

Like most analytical political theory, the argument of the book substitutes one set of concepts and distinctions for another, claiming that (only) the new concepts and distinctions just manage to secure democracy, freedom and equality, and so on. One of those concepts is demonstrable nonconsensual harm. Yet Bedi's discussion of the terms of this concept shows that it can do the job only to the extent that citizens agree about what constitutes demonstrability, consent, and harm. Take, for instance, the following quotation: "[I]n many . . . cases there will be good faith disagreement over demonstrability, whether a particular activity leads to harm. . . . There are no right answers here, only good faith decisions by the majority" (p. 72). Here, the acknowledged fact of disagreement undermines the ability of the demonstrability requirement to protect minorities against the tyranny of the majority.

This seems to me to be a general point: When we probe the concepts and distinctions of *Rejecting Rights*, their force is undermined by potential disagreements. Those disagreements can be trumped by democratic majority decisions, but this reintroduces the threat of majority tyranny that the author otherwise wants to protect us against. I do not claim to have a way to solve this; nor is my point that Bedi fails to find the truly neutral theory of government. As he rightly argues, such a theory does not exist. But perhaps the very concerns he has with the failures of competing liberal attempts to square democracy and freedom and equality should lead us to be more wary about the work that concepts and distinctions can do. That said, it is the merit of the book that it forces us to rethink our common conceptions about rights, democracy, freedom, and equality, and it is highly recommended for political scientists and legal scholars with an interest in contemporary theories, and uses, of rights.

**Democracy as Problem Solving: Civic Capacity in Communities Across the Globe.** By Xavier de Souza Briggs. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008. 400p. \$70.00 cloth, \$28.00 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592710003683

— Carmen Sirianni, *Brandeis University*

This book makes a significant contribution to an emergent international literature that looks at democracy through the pragmatic lens of problem solving. Xavier de Souza Briggs locates this in the tradition of John Dewey, though its contemporary variants are much more explicit about the role that citizens, as well as different kinds of civic associations and intermediaries, can play in working with other stakeholders to solve important public problems in ways that are innovative and accountable. He steers a quite interesting path within this literature and brings to bear his own six case studies designed for theory building, not rigorous comparison or hypothesis testing. The six are paired across continents, with the U.S. cases as the repeating ones. Thus, under the policy problem of managing

urban growth, the Salt Lake City region is paired with Mumbai, India. On restructuring the economy, Pittsburgh is paired with a region within Greater São Paulo, Brazil. For youth development, San Francisco is paired with post-apartheid Capetown, South Africa.

The core of Briggs's argument is that in many policy domains, public problems have become so complex and have so many interacting parts that new forms of civic capacity need to be built that are customized to address the specific nature of the challenges they pose (in addition, of course, to aligning with local and regional civic and political cultures). Aggregate measures of social capital do not tell us much about how this can be done, and historic civic legacies (see Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, 1993), while important, often disguise emergent possibilities for "resourceful" (p. 300) civic innovation represented by new intermediaries and coalitions. While he does not say so directly, Briggs also implies that the classic multitiered civic associations in U.S. history (see Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*, 2003) have also lost much of their relative capacity because of the increasingly complex nature of many problems and the multifarious forms of coalitions and partnerships that need to be generated to address them. I would argue further that the classic multitiered associations of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries displayed almost no propensity to develop complex policy frames and capacities for the problems of the late twentieth century and beyond, and that in addition to the causes that Skocpol pinpoints, the diverse organizational ecologies generated to respond to such complexity tended over time to undermine the structural privileges of the multitiers as civic aggregators at the local level and, thus, in the democratic system as a whole.

Briggs's analytic approach draws fruitfully from the work of Clarence Stone, especially upon his social production model of "power with" in urban regimes (though Briggs goes beyond the regime model), as well as Stone's specific analysis of what it means to build civic capacity for reforming urban schools. The latter, according to Stone and his colleagues, are "high reverberation subsystems . . . characterized by frequent reshuffling of mobilized stakeholders, multiple and strongly felt competing value and belief systems, deeply held stakes by both educators (the professional providers of education) and parents (the consumers), and ambiguous boundaries" (Clarence Stone et al., *Building Civic Capacity*, 2001, p. 50). Only new forms of civic capacity and mobilization are likely to be adequate to such systems and, Briggs adds, to many other systems (ecosystems, public health and safety, housing, employment, urban and regional development).

Briggs stresses models of democratic coproduction and reciprocal accountability among various partners (civic, government, business, other institutions) because implementation is as critical as setting agendas or enacting legislation. Leadership for such partnerships can come from

many directions, sometimes from the top down, but also from the bottom up, as radical engagement by poor people's groups in Mumbai and the ABC Region of São Paulo set agendas and sparked collaborative action. His understanding of partnership accommodates inevitable conflict and inequalities of power since these can hardly be wished away, and since responsible democratic actors must seek to enhance governance even while battling persistent inequalities. His best cases incorporate some version of responsible bargaining and genuine policy learning within partnerships, moving beyond simple interest-group models, but also beyond forms of deliberative democracy that tend to stress large public forums and/or representative samples of participants. In the author's model, the complexity of problems, relationships, and coproduction within extended networks for public value creation requires building forms of trust and mutual accountability that are more dense, persistent, and reflexive than typically found in many forms of deliberative democracy—though some do tend to focus on recurrent problem solving, reducing inequalities of voice, and institutionalization (e.g., Archon Fung, *Empowered Participation*, 2004).

The analysis of the creative role of civic intermediaries is the great strength of the book, although Briggs could have given us more measures of organizational capacity (resources, networks, staff, public communication, membership mobilization). In one case at least, the dynamic has been even more robust than he shows. Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth, which spearheaded the successful San Francisco ballot campaign in the 1990s for a children's budget and generated independent youth and parent groups to ensure passage and reauthorization, was also at the center of the struggle to establish a citywide youth commission. Composed of young people, ages 12 to 23 years old, the commission helps organize through youth networks across the city, and it has official responsibilities for public deliberation and reporting to the board of supervisors on all policies affecting youth. When Margaret Brodtkin, the dynamic leader of Coleman, was appointed to head the city's department of children, youth, and families in 2004, she brought her frame of youth empowerment to the process and criteria by which the department managed grants, sparking a culture change within the department, as well as within some of the traditional nonprofits in the field (see Carmen Sirianni and Diana Schor, "City Government as Enabler of Youth Civic Engagement," in James Youniss and Peter Levine, eds., *Policies for Youth Civic Engagement*, 2009).

This example represents one way to bring innovations to scale, a key challenge noted by the author. While he is right to warn against relying on the public sector and to highlight diverse avenues, I think that the enormous challenges of building and sustaining civic and partnership strategies and capacities for public problem solving calls for a much more systematic approach by public agencies

at all levels of government (see Carmen Sirianni, *Investing in Democracy*, 2009). We have a good number of cases from the United States and around the world where local as well as national government agencies enable civic engagement, collaborative problem solving, and democratic network governance. We have available many practical tools, templates, and policy designs that can be leveraged for much greater scope and impact. But we need to look at the concept of policy design for democracy, civic policy feedback, public administration, and planning in broader ways, especially when tailored to local/regional policy challenges, and we also need to be willing to view public spending through the lens of investments in democracy.

Briggs's book is an indispensable contribution for those figuring out how to make collaborative problem solving a core component of vibrant, effective, pluralist, and just democracies in the twenty-first century.

**Theories of Social Capital: Researchers Behaving Badly.** By Ben Fine. New York: Pluto Press, 2010. 304p. \$110.00 cloth, \$45.00 paper.

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— Sanford F. Schram, *Bryn Mawr College*

Ben Fine has been writing about the limitations of the concept of social capital for more than 20 years. The 34-page bibliography in this book includes 44 separate publications authored by Fine on the topic. He tells us at the outset that he had recently tried to resist writing further about it, but just when he thought he had escaped its clutches he was pulled back in, when folks at the World Bank invited him to participate in a session designed to show the concept's utility for addressing the problems of economic development around the globe. It was at that point that Fine knew he had to go back into the trenches to fight the good fight on this topic. The result is a book meant to be a synoptic critique on how the concept of social capital continues in an era of globalization to be far too fashionable a social science conceit and needs to be taken down a peg or two (at a minimum). The text delivers on its promise, providing an exhaustive, if at times exhausting, blow-by-blow analysis demonstrating that the trendiness of the social capital concept has led to its ever-widening trivialization across a growing number of academic disciplines, such that its contribution for helping us understand how to respond to the problems of globalization could well be negative.

*Theories of Social Capital* is not your usual academic monograph; it is not, strictly speaking, a focused study of a particular topic based on empirical research, qualitative or quantitative. There are some index searches and other attempts to demonstrate how the concept of social capital has achieved its hypertrophied status. Nor is it the usual theoretical investigation of an idea or concept; it lacks sustained attention to the development of the idea's