Transforming Assessment Practice through the Lens of Democratic Engagement

Assessing the Practices of Public Scholarship [APPS] Research Group

Group representatives here today: Mary F. Price, Julia Metzker, Sylvia Gale, Joe Bandy, & Patti H. Clayton, [with us today in spirit: Sarah Stanlick, Anna S. Bartel, Stephani Etheridge Woodson, & Georgia Nigro

Assessment Institute, Indianapolis, IN

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LEARN MORE

Read the White Paper on Democratically Engaged Assessment
▶ http://hdl.handle.net/1805/17729

Learn more about the APPS Group and Imagining America
▶ https://imaginingamerica.org/initiatives/apps/
Imagining America creates democratic spaces to foster and advance publicly engaged scholarship that draws on arts, humanities, and design. The organization works to catalyze change in campus practices, structures, and policies that enables artists and scholars to thrive and contribute to community action and revitalization.
Assessing the Practices of Public Scholarship [APPS]

Who we are:

- Transdisciplinary research group within Imagining America
- Over our history, blend of community arts practitioners, academics, students and practitioners

What we do:

- Promote assessment that realizes the values and transformative potential of community engagement.

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Getting to know each other:

• Your Name, Institution
• 3 words that describe what you do
• 1 word or phrase that best describes your relation to assessment
• Particular area of interest [classroom assessment, institutional, partnerships, etc.]
Overview of the day

- Values and Assessment: Locating Ourselves
- Break [10:25 – 10:40 a.m.]
- Introducing, Engaging, & Applying DEA
- Lunch [noon – 1:15 p.m.]
- Working with DEA
  - Part 1 – Digging into your selected value
  - Break [2:30 – 2:40 p.m.]
  - Part 2 – Reimagining practice & moving to action
- Feedback & Recommendations for Next Steps
Values and Assessment: Locating Ourselves
Refer worksheet:

• What is your assessment story?
• How did you come to assessment?
• How do you feel about it?
• What does it mean to you?
• What do you want it to mean?
Assessment/evaluation is...?

- **value free**: free from imposed values, purely objective
- **value neutral**: doesn’t take sides
- **value laden**: derived from a particular set of values
- **value engaged**: grounded in, informed by and in dialogue with values

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- Something we have?
- Something we learn?
- Something we do?
Assessment as “liberatory”

“civic imagination”

“the capacity to imagine alternatives to current social and political conditions.”

(Jenkins, 2016, p. 300).

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Fueling the civic imagination…

Assessment a civic institution?

a cultural practice through which we can take “seriously the demands of justice, equity, and civic courage.”

(Giroux, 2017, pp. 16-17)
The public work of democracy

- Naming, setting, and framing a problem or positive goal
- Identifying options for what can be done and the consequences of alternatives
- Acting to implement solutions and create something of public significance and evaluating, reflecting on, and learning from experience
- Deciding what should be done


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Public Purposes in Higher Education
Think back to your story?

What public purposes/ends lie inside your assessment work?

In light of this:
- What values do you bring to your work in assessment?
- How does/might assessment bring your values to life?
World we encounter vs. World we envision:

- Power shared across among all stakeholders
- Power concentrated among ‘experts’ & professionals
- Focus on relationships, processes & products
- Focus on products
- Relationships are means and ends
- Participation & co-creation empowered
- Participation & co-creation constrained
- Multiple methods & dialogue
- Accounting and auditing

Legend:
- Red (Tension 1) = Expertise & Power
- Blue (Tension 2) = Sources of Accountability
- Green (Tension 3) = Relationships & Process
Central question

How might we better “walk the talk” of the values of democratic engagement in our assessment work, navigating constraints and inevitable tension points while empowering all participants?
BREAK
Introduction to DEA
Assessing the Practices of Public Scholarship [APPS]

- 2008: “scholarship in public” and “the curriculum project”
- 2009: “integrated assessment”
- 2015: “values-engaged assessment”
- 2018: “democratically engaged assessment”

MJCSL article
White Paper

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Core Values of DEA

- Full Participation
- Resilience
- Co-Creation
- Practicability
- Generativity
- Rigor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technocratic Civic Engagement (TCE)</th>
<th>Democratic Civic Engagement (DCE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>For</strong></td>
<td><strong>With</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit-based</td>
<td>Asset-based</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uni-directional flow of knowledge from credentialed academic experts; distinction between knowledge producers and knowledge consumers</td>
<td>Multi-directional, synergistic flow of ideas and questions within a web of knowledge centers; co-creation of knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engagement is apolitical</td>
<td>Engagement facilitates inclusive, collaborative, deliberative democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>At best transactional exchanges</td>
<td>Potentially transformative partnerships (transformative of self, others, organizations/institutions, systems, paradigms); change result from co-creation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical power dynamics</td>
<td>Powershifted dynamics that disrupt hierarchy and position all partners as co-educators, co-learners, co-generators of knowledge and practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applying DEA

Reclaiming agency in assessment

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• Beth’s Story: Enacting a value in the design of a new program
• Vialla’s Story: Assessing unit programming for presence of a value
• ioby’s Story: Designing an assessment strategy in light of competing values
Phases of Assessment

1. Deliberate & Define Values, Goals, Audiences
   - Why assess? What values and goals are particularly important, and for whom?

2. Determine Design & Methods
   - What do we collect and how?

3. Implement
   - How do we find and interpret evidence?

4. Report and Disseminate
   - How do we communicate and share results?

5. Learn from and Act on Results
   - How do we improve our work? What are next steps forward?

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Mapping: Carnegie Elective Community Engagement Classification

- Deliberate & Define Values, Goals, Audiences
- Determine Design & Methods
- Learn from and Act on Results
- Report and Disseminate
- Implement

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Mapping: DEAL Model Critical Thinking Table & Rubric

- Deliberate & Define
- Values, Goals
- Audiences
- Learn from and Act on Results
- Determine Design & Methods
- Report and Disseminate
- Implement

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In packet [pg.4]

What about DEA excites you?

What about DEA concerns or challenges you?

Which DEA Value do you MOST want to apply to your assessment practice?

Why?

What do you MOST want to work on in your assessment practice related to values and DEA?
LUNCH
Working with DEA – Parts 1 & 2

Reclaiming agency in assessment

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Core Values of DEA

- Full Participation
- Resilience
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• “Our lives are filled with contradictions — [including] the gap between our aspirations and our behavior ... If we fail to hold them creatively, these contradictions will shut us down and take us out of the action ...”

• When we allow their tensions to expand our hearts, they can open us to new understandings of ourselves and our world, enhancing our lives and allowing us to enhance the lives of others. ...The genius of the human heart lies in its capacity to use these tensions to generate insight, energy, and new life.” (p. 45)
Resisting the “Shutdown”...and Reclaiming Assessment
Dialectical Tensions & the Shutdown
Strategies beyond Shutting Down

- The Exit Strategy
- The Accommodation & Resistance Strategy
- The Competition Strategy
- Strategies of Transformation
  - Micro
  - Macro
BREAK
Beth’s Story: Enacting a value in the design of a new program

Vialla’s Story: Assessing unit programming for presence of a value

ioby’s Story: Designing an assessment strategy in light of competing values

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World as we encounter it

World as we envision it
Intention Setting

What steps can you take and when?

- During the conference
- This month
- This semester
- This year
- And beyond....

What is the impact you want to have?

Locate yourself.
Discussion

Feedback on DEA & Next Steps
What are you still struggling with right now?

What else do you need to go deeper or to do this well?
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