate" the institution. Higher education over the course of the Progressive years lost institutional coherence, and increasingly served needs defined outside of the institution—and hence did not have the quality of an independent public actor. Veysey pushes the criticism only so far: by the early 20th century, educators "ran the danger" of "accepting the dominant codes of action" of business, but the infiltration was incomplete and to some extent necessary. The institution could not run without financial support, and at major universities it was rare to find a case where business was "made to stand for the whole" of the institution.[14]

There are revealing similarities between Veysey's *The Emergence of the American University* and a study published three years later by Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, *Academic Revolution*. At the heart of both works is a deep ambivalence about the character of public practice in modern universities; if this is public theater, it is a rote, mechanical performance. In Jencks and Riesman's account it is unclear whether universities in the "academic revolution" were among the agents of social change, or the products of social change. At times they portray modern universities as the result of inexorable late 19th century societal forces, chiefly having to do with the emergence of national institutions in the U.S. This social transformation put higher education at the center of a new, more vertical organization of American society dividing people according to "merit" rather than locality.

Emergence describes the transformation as unfolding in necessary steps: in "highly organized societies with a very specialized division of labor," the rule of merit "seems to us an inevitable feature." Meritocracy in turn "brings with it" what Jencks and Riesman describe as "the national upper-middle class style: cosmopolitan, moderate, universalistic, somewhat legalistic, concerned with equity and fair play, aspiring to neutrality between regions, religions, and ethnic groups." Change in American society was "inevitably" accompanied by change in higher education.[15] Merit needed standardized, reproducible scales in order to be recognized and distributed, making objective, scientific method the dominant organizing principle in higher education at the expense of subjective knowledge. The end of this logical chain, beginning with the demands of "highly organized societies," is a form of self-denial: an institutional "quest for impersonality." Predominant research methods "go a long way toward determining the character of the academician himself…" A graduate student tends to become "a passive instrument 'used' by his methods and his disciplinary colleagues."[16] Supposedly neutral means unwittingly shaped institutional ends.

It is unclear, again, if universities have some status as independent institutions—if, in effect, they are citizens— or if they are subjects to a deeper systemic logic such as a specialized division of labor. The exclusive push for objectivity, for example, works counter to public participation and against independent citizenship, with faculty "hiding behind evidence" and afraid to "stick their necks out." The academic revolution seems to take place in passive voice, without actors or action. It is clear that Jencks and Riesman would have it otherwise: they end the book with a call for greater freedom and variety, arguing that the institution ought to link objectivity and subjective experience as "two modes of knowing."[17] Such an institution would recognize virtues other than skepticism and clarity of thought, virtues including "tact, practicality, social inventiveness—and even faith, hope, and charity."[18]

It does not take too much of a stretch to see a rough model of citizenship education in this list of virtues (republican?) undervalued by research universities. Jencks and Riesman's study remains one of the more insightful accounts of the origins and character of what I refer to as the modernist model of citizenship embedded in modern higher education. As with Veysey, they tend not to see this dominant strand of institutional culture as modeling—however inadequately—citizenship practice.

The depiction of modern universities as a-public, as public absence, is in part a limitation of method: Veysey's discussion of democracy does not look beyond the writings of leading educators, and tacitly assumes that where the word "citizenship" was not used, there were no concerns relevant to citizenship. Jencks and Riesman use a form of modernization theory which gives their writing a deductive and a-historical tone. The early research university might have looked different in both books if, for example, it had been situated in the context of turn of the century political reform movements. By "reasoning backwards," instead of studying the historical production of the institution, Jencks and Riesman do not see that some aspects of "meritocratic" values were promoted and consciously identified by reform movements and Progressive educators in an attempt to push cultures of citizenship away from the reigning spirit and style of partisan politics. Universities did not just serve other powerful institutions; rather, the turn of the century university movement made a claim on the nature of national public institutions.

The absence of citizenship as a theme in both books may also be a consequence of their particular approach to the concept: by the mid-1960s, some aspects of the institution were not recognized as modeling public practice. Or, stated differently, by the mid-1960s, Progressive-era cultures of citizenship in the institution did not respond to progressive critical concerns. This was especially so for scientific research—which both books depict as a kind of conservative force— but also, more abstractly, in the institution's structuring of relations between members. To Veysey the university had the appearance of a shell, a structure that "functioned as its own end"; Jencks and Riesman at times refer to the institution in terms of impersonal "machinery." In both cases university practices were not seen as serving public ideals, ends other than the institutions own functioning.

I read the theme of citizenship-absence in these two influential books as, in part, a critical strategy aimed at transforming the authors' contemporary institutions. In retrospect, it is hard not to read the books in the context of mid-1960s calls for institutional change. Both argue for a renewal of citizenship cultures on campus. But I have to wonder, if the history of modern education had simply been a move away from citizenship, where did the authors' own critical orientations come from? What made it seem appropriate for these university members to criticize the modern university in terms of citizenship?

More recent studies have elaborated and sharpened the view of the emergence of modern universities in the U.S. as a negative turning point and target for criticism of public practice.[19] Thomas Bender places the origins of this transformation in the late 19th century, while others point to the interwar years as critical. In "The Erosion of Public Culture" Bender writes of late 19th century academic professionalization as a withdrawal of intellectuals from disorderly urban centers to the university as an "intellectual refuge." The long-term result of this process, he concludes, was "an impoverished public culture and little means for critical discussion of general ideas, as opposed to scientific or scholarly expertise."[20] Burton Bledstein, in his important study *The Culture of Professionalism*, wrote that by 1900 higher education had "segregated ideas from the public"; universities contained controversial issues within the institution and "reduced them to scientific and technical terms."[21] Derek Bok writes that the low point came by the end of the interwar period, when "institutions of learning had not only ceased to be actively engaged in moral and civic education; they had lost their former status as an important source of moral guidance for the society."

In Bok's account, the university embraced "intellect and technical proficiency," not moral education.[22] Robert Bellah, et al., in *The Good Society*, argue that the early 20th century university, "rather than interpreting and integrating the larger society, came more and more to mirror it."[23] Benjamin Barber agrees, "by the end of World War II, higher education had begun to professionalize, vocationalize, and specialize in a manner that occluded its civic and democratic mission."[24] The direction of critical interpretation, again, is similar to Veysey's.

Among more recent works, Julie Reuben's *The Making of the Modern University* (1995) stands out as an important contribution to the study of citizenship and higher education—though its primary target is morality, and not citizenship per se. Reuben traces the changing status of science and moral discourse on campuses over a sixty-year period, from 1870 to 1930. Most of these changes have direct bearing on forms of citizenship education. Readers will be surprised to learn of the extent of change: at one point, for example, universities embraced hygiene instruction as a crucial aspect of moral education (158). *The Making of the Modern University* emphasizes the consequences—often unintended—of early institutional reforms such as the introduction of electives. As with Jencks and Reisman, the end result of this chain of consequences is a form of absence, in this case, a relative absence of moral education in the Academy. Reuben's argument is based on a careful, and highly rewarding, study of the writings and institutional choices made by university leaders and faculty between 1870 and 1930. Reuben persuasively ascribes changing views of morality and science to changes in institutional practice.

I would like to see the relevant institutional context expanded, however, to include socio-political patterns beyond the university. Political context, and contemporaries' perceptions of political society, rarely enters into Reuben's analysis. Without this context it is difficult to see the institutional separation of morality and science as anything but a loss. During the decades in which the marginalization of morality was occurring, it was thought to be a problem primarily by conservative religious and nationalist critics of the university, who correctly saw that modernist universities had the potential to plant critical seeds of doubt in the minds of American students.[25]

University members at all levels of the institution frequently make comparisons and contrasts—implicit or explicit—between the campus and the world beyond. These contrasts help to construct a distinctive institutional identity and help to guide institutional directions and practices. Some measure of the causal force Reuben attributes to the shape of the research university, in other words, may be better understood in reference to broader societal changes. Considering the transformations Reuben describes in such broader context, I think that *Making of the Modern University* tracks the gradual dominance of a particular model of citizenship in higher education, not the gradual demise of citizenship *per se*. Reuben's study vividly illustrates how this model of citizenship constrained the university's ability to address moral and civic issues; we hear less, however, about the specific citizenship practices and capacities this model enabled. And these are not insignificant.

Several studies focusing on specific disciplines rather than the institution as a whole similarly identify a shift of emphasis from "moralism and reform" to "objectivity and science" in the period roughly between 1880 through the interwar years.[26] Edward Purcell, for example, writes that gradually in the early 20th century "methodology replaced moralism in the minds of many younger reformers and social scientists, and the instrument of social research came to overwhelm the goal of social reform." Of course, as Purcell notes, many felt that social research and scientific advance indirectly furthered the goal of social reform, and this belief, "rationalized in the minds of most the divorce between social science and the problems of political morality."[27] And Bruce Kuklick's *The Rise of American Philosophy*, for example, traces changes in the character of philosophizing at Harvard University from 1860 to 1930. With professionalization, philosophy insulated itself to the point where society "ceased to be a direct influence in shaping philosophical ideas."[28]

A possible implication of this line of criticism is that higher education in the mid to late 19th century—prior to the modern research university—in some respects did a better job of citizenship education than what followed. And, aside from glaring exclusions based on gender, race, and religion, some critics do see in this earlier period a more integral and coherent moral vision, stronger connections between individual members and the shared life and aims of the institution, and a sense of integration between the scientific search for knowledge and the construction of a good society.[29] This reading meshes with a trend in studies of mid 19th century American civic life, which, again, finds admirable qualities, particularly for the high levels of participation and deliberation it fostered. Neil Postman, for example, chose the 1850s Lincoln-Douglas debates as a model of deliberation and a positive counter-example to late 20th century television sound-bite politics. Michael McGerr in *The Decline of Popular Politics*, and Robert Wiebe in his cultural history of American democracy, Self-Rule, agree that the 19th century did a better job of connecting citizens—white male voters—with political processes.[30]

Explaining this transformation from relatively positive mid-to-late 19th century civic life to negative modern institutions has been a common historiographic and sociological task since the late 1950s. When applied to the university, two common explanations focus on the growth of bureaucratic administration, and the growing influence of professionalization as faculty oriented themselves toward methodology and professional networks rather than local universities and communities.[31] Of course, Progressive Era educators for the most part had very different views about the emerging modern university and its relationship to public practice, as did, for example, the authors of the 1945 *General Education in a Free Society*.

Bruce Kimball, in *The "True Professional Ideal" in America,* gives a valuable account of the shift in scholarship evident in the leap from *General Education in a Free Society to the Academic Revolution*. Kimball notes that beginning in the late 1950s the tone of scholarship on the professions and universities was increasingly one of disillusionment. Where previous, more functionalist studies emphasized the "validity and utility" of professions to the public welfare, the new wave of scholarship tended to read professional institutions as systems of domination artificially grounded in scientific expertise.[32] In this framework, treatments of modern higher education selectively highlight systems of social status, class reproduction, or institutional co-optation by market interests. Magali Larson's influential study of professionalism, for example, described the central role of universities in establishing professional organizations and authority, and argued that "...*the dominant, and almost the unique, meaning of these professional movements was the conquest and assertion of social status.*"[33] Kimball focuses on American scholarship, but the more critical direction in studies of the professions was not specific to the U.S.: for example, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* by Michel Foucault (published 1975, with English translation in 1977), stands out for its harsh reading of modern institutions.[34]

Kimball argues that the trend toward disillusionment regarding the professions can be explained by a form of presentism rooted in a gradual decline in the social status of the professoriate over the course of the 20th century.[35] However, I find it implausible that several decades of critical scholarship can be characterized by what he calls "sour grapes." Elsewhere in the book Kimball suggests a path to a more convincing explanation. To explain the growing appeal of science as a cultural ideal in the late nineteenth century, he cites the importance of political context—including the Civil War, national expansionism culminating in the Spanish-American War, political corruption, disillusionment with electoral processes and the judiciary—in contributing to a loss of faith in existing political processes. Kimball concludes that the "increasing complexity of society," coupled with disillusionment with the status quo in politics, made science an appealing alternative to the cultural ideal of polity.[36] Unfortunately, polity and political context seem also to drop out at this point in Kimball's analysis. Instead of attributing the late 20th century turn in social thought solely to the change in professorial status, for example, Kimball could again have referred to context: the civil rights movement and heightened awareness of racism, student movements, multiple political assassinations, war in Vietnam, the Cuban missile crisis and nuclear arms proliferation, and assorted political scandal. Events testing faith in existing institutions.

The shift in Kimball's explanatory framework, in which political context plays a key role for the late 19th century, and yet disappear for the late 20th century, provides a clue to recent scholarship on modern higher education. Part of the problem may be that *The "True Professional Ideal* describes the late nineteenth century leap from polity to science a bit too sharply. The shift is better read as one toward a *scientific polity* as a cultural ideal, with polity not quite dropping out of the equation. This is an important distinction: scientific practice, and more generally, university practice as it was associated with a cultural ideal of science, carried an ongoing symbolic reference to polity. University members well into the 20th century understood that their actions had an element, in other words, of public performance. This again helps provide a more plausible reading of late 20th century disillusionment as in part due to the perception that the modern university was not meeting its obligations to polity.

My suggestion here is that contemporary representations of modern university history are, in part, products of late 20th/early 21st century critical perspectives on the public sphere. This is a different kind of presentism than that described by Kimball. Loosely connected public reform movements in the late 20th century came in roughly two waves: one in response to 60s era upheavals and producing volumes of critical writing on the state of the university, and the other gaining momentum in the last two decades of the century. The early phase saw sustained critiques of objectivism and its association with a military-industrial complex, war in Vietnam, gender and racial discrimination. The concept of democratic public practice gained renewed attention in the face of dysfunctional institutions. One strand of social thought looked to classical republican traditions as a critical benchmark—a measure of how far modern political society had fallen from or failed to realize democratic ideals— and as an alternative to liberal models of modern political society. Interestingly, the more recent wave(s) of public criticism have come from both the right and left, as dissatisfaction with the state of citizenship on campus seems to be shared across the political spectrum.

Joyce Appleby credits Bernard Bailyn and Gordon Wood's mid-1960s studies of early American politics as playing a key role in the recovery of republican political/cultural traditions.[37] Robert Bellah's *Civil Religion in America* was published at the same time, setting the grounds for a series of influential works on modern political culture.[38] As Appleby notes, the recovery of the classical republican tradition was important both for re-introducing a critical model for democratic politics, and for pushing social-political thought away from naturalized liberal categories and toward an anthropological emphasis on culture.[39] The intellectual movement was, again, in some respects international— Habermas' *The Transformation of the Public Sphere*, for example, was first published in 1962, though little read in the U.S. until its English translation in 1989.[40] Several important works published in the mid-1970s referred to republican concepts of political society: Richard Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man* in 1974, followed in 1975 by *The Machiavellian Moment* by J.G. Pocock, and Robert Bellah's *The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in a Time of Trial,* each taking very different approaches to the study of cultures of public practice. [41] In a sense, the central themes of 1920s debate between Lippman and Dewey over the state of American political society had again come to the fore in various academic circles.

Scholarship revolving around the related concepts of the public, citizenship, and civil society, in the past two decades has been marked by several events, including: the attention given to the work of Bellah, et al. in *The Habits of the Heart,* the "liberal versus communitarian" debates including writings by Michael Sandel and Charles

Taylor, Russell Jacoby followed by Cornell West and others on the decline of "public intellectuals," the Bowling Alone critique of American public life by Robert Putnam, interest in the cultural and institutional bases of democracy spurred by the newly independent Eastern European states, and the flurry of scholarship surrounding the English translation of Jurgen Habermas' *The Transformation of the Public Sphere*.[42] Benjamin Barber's *Jihad vs. McWorld*, for example, employed a Habermas-inspired approach to globalization. And Theda Skocpol, Michael Schudson and others have published important research in the historical sociology of civic practices. Taken together, the multiple, conflicting discussions on the public sphere in this partial list can be seen as part of ongoing reformist and counter-reformist movements.

I mention this strand of civic-oriented literature because it reflects a period of unusual ferment and questioning in higher education about the nature of citizenship. These works have shaped intellectual (and to some extent popular) perceptions of the public sphere, and have helped to shape the terms of discussion about citizenship in higher education. With few exceptions, when critics within this public-reform movement have looked back on the history of the university they have not seen the aspects of citizenship they expect or want to see, and come away describing an absence of citizenship. This stance has critical rhetorical utility in prodding institutional change, but it overlooks the powerful existing currents of citizenship in higher education. These currents may be *different* from what critics expect of citizenship, and may be expressed in unfamiliar cultural vocabularies, but they are nevertheless influential forms of citizenship.

Scholarship on citizenship—in higher education and elsewhere—tends to cluster around different analytical dimensions of the concept, dimensions associated with criteria for democracy. I see these as grouping into roughly three categories having to do with the inclusivity, character, and depth of public participation. Though the three clearly overlap, there are fairly distinct bodies of criticism associated with each dimension. For example, levels of diversity and inclusion have of course been a critical focus in recent decades, such as in multicultural and feminist critiques of the public sphere. As for the character of participation, a range of critics survey public participation for its quality of informed and reasoned deliberation, such as in works by Neil Postman, Jurgen Habermas and mass media criticism. I would also include in this category arguments about the quality of civic and moral reasoning in institutions, for example in works by Alan Wolfe, Robert Bellah et al., Phillip Selznick, Julie Reuben, George Marsden, and Martha Nussbaum.[43] The third cluster of criticism looks at levels of participation in public life, such as in Robert Putnam's work on civic traditions in Italy, and his research on declining levels of civic participation in the U.S.[44] Critics and politicians often favor or trade some dimensions over others, depending upon context and viewpoint. Robert Wiebe, for example, argues in *Self-Rule* that democracy is basically about open participation, a mix of the first and third categories.[45] Modernist citizenship put greater emphasis on the character of participation, with mixed consequences for diversity and depth of participation.

As we have seen, public (re)construction criticism tends to read modern institutions, including higher education, in terms of a public negation or absence, falling short in diversity, deliberation, and participation. The research university that emerged from the Progressive Era figures as a highly exclusive realm isolated from public concerns, marginalizing moral and civic inquiry in favor of narrow procedures and professional ends, and fragmenting interaction between its members. This is somewhat ironic because the vision of an inclusive, rational-deliberative (with various understandings of what this entails), and participatory public draws from modernist models of citizenship, also emerging in the Progressive Era. The modernist model framed good citizenship as a matter of free individuals making rational, informed choices, individuals voluntarily forming a "free society" through mutual obligation. This was a style of citizenship reflecting what was widely thought to be an image of scientific practice. Modern institutions such as universities took shape, in part, as expressions and vehicles of this model; their creators, too, were acting upon perceptions of the state of public participation.

Among other problems, the critical interpretation of modern higher education as a-public leads to a significant anomaly: the student movements of the 1960s have to be seen as standout examples of modern civic participation. How were these movements possible without resources for citizenship pre-existing in the institution, or without an existing identification of the institution with citizenship? Explanations typically point to external influences such as the civil rights movement or generational change to fill this gap, but I suspect pre-existing patterns of university–public relations are an important part of the story. Further, the reading of modern higher education as a-public has the consequence of obscuring important aspects of the contemporary, as well as earlier modern (meaning roughly 1890–1965), institution. This is especially so for the scientific, technical, and discipline-specific pursuits of the institution, pursuits typically regarded as standing outside the realm of citizenship.

In part, my aim here is to encourage second looks at dimensions of the institution that tend to read as structure empty of citizenship; to see conflict and conversation, public practice, in a wider range of campus patterns. Science, for example, figures centrally in the modern university, and interpretations of the university often hinge on its representation. The tendency is to downplay the ethical and political connotations of scientific research and disciplinary development. This effectively makes modernist citizenship an oxymoron, insofar as the aim of Progressive reform was toward a more scientific public.

One last essay, one that partly avoids the aim of my criticisms: Carol Geary Schneider's "Educational Missions and Civic Responsibility." If I were to direct someone new to this field to a single article, this would be it. Early in the essay Schneider writes that citizenship in the modern academy had by mid-20th century retreated to the narrow limits of general education courses on Western Civilization. Citizenship education had shifted from the 19th century emphasis on moral development to "education in responsibility for the heritage of Western Civilization." This observation generally fits with the theme of citizenship absence in modern universities. However, Schneider recognizes that this was not the whole story. While discussion and intentional teaching of citizenship tended to be confined to the space of the Western Civ course, the institution as a whole embraced a broader model of citizenship. Schneider writes, "the university's primary self-understanding about education and citizenship came to rest on its claims of cultivation in students generalized capacities for leadership, especially intellectual discipline, critical thinking, and higher order analytical reasoning" (104). And this learning took place throughout the academy, not just in Western Civilization courses. Schneider draws from Michael Sandel in arguing that these principles of citizenship were based on a vision of a "procedural republic" that did not ground itself in the cultivation of moral virtues.

I prefer the term modernist to emphasize that this procedural model responded to perceived problems in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Modernist citizenship was liberal, in Sandel's sense, but it was also deeply concerned about sources of vision, autonomy, order and direction in a mass democracy, and in the context of potentially overwhelming social and political problems. University critics—including the authors discussed above— have variously been pointing out the limitations of modernist citizenship since the 1960s. As Schneider writes, "Cultivating analytical abilities in citizens is certainly important to the health of a political democracy as it is to the modern economy. But it is not, I believe the evidence persuades us, sufficient to the vitality of a healthy and self-correcting civic society."[46] Schneider describes the ongoing movement toward a more engaged academy, including the introduction of collaborative inquiry, service-learning, and multidisciplinary integrative learning, among other changes. The volume of collected essays in which Schneider's article appears— *Civic Responsibility in Higher Education*—offers an excellent map of the current state of initiatives to transform citizenship education.[47] My aim in this review has been to lend these initiatives and this literature a different, potentially more productive historical frame.

As we have seen, it is common in historical studies of modern higher education to depict the institution as having separated from the public sphere, as having absented itself of a public spirit. I see the modern institution as inherently standing in reflexive relation to the public sphere, such that studies that minimize or overlook this dimension miss an important aspect of higher education. If higher education indeed lacked such a connection, it would be difficult to explain the appearance of the long list of scholars since the 1960s commenting critically on its absence. I actively support the aim of these criticisms; universities and colleges ought to engage a fuller vision of citizenship. Change, though, will not mean bringing citizenship onto a campus that had none, but changing the citizenship equation(s) that now exists. This requires raising awareness of the tacit models of political society informing current university structures and practices, and—through persistent dialogue—finding ways to build on their achievements. Citizenship reform efforts will (continue to) encounter opposition if they do not recognize the significance of, and depth of commitment to, what at first glance appears to be empty structure.

ENDNOTES

[1] See, for example, Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of and Organizational Base for High Culture in America," *Media, Culture and Society* 4 (1982): 33-50.

[2] Laurence Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 23. Also see Lawrence Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience 1783-1876* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 400-409.

[3] The Occident, (Berkeley), 5 September 1892, 5. University of California Archives, Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley.

[4] Robert M. Hutchins, "Education and the Public Mind," *School and Society* August 5 (1933): 163; and R.M. Hutchins The State of the University 1929-1949 (1949), 7.

[5] Robert M. Hutchins, "Education and the Public Mind," *School and Society* August 5 (1933): 163.

[6] See, for example, James McLachlan, "The *Choice of Hercules*: American Student Societies in the Early 19th Century," in *The University in Society,* ed. Lawrence Stone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 449-94.

[7] David Hollinger discusses the significance of the Harvard Report in, *Science, Jews, and Secular Culture: Studies in Mid-Twentieth Century American Intellectual History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 161.

[8] Paul S. Buck et al., *General Education in a Free Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1945), 50.

[9] See Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1998), and Michael E. McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North*, 1865-1928 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

[10] Laurence Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (1965), 62-65.

[11] Ibid., 139-147, 215.

[12] Ibid., 64, 120.

[13] Ibid., 140.

[14] Ibid., 354.

[15] Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, *The Academic Revolution* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968), 12.

[16] Ibid., 517-518.

[17] Ibid., 519.

[18] Ibid., 530.

[19] For critical works directed more specifically at contemporary (1980s and later) higher education, see, for example: Alan Bloom, *The Closing of The American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987); Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on trial* (New York: Basic Books a division of Harper Collins, 1995); Christopher Lasch, *The revolt of the elites : and the betrayal of democracy*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995); Alan Wolfe, *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Robert Bellah et al., *The Good Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), Chapter 5; Michael Katz, *Reconstructing American Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), and numerous others.

[20] Thomas Bender, *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 46. Bender's more recent writings, I should note, develop a more complex notion of the public and revise the thesis of decline.

[21] Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America (*New York: Norton, 1976), 327.

[22] Derek Bok, *Universities and the Future of America* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990), 68.

[23] "Far from becoming a new community that would bring coherence out of chaos, it became instead a congeries of faculty and students, each pursuing their own ends, integrated not by any shared vision but only by the bureaucratic procedures of the 'administration.'" Robert Bellah et al., *The Good Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 154-5.

[24] Benjamin Barber, Foreward to *Education for Citizenship*, Reeher and Cammarano, eds. (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997), xi.

[25] See, for example, the volume produced by a 1932 conference at NYU entitled *The Obligation of Universities to the Social Order*, edited by Henry Fairchild Pratt (New York, 1933).

[26] E.g., Robert L. Church, "Economists as Experts: The Rise of an Academic Profession in America 1850-1917," in *The University in Society,* ed. Lawrence Stone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 571-610, 573; Gillis J. Harp, *Positivist Republic: August Comte and the Reconstruction of American Liberalism, 1865-1920* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Mary Furner, *From Advocacy to Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1975); Thomas Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science* (Urbana: 1977); Dorothy Ross, *The Origins of American Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Using a longer historical timeline, this is also the theme of Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

[27] Edward A. Purcell Jr., *The Crisis of Democratic Theory* (Lexington, Ky.: The University Press of Kentucky, 1973), 25-7.

28 Bruce Kuklick, *The Rise of American Philosophy*: *Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1860-1930* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), xviii.

29 E.g., Derek Bok, Higher Learning (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and The Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Nicholas H. Steneck, "Ethics and Aims of Universities in Historical Perspective," in *An Ethical Education: Community and Morality in the Multicultural University*, ed. M.N.S. Sellers (Oxford and Providence: Berg Publishers, 1994), 9-20.

30 Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985); Michael E. McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Robert Wiebe, *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

31 See, for example, Nicholas H. Steneck, "Ethics and Aims of Universities in Historical Perspective," in *An Ethical Education: Community and Morality in the Multicultural University,* ed. M.N.S. Sellers (Oxford and Providence: Berg Publishers, 1994), 9-20.

32 Bruce A. Kimball, *The "True Professional Ideal" in America: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992), 309-317. Talcott Parsons' voluntarism does not quite fit this functionalist versus structuralist model, but for various reasons his massive theory itself came to be associated with the negative aspects of modern institutions, criticized in roughly the same terms Veysey and others described the modern university.

33 Magali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 155. Original italics.

34 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

35 "The presentism of analysis has derived from professors' preoccupation with the status and nature of the professoriate, which entered the twentieth century preeminent and gradually declined." Bruce A. Kimball, *The "True Professional Ideal" in America: A History* (1992), 325. On the changing status of professors, Kimball cites Joseph Gusfield, "American Professors: The Decline of a Cultural Elite," School Review 83 (1975): 595-616.

36 Bruce A. Kimball, *The "True Professional Ideal"* in America: A History (1992), 200-202.

37 Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 21. Citing: Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), and Gordon S. Wood, "Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution," William and Mary Quarterly 23 (1966).

38 Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* , no. Winter (1967): 1-21.

39 Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (1992), 23.

[40] Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

[41] Robert Bellah, *The Broken covenant : American Civil Religion in a time of trial* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974).

[42] Robert Bellah, et al. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate," in *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, ed. Nancy Rosenblum (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals : American culture in the age of academe* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, eds., *Civic Engagement in American Democracy* (Washington D.C. and New York: Brookings Institution Press and Russell Sage, 1999); Michael Schudson, *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1998).

[43] For example: George Marsden, *From Protestant Establishment to Established Non-belief: The Soul of the American University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985); Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and The Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996); Philip Selznick, *The Moral Commonwealth: Social Theory and the Promise of Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Alan Wolfe, *Whose Keeper? Social Science and Moral Obligation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

[44] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Robert Putnam, Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[45] Robert Wiebe, *Self-Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 247-267.

[46] Carol Geary Schneider, "Educational Missions and Civic Responsibility: Toward the Engaged Academy," in *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education.* Thomas Erlich, Ed. (American Council on Education and Oryx Press, 2000), 108.

[47] See also Reeher and Cammarano, eds. *Education for Citizenship* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1997); and the proceedings of Campus Compact (http://www.compact.org/), especially the "Wingspread Declaration on the Civic Responsibilities of Research Universities," 1999 (http://www.compact.org/civic/Wingspread/Wingspread.html).

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