Teaching Inclusion and Discourse: A Classroom Demonstration from Nepal

Helen Morrow, PhD, LCSW
Associate Professor

Laura A. Lowe, PhD, LCSW
Associate Professor

Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX 79409-1012, USA

Received	Accepted	Published
October 16, 2015	January 14, 2015	February 19, 2016

Citation: Morrow, H., & Lowe, L.A. (2016). Teaching inclusion and discourse: A classroom demonstration from Nepal. *The Advanced Generalist: Social Work Research Journal, 2*(1), p 28-44.

Abstract:

While a cornerstone of any democracy, efficacious civic discourse and the ability to come to reasonable compromise seem to occur rarely today. This paper suggests that higher education may be a place to teach such skills, describes a two-fold approach of lecture and class exercise, and reports on student results from a case example. Lecture on concepts based on Habermas' lifeworld and ideal speech situation, with an emphasis on the relationship of these two terms to that of deliberative justice, was provided to graduate students in Nepal before engaging them in a class exercise deliberating about a social issue relevant to the local context. Both quantitative and qualitative results indicated that students understanding of the material significantly improved through the method of presentation. This pedagogy may be one way to increase civic discourse and engagement in society.

Keywords: Civic discourse, pedagogy, inclusion, ideal speech situation, deliberative justice

Introduction

Civic discourse is a cornerstone of democracy. Teaching students to appreciate its significance has recently been underscored by research from the Pew Foundation. Addressing the situation in the United States, their report of June 12, 2014, claimed "Republicans and Democrats are more divided along ideological lines – and partisan antipathy is deeper and more extensive – than at any point in the last two decades," (p. 6). And, as most observers would probably point out, this has resulted in a stifling effect on the ability of the U.S. Congress to work collectively to reach political compromise that would lead to effective action on the most salient matters before them. One might wonder if engagement in civic discourse and the ability to find reasonable and effective compromise have become lost arts. If this is the case, then perhaps the classroom is a place where these may be rediscovered. This paper describes a two-fold approach to teaching concepts and skills related to civil deliberation in a college classroom and examines the impact on students.

Literature Review

> Policy legitimacy, from the point of view of deliberative justice, has become a focus of discourse in recent years (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Scambler, 2001). Thomas (2010) suggests that it requires: primarily informed and motivated policy makers, experts, and everyday citizens working together to tackle public problems... People examine an issue through a deliberative process in which they invite and consider dissenting perspectives, manage conflict, design solutions that are for the common good, and collaboratively implement change. Actions are taken with the understanding that, if they do not work, they can be reconsidered and adjusted... This form of democracy requires not just a change in the way government works: it calls for a cultural shift. (p. 2)

Toward this end – a cultural shift - a substantial body of literature is available concerning the need for increased deliberation and enhanced civil society. Much of this work expounds and/or critiques the work of sociologist Jürgen Habermas. Several theoretical pieces from Australia and the United Kingdom emphasize the utility for social work of intersubjective relations and communication found in the work of Habermas (as cited by Lovat and Gray, 2008, p. 1100; Gray & Lovat, 2008). Similarly, Houston (2009) focuses on "*egalitarian communication* and the imperative to *recognize human identity*" in a comparison of the works of Habermas and Axel Honneth; this also considers the relationship of their

theories to social work. Jones (2001), on the other hand, sees the practical use of Habermas' theory of Communicative Action in the realms of health care and public health decision-making. Gutmann and Thompson (2004) argue that the "democratic element in deliberative democracy" is not based solely on correct *procedure* in decision making, but more importantly on "how fully inclusive the process is" (p. 9). The challenge, it seems, is to not only understand the underlying significance of inclusion, but to also convey the utility and fairness of inclusion to the populace. Again, this implies the need for a cultural shift.

The theories of deliberative democracy are not without controversy, but some have taken these a step further and tried to provide empirical support. In an effort to demonstrate the superior utility of inclusive deliberation, James Fishkin and his colleagues, first at the University of Texas and later at Stanford University, sought to distinguish active, informed and responsive deliberation from typical opinion polls. The Center for Deliberative Democracy, Stanford University, (n.d.) has repeatedly demonstrated the significance of these differences through experiments conducted using Deliberative Polling® in many settings around the globe. Their work contrasts baseline opinions on a given issue with opinions' of the same subjects following a weekend of study and then engagement in dialogue with "competing experts and political leaders." Since the Center makes a concerted effort to select a representative sample of the respective population, the Center makes the assertion that the "resulting changes in opinion represent the conclusions the public would reach, if people had [the] opportunity to become more informed and more engaged by the issues" (Center for Deliberative Democracy, n.d., Section on Selected Results). Twenty-two studies are reported: examples include one in South Korea in 2011 concerning Korean unification, one in Poland in 2009 concerning the fate of the Bulgarska St. Stadium following the 2012 Euro Cup, and another of citizens of the 27 countries of the European Union regarding parliamentary elections. The Center reports that there are dramatic and statistically significant changes in views as a result of the Deliberative Polling® process. The early history and development of this work can be found in Fishkin and Laslett (2003).

Giroux (2006) takes the problem to educators; he suggests all levels of education should stress the significance of knowledge, debate, and dialogue concerning pressing social problems as a means to correcting unjust social conditions:

> Public civic engagement is essential if the concepts of social life and the public sphere are to be used to revitalize the language of civic education and democratization

> as part of a broader discourse of political agency and critical citizenship in a global world (Giroux, 2006, p. 233).

Levine (2010) seems to agree that educators, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, are in a good position to teach these skills. He suggests that they are most likely to deal with "contested questions of values" (p. 15) and that democratic education is most effective when students discuss these types of controversial issues. Students "can practice reasoning together and navigating the inevitable conflicts over values that emerge in democratic life. They can develop understanding and empathy for those whose lives are differently or less privileged" (p. 15). Levine points out that universities could do far more in this area than simply allow for classroom deliberation; universities can and should provide opportunities to engage students as well as other community members in open forums in which differing views may be expressed without impingement.

Teaching Deliberation

Some educators are answering this call. For example, Cole (2013) argues that deliberative democracy should be taught during undergraduate education and presents how he did so in a class titled *Argument and Advocacy*. After introducing the basic ideas of deliberation to the class, students researched the assigned topic, listened to guest speakers, and then engaged in deliberative sessions together. Results indicated that the students gained from the experience. Other educators have engaged in similar efforts, including these examples from the fields of teacher education (Stitzlein, 2010), political science (Harriger & McMillan, 2007), and philosophy (Ralston, 2011). However, Hess and Gatti (2010) point out that "Infusing higher education courses with rich and high-quality discussion of controversial political issues is not easy" (p. 25). While difficult, they also note that the pay-off is high if successful.

For several years the first author taught deliberative justice in a social policy course in which students practiced a deliberative justice exercise (Morrow, 2011). In her class, ideas were introduced in the context of policy legitimacy. A distinction was made between equity based on distributive justice, that is, fairness in the "distribution of costs, benefits and risks across population subgroups" (Kraft & Furlong, 2013, p. 185) and the equity found in deliberative justice, i.e. fairness based on inclusion and fair procedure. As the first term implies, distributive justice is focused on the fairness of distribution, and it is the term more commonly referenced when the relative fairness of a social programs' benefits are discussed. Typically, those who are more conservative tend to prefer targeted benefits, that is, benefits

targeted to those who have the greatest need. Those who are more liberal tend to prefer benefits that are provided more universally. Deliberative justice, on the other hand, "emphasizes that the voices of affected stakeholders must be heard and respected in the policy decision-making process" (Morrow, 2011, p. 390). Inclusion of all voices and effective debate that allows for active interchange of ideas and values prior to decision-making becomes crucial in measuring the quality of deliberation. Put another way, the level of inclusion and the fairness of procedure within an open debate, combined, can determine the extent to which deliberative justice is served.

Focusing on two terms from Habermas helps students better understand deliberative justice, and these terms aid especially in the distinction between deliberative and distributive justice. The first term from Habermas (as cited by Scambler, 2001) is *lifeworld*. Using an adapted and simplified description, lifeworld is explained as understanding the person within their environment; but it also encompasses all of the experiences and impressions that each of us brings to the moment. As some of our memories will be more salient at any given time, accuracy of the memory may be less important than the impression it left on us. In addition to our personal experiences and impressions, lifeworld includes our collective experiences. It is what we learn through our eyes as well as through the eyes of others. The relationship of lifeworld to deliberative justice is that lifeworld stresses the importance of every individual's potential contribution to collective decision-making.

Another of Habermas' concepts used in class is *ideal speech situation* (as cited in Scambler, 2001). Ideal speech situation is described to the students as the process that affords everyone the ability to participate in a fair and open debate in which each opinion is respected. While it may be desirable that a collective consensus be reached, an ideal speech situation is more about the process that allows this to happen. The relationship of ideal speech situation to deliberative justice is that it stresses the importance of fair process in discussion *prior to* collective decision-making.

A simple graphical model of a Continuum of Legitimacy has proved a useful tool to help students gain an appreciation of inclusion and deliberation in decision-making. On one end of the continuum is the extreme of no citizen input. On the other end is the extreme of maximum citizen input and deliberation. From a deliberative justice point of view, the extreme of no citizen input is labeled as an "illegitimate policy" and the extreme of maximum citizen input is labeled as a "fully legitimate policy" (Morrow, 2011, 394).

Once the students have a basic understanding of the ideas of deliberative justice and its contribution to policy legitimacy, they are given the opportunity to participate in a deliberation exercise during class. In social work policy courses, the topic has typically been related to healthcare in the United States (see example in Morrow, 2011). Students choose a stakeholder role to enact during the exercise from a list that the instructor has provided. The students are asked to draw on their own perspective and experience on the issue as they express their "character's" views to the other participants. The deliberation then takes place and a conclusion, usually based on compromise, is reached. In this demonstration of deliberative democracy there are no winners or losers as one might see in a normal classroom debate (for instance, see Bowie, 2009).

Previously, the first author taught about deliberative justice in undergraduate social work policy classes in the United States. This article makes the argument that this same approach to teaching flexibility and consensus in the context of civic discourse also has potential in other college courses and in other locations. In this case, the example is with graduate students in Kathmandu.

Methods

This research was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at Texas Tech University. The same proposal was reviewed and approved by the chief academic officer of the college in Kathmandu. No student's grade was impacted by the study and grades were submitted prior to any analysis of data.

The Context

For the purpose of this study, the classroom is in Nepal, a land where democracy is relatively new. Although Nepal has a proud and great heritage, it also has substantial political tension. The country is sandwiched between two huge and more powerful states, those of China and India. Following eight years of debate, multiple political parties recently agreed to a new constitution on September 20, 2015 (Rawat, 2015, para. 1). Regarding the tensions leading up to the adoption of the constitution, former Prime Minister Madhav Kumar, leader of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), stressed the need for flexibility and consensus to reach this goal ("New constitution", 2014). Today the willingness to use these skills – the willingness to be flexible and the willingness to work towards consensus -- seem to be difficult to find. Unfortunately, a recent report from Nepal suggests that those in power are reluctant to be inclusive in the decision-making process (Bell, 2015). Perhaps an example of the lack of inclusion is the

complaint arising from two minority groups in Nepal, the Madhesis and the Janjatis, and their supporters in India; they complain that the new constitution may "impinge on their cultural identities" (Rawat, 2015, para. 3). Protests have become violent, and possibly as many as 40 lives have been lost concerning this issue. On the other hand, the new constitution provides for protection of the rights of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, and Transgendered (LGBT) persons. It also recognizes the ancestral property rights of women and abolishes the death penalty (Rawat, 2015), two provisions that are rarely seen in this part of the world.

Approximately a year and a half before the enactment of the constitution, while the debate over it was quite contentious, the first author arrived in Kathmandu. She was invited to teach a graduate class in human behavior at the macro level (groups, communities, organizations, populations, etc.) at a small college that is part of a larger university system in Nepal. Given the political context described above, and given the rather substantial differences between the cultures of Nepal and that which surrounds the instructor's home university, this presented a rather unique opportunity to give new depth to previous research on teaching the skills related to flexibility and consensus in debates about public policy.

The Students

Twenty-five students were enrolled in a graduate program near the center of Kathmandu, Nepal. They were already professionals, primarily teachers and school principals, and had already accomplished a great deal academically and professionally. Each had at least one prior college degree. Eight were female; seventeen were male. Some were single; some were married. At least one had children. Some drove over an hour to attend the class that normally met twice per week. A late afternoon schedule was intended to be more convenient for the class members who worked at full time jobs, which was the case for most of them. No data was gathered concerning their ages, but they appeared to range in age from 21 to near 40.

The Class Process

Being in an unfamiliar culture and having a class filled with accomplished professionals, it was soon clear to the first author/instructor, that teaching and learning would be a mutual affair. The effort to teach the two specific concepts related to deliberative justice and to provide a meaningful demonstration of these concepts, as previously described, encompassed only a small portion of the material for this "Human Behavior in the Macro Social Environment" class. Other covered topics included: human needs

and environment; social health and social problems; macro systems theories; major social institutions; organizations; communities; and international communities. Inspiring civic engagement, teaching fair procedure in civic engagement, and emphasizing inclusion that seeks to empower the populace, are challenges that can be drawn from several of the above mentioned topics. Nevertheless, we are focusing here only on the portion of the class dealing with deliberative justice.

Following the presentation of theory, students were asked to independently list the three most pressing social problems in Nepal based on their own points of view. The purpose was to discover which issues could be used to illustrate theory and to engage the students in discussions that would be relevant to their own lives. Four issues seemed of greater concern, including unemployment, corruption, overpopulation (especially in Kathmandu Valley), and pollution (again, primarily in Kathmandu Valley). At that point, the instructor's challenge was to decide which of these four issues would best provide material for a class demonstration of civil deliberation. [Note: This demonstration was one year prior to the devastating earthquakes of 2015.] The goal was not simply to set up a debate, but more importantly to set up the opportunity for deliberation that would lead to consensus, hopefully based on compromise. As previously noted, the primary principles to be illustrated were lifeworld, i.e. an appreciation of the contribution that each individual brings to a discussion based on his/her experiences in his/her environment, and ideal speech situation, i.e. the circumstances that allow each one to share his/her opinion for consideration without distraction or interruption. The intention was to find an issue with which the students were all familiar, but upon which their opinions also seemed divided. In this case, the instructor's personal sight-seeing trip to the famous Pashupati area provided insight into just such an issue.

The Issue. The primary temple of Pashupatinath is located on the Bagmati River that flows through the main part of Kathmandu. A local brochure proclaims, "It is believed that Pashupatinath is the Lord of the entire living beings and the source of eternal bliss and peace. It is a world-renowned temple and most revered by both Hindus and by Buddhists all over the world, setting a shining example of religious harmony. It is a glory of Nepal," (Pashupati Area Development Trust, n.d.). It is also a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site.

One of the most sacred functions of Pashupati is the cremation of deceased Hindu followers and the associated rituals. The rituals are quite lengthy and specific. Following the cremation, Hindu priests

dispose of the cremains into the highly polluted Bagmati River. As the instructor stood beside the river, watching the smoke rise from just such a ceremony, and viewing the gray murkiness of the highly polluted river, a question emerged: "Should Hindu priests be allowed to continue to dispose of cremated remains in the river beside Pashupati? Yes or No?" This question pits a Hindu religious and cultural practice against the increasingly potent problem of pollution of a major river.

Hopeful that this could be an ideal question, the instructor asked students to hand write a one page paper to defend their individual position on this subject. They were specifically asked not to elaborate on multiple sides of the issue. Instead, they were to take a single stand, either for or against the current policy of allowing cremains to be disposed in the river, and to ignore all arguments that might impinge on the stand they were taking. In other words, they were to write in one direction only, in support of their decision, whether yes or no. It was further explained to the students that while they would get participation credit for this assignment, their responses would not be graded and their answers would in no way impact their grade in the class. There was no "right" or "wrong" answer. It should be noted that the students had very little time for self-deliberation; more time might have been recommended by Agosto (2013) to allow for reflection on the issue before forming a judgment. However, for the sake of this demonstration, it seemed best to allow greater time for reflection further on the in the process.

Choosing a firm position was more difficult for some than for others. Six of the students chose "Yes," the priests should continue to be allowed to dispose of cremains in the Bagmati River. In most cases, these students based their arguments on the ideas of religious freedom and cultural tradition. Thirteen of the students said "No" due to the high level of pollution in the river. One of these students argued that the river itself is sacred, and that to uphold its sanctity, it is necessary to clean it up.

Demonstration. The next step the demonstration, allowed the students to experience a small slice of deliberation in which the concepts of lifeworld and ideal speech situation could take on more meaning. The written opinions given by the students during the previous week were divided and two students from each "side" were asked to join the instructor at the front of the classroom. Each of these students was handed his/her previously written statement regarding the river pollution issue; no one else in the class was informed of these written positions. The four took designated seats at the front of the classroom.

Each student was asked to play the part of someone who might be considered a stakeholder in relationship to the selected policy, including a Hindu priest, a Buddhist monk, a public health physician, and a new widow. Members of the demonstration group were asked to speak from the point of view of their assigned role, but they were also asked to keep in mind their personal experience based on their own lifeworld. The role assignment gave each student the opportunity to look through a different lens that was separate from their own previous experience with the topic.

The deliberation was held under strict instructions with an emphasis on the need to show respect for every opinion. Each of the four role players was allowed a few minutes to express his/her views on the subject of cremains disposal in the Bagmati River at Pashupati. They were also asked to listen carefully to the views of the other deliberation participants. Then each was given the opportunity for response to the ideas presented. The students who were not part of the demonstration were asked to listen and let the deliberation between the four demonstration participants unfold.

The "widow" spoke in support of the practice because of the religious significance to her "family;" this corresponded well with her written opinion turned in a week earlier. The "Buddhist Priest" also defended the right of the Hindus to continue this religious practice; and this was in line with his written statement. The "Hindu Priest," on the other hand, felt that even though it was important to honor the Hindu traditions, he firmly believed that this should not continue at Pashupati because the Bagmati has become far too polluted. Interestingly, the "Public Health Physician" argued, as he said in his written assignment, that "Cultural and religious heritages (such as Pashupati) are not the property of one country but they are the property of the world." He added that this site represents the image of the Nepali civilization to the rest of the world, and that the pollution "destroys its beauty."

After their initial statements, each demonstration member was allowed to respond respectfully to any of the other members, but they were also reminded not to demean any of the presented arguments. [Note: The audience very much wanted to participate at this point; this really is a contentious issue in Kathmandu. However, they were silent and respectful after being reminded that the selected group needed to continue the demonstration without interruption.] The two who opposed argued that the river was already too polluted and that the cremains should now be taken elsewhere for disposal. One of these affirmed that the health of the river itself should be preserved. Another participant noted that there are additional significant sources of pollution of the river; and that the sources of mass dumping of chemicals

and other pollutants should also be considered, rather than simply the pollution from the cremains. Eventually a participant pointed out that a partial solution was already planned for implementation. Within a very short period of time, a new electronic system of cremation was to be installed at Pashupati. Presently, the wood used to burn the corpses makes up the largest portion of the ash that is dumped in the river. The electronic version will not need wood, and therefore a great deal of the smoke and ashes from burning of the wood will be eliminated.

Based on the views presented, along with the news of the coming solution, it seemed that a consensus was emerging. All demonstration members agreed on the need to preserve religious freedom for the Hindu population. All agreed in the sanctity of the river and the need to preserve that sanctity by cleaning it up. They all agreed that the new electronic system would resolve a lot of the pollution caused by the burning of wood. Therefore, the group was asked if it might be feasible to agree on a temporary solution. They collectively decided that it would be good to ask (not demand) that family members of deceased persons dispose of the cremains in another part of the Bagmati (or in an alternate river) through a time-limited public service campaign. This would allow time to address all issues of pollution of the river, including industrial sources, and allow the river to be restored so that all persons might again enjoy its beauty and sanctity. This was not a solution that was predicted by anyone in the room. Even the demonstration students were surprised that they had been able to reach a mutually satisfying compromise in such a short period of time (30 – 40 minutes).

Evaluation Measurement

On the first day of class (n=18) and again near the end of term (n=16), students were asked to define or describe the meaning of the concepts “lifeworld” and “ideal speech situation” in their own handwritten words in one or two sentences. After submitting their grades at the end of the term, their level of understanding of these key terms was rated by the instructor using the following rubric: “no understanding of the term” was rated as 0, a “good guess in the right direction” was rated as 1, “partial understanding of some of the concept” was rated as 2, and “excellent comprehension of term” was rated as 3. It should be noted that not all the students who completed pre or post measurements had also been present for all the lectures or the deliberation demonstration exercise.

Students who were present during the demonstration were also asked about their reaction to the method of presenting the material on deliberation. Each responded to the questions “Did the classroom

debate help you to see more clearly the need to better understand the [*lifeworld* or *ideal speech situation*] of others in the process of policy deliberation?" They answered with either "very much", "somewhat", or "not at all" and then they were asked to briefly expand on their ratings, qualitatively.

Results

Central tendency of the instructor's ratings of student understanding of both concepts are displayed in Table 1. As can be seen there, the mean scores did improve from pre to post-testings for both concepts. A paired sample t-test was conducted for the 11 students who completed both pre and post measurements. These results indicated that the increase in mean scores did statistically improve for both *lifeworld* (p=.03) and *ideal speech situation* (p=.01). Fifty-five percent of these students improved their understanding of lifeworld and 73% improved their understanding of ideal speech situation. By the end of term, 50% of the class demonstrated some or excellent understanding of lifeworld while 68% demonstrated some or excellent understanding of ideal speech situation.

Table 1: Means and Modes of Pre and Post Measurements

	Lifeworld		Ideal Speech Situation	
	Pre-test score	Post-test score	Pre-test scores	Post-test score
n	18	16	18	16
mean	0.27	1.31	1.27	2.55
mode	0	0	2	3

Students who participated in the demonstration exercise were asked their subjective opinion about how well the demonstration exercise helped them understand the concept of lifeworld. Of these, 13 students chose "very much", 3 students indicated "Somewhat", while no students said it was not helpful at all. Most qualitative comments regarding this question were also quite favorable.

- *Yes, indeed. The debate had the participation of "people" from different cultural and professional backgrounds and they all had a certain lens through which they interpreted the issue. And yes, they had valid arguments to back their perspectives.*
- *...The participants were very rigorous in their opinions and only finally reached [a compromise through] deliberation.*

- *Yes, it helps to understand others' idea[s] and learn how their ideas are influenced... The [ideas of others] are also valuable. That's why the debate helps to understand life world while creating policies through inclusion.*
- *[In the] debate, three different opinions came to a conclusion/solution because each of them [was] able to understand the life world of others.*

When asked about the utility of the instruction on ideal speech situation, 13 students felt that the instruction "very much" added to their understanding of its relationship to policy deliberation. Three students indicated that the instruction helped "somewhat". There were no students who said it was not helpful at all. It should be noted that not all of those who marked "very much" about the lifeworld instruction marked the same regarding ideal speech situation; in other words, there were some split decisions. Students also made qualitative comments regarding the usefulness of the demonstration in helping them to understand the significance of ideal speech situation. Again, most of the statements were positive.

- *Classroom debate contained ideal speech situation. All participants equally expressed their views and ideas so [it] was practical for understanding.*
- *The participants, though were rigid in their opinion(s), allowed much for others to express their thoughts regarding the issue. The ideal speech situation was... well maintained in the debate.*
- *...Each of the participants was allowed to express his/her views and meanwhile listening to each other – finally agreeing on a center-point.*
- *Yes it did. The debate was completely in democratic way and procedure. Each of the member[s] of panel could express their opinion freely and other members conceive it and criticize in positive way and finally reach... the consensus.*

Discussion

Overall, the results appear positive. As it turned out, the political situation in Nepal provided an interesting backdrop for the context of the class. Despite the distinct cultural difference between this set of students and her students in the U.S., the instructor was able to identify a social issue that interested these students and set up the deliberation demonstration successfully. The results of the pre-test and

posttest comparison indicated movement in a positive direction for students' understanding of both of the concepts presented. The qualitative comments on the instruction technique indicated that the students considered the demonstration a useful activity that bolstered their learning.

Limitations

An obvious, but unavoidable, limitation of the research was the small sample size. With only 25 students enrolled in the course, results cannot be generalized beyond the participating students. Further, only 11 students, less than 50% of the class, completed both the pre and post measurements. This calls into question whether these 11 students' results might have been significantly different than the other students in the class. Perhaps more importantly, there were students who completed the pre and/or post measurements but did not attend all classes in which the relevant content was discussed nor the deliberation demonstration exercise. While unable to track this data, it is very possible that further improvement in understanding would have been demonstrated if all the students had been able to attend all the class periods.

Additionally, it is possible that social desirability may have impacted the measurements. Culturally, the Nepali have been socialized to place their instructors in very high regard and to show them a maximum level of respect. However, throughout the semester, these students frequently questioned and confronted the instructor regarding the material being presented in class. They also freely challenged one another's opinions on a wide variety of issues. Therefore, we do not believe that social desirability was a significant problem in this case.

The language barrier is another potential limitation. Though all the students knew English, some were more fluent than others. Some may have had difficulty understanding the class material and the measurement questions, or expressing themselves in English. However, if true, the instructor was unaware of it. The students appeared to understand the material and did not ask for any clarification of the attempts to measure their comprehension and appreciation.

Implications

Student feedback from this course was similar to feedback regarding a senior level social work policy class in the U.S. (Morrow, 2011). In the U.S. class, more than half (55%) felt that the class discussion/demonstration regarding lifeworld was very helpful and almost two-thirds (73%) felt that the

discussion/demonstration regarding ideal speech situation was very helpful. It appears worth noting that both classes found these pedagogical methods effective.

The data from the Nepalese students' adds a new dimension to previously published research on this topic since both the class and students were significantly different. Based on these findings, it appears that continued study of the most efficacious pedagogical methods to help students understand deliberative justice is important for an informed and active populace in any democracy. We hope that the students' enthusiastic responses to the demonstration will inspire them as teachers to incorporate similar demonstrations in their own classrooms of the present and future.

Further research is encouraged to find effective approaches to teaching the concepts and skills needed to support civil society at the grassroots level. As mentioned earlier, there are those who are studying the impact of informed deliberation among those with differing options (The Center for Deliberative Democracy, n.d.). However, evaluating the effectiveness in classrooms of various educational levels and in very different parts of the world remains in the beginning stages. Others are encouraged to experiment, find what works well, and report their findings to the rest of us.

Conclusions

Teaching about civic discourse in classrooms at different levels of education is one way that has been suggested to increase citizens' ability to actively participate in their government and society in general in an informed and effective way. This paper presented a case example of how introducing two particularly salient concepts from Habermas and a demonstration of democratic deliberation using a social issue of interest may help students to grasp how these methods can be used to increase the legitimacy of policy-making in society. The positive evaluation results add to the growing body of knowledge on pedagogical techniques that can bolster civic discourse and engagement.

References

Agosto, V. (2013). Public acts of self-deliberation: Preparation for discursive democracy in education. *Learning for Democracy*, *5*(1), 18-27.

Bell, T. (2015, July 8). Nepal's constitutional jeopardy (Opinion). *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved from http://www.aljazeera.com

Bowie, S.L. (2009). Undergraduate social welfare policy debates: An assessment of outcomes using the policy debate rating scale. *The Journal of Baccalaureate Social Work*, *14*(1), 63-82.

The Center for Deliberative Democracy. (n.d.). What is Deliberative Polling®? Retrieved from http://cdd.stanford.edu/what-is-deliberative-polling/

Cole, H.J. (2013). Teaching, practicing, and performing deliberative democracy in the classroom. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 9(2), Article 10. Retrieved from: http://www.publicdeliberation.net/jpd/

Fishkin, J. S. & Laslett, P. (2003). *Debating deliberative democracy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Giroux, H. A. (2006). *America on the edge. Henry Giroux on politics, culture, and education*. New York, N.Y.: Palgrave MacMillan.

Gray, M. & Lovat, T. (2008). Practical mysticism, Habermas, and social work praxis. *Journal of Social Work, 8*(2), 149-162. doi: 10.1177/1468017307088496

Gutmann, A. & Thompson, D. (2004). *Why deliberative democracy?* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Harriger, K.J. & McMillan, J.J. (2007). *Speaking of politics: Preparing college students for democratic citizenship through deliberative dialogue*. Dayton, OH: Kettering.

Hess, D. & Gatti, L. (2010). Putting politics where it belongs: In the classroom. In N.L. Thomas' (Ed.) *Educating for deliberative democracy: New directions for higher education, no. 152* (pp. 19-26). San Francisco: Wiley.

Houston, S. (2009). Communication, recognition and social work: Aligning the ethical theories of Habermas and Honneth. *British Journal of Social Work, 39*(7), 1274-1290. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcn054

Jones, I.R. (2001). Ch. 4: Health care decision making and the politics of health. In G. Scambler's (Ed.) *Habermas, critical theory and health*. London: Routledge.

Kraft, M. E. & Furlong, S.R. (2013). *Public policy: Politics, analysis, and alternatives*. (4th Ed.). Los Angeles: Sage/CQ Press.

Levine, P. (2010). Teaching and learning civility. In N.L. Thomas' (Ed.) *Educating for deliberative democracy: New directions for higher education, no. 152* (pp. 11-18). San Francisco: Wiley.

Lovat, T., & Gray, M. (2008). Towards a proportionist social work ethics: A Habermasian perspective. *British Journal of Social Work, 38*(6), 1100-1114. doi: 10.1093/bjsw/bcl396

Morrow, H. (2011). Integrating deliberative justice theory into social work policy pedagogy. *Journal of Social Work Education, 47*(3), p 389-402. doi:10.5175/JSWE.2011.201000003

New constitution on Jan 22, claims leader Nepal. (Nov. 22, 2014). *Rautahat News*. Retrieved from: http://www.myrepublica.com.

Pashupati Area Development Trust Governing Council. (n.d.). Pashupati Brochure. Galkopakha, Kathmandu: Kishor Offset Press Pvt. Ltd.

Pew Foundation. (2014). Political polarization in the American public. Retrieved from http://www.people-press.org

Ralston, S. (2011). Deliberating with critical friends: a strategy for teaching deliberative democratic theory. *Teaching Philosophy, 34*(4), 393-410. doi:10.5840/teachphil201134449

Rawat, M. (October 7, 2015). Nepal's constitution and lessons for India. *The Diplomat.* Retrieved from http://thediplomat.com/

Scambler, G., ed. (2001). *Habermas, critical theory and health*. London: Routledge.

Stitzlein, S. (2010). Deliberative democracy in teacher education. *Journal of Public Deliberation, 6*(1), 1-18.

Thomas, N. L., ed. (2010). *Educating for deliberative democracy: New directions for higher education*, no. 152. San Francisco: Wiley.

Acknowledgments

The assistance of Sushil Pandey, PhD, Deborah Merola, PhD and Bev Hoffman, is gratefully acknowledged. Also, this research would not been possible without the enthusiastic class participation of the Nepali graduate students involved.

About the Author(s)

Dr. Morrow is an Associate Professor of Social Work in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, College of Arts and Sciences, Texas Tech University, in Lubbock, Texas. She is the MSW Director. Dr. Morrow received her MSSW from the University of Texas at Arlington and her PhD in political science from Texas Tech University. Her recent courses have included: Social Policy & Social Welfare Legislation; Human Behavior in the Social Environment: Macro; and Social Work Profession and Social Welfare Policy. Her primary research interests are the pedagogy of decision-making in public policy, health care, and public health.

Dr. Lowe is an Associate Professor of Social Work in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work, College of Arts and Sciences, Texas Tech University, in Lubbock, Texas. She received both her MSW and PhD in Social Work from the University of Georgia. Her current research interest include professional civic-mindedness and social work education.