



DRAFT



The DC Tutoring & Mentoring Initiative: Weighing the Evidence from the Social Sciences and Other Sources

Tom Pollak, 2016

There's a wealth of circumstantial evidence from the social sciences and the humanities to suggest that a comprehensive and holistic city-wide project such as the DC Tutoring & Mentoring Initiative (DCTMI) can successfully engage and mobilize people for the common good, over a sustained period of time, and in the absence of a physical crisis or event (snowstorm, flood, act of terrorism, etc.).

Public health and social marketing campaigns as well as successful social movements show that large-scale social change is possible. These, more often than not, aim to *stop* particular behaviors or make very small changes in behavior (e.g., relating to personal health care) – a smaller challenge than we face with DCTMI. However, a range of small-scale studies and other examples suggest that prosocial attitudes and behavior – e.g., volunteering to mentor or tutor – can change under the right circumstances.

We do not need consensus or political agreement to begin. Even modest support from nonprofits and higher education enables us to scale the effort. Individual volunteers can act autonomously and almost immediately – although the results of their tutoring or mentoring may take longer to appear.

The DCTMI concept paper provides an overview for the project.¹ The value of volunteer tutoring and mentoring to youth has been well documented in a myriad of research already; we do not address this here.² The purpose of this working paper is narrower: To explain why this project ought to be embraced by universities and research organizations as an outgrowth of their missions and as sound and innovative social science.

Introduction

As Robert Kennedy put it, "The future is not a gift: it is an achievement. Every generation helps make its own future." What we do as social scientists really matters to the future – or could matter if we work together around the right vision and set of goals.

¹ <http://www.dctutormentor.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/DCTMI-concept-paper-2015-04.pdf>

² See, for example, Eby, Lillian T. et al. "Does Mentoring Matter? A Multidisciplinary Meta-Analysis Comparing Mentored and Non-Mentored Individuals." *Journal of vocational behavior* 72.2 (2008): 254–267. PMC. Web. 30 June 2015 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2352144/>; *Mobilizing Volunteer Tutors to Improve Student Literacy: Implementation, Impacts, and Costs of the Reading Partners Program*, 03/2015, Robin Tepper Jacob, Catherine Armstrong, Jacklyn Willard, http://www.mdrc.org/sites/default/files/ReadingPartners_2015_FR.pdf

I have tried to synthesize a wide variety of knowledge focused on strategies for addressing our long range challenges. I see a number of interrelated challenges and opportunities:

Traditional anti-poverty and education reform efforts have had limited success. Yet fifty years after the start of the War on Poverty, policymakers largely know what works in many if not most human service, public health and education fields. As Lisbeth Schorr put it more than thirty years ago writing about programs for at-risk families and children, "intensive, comprehensive, individualized services with aggressive attention to outreach and to maintaining relationships over time... are what works..." And, of course, families need a base of economic security, stable housing and safe neighborhoods. There may be gains to be made by fine-tuning programs, coordinating work through collective impact projects, and better channeling private and public dollars to programs with proven outcomes,³ but the larger policy question is the one that nobody has systematically tackled: How do we increase the level of sustained civic support for what works? (That civic support may be expressed through volunteering, donating to nonprofit organizations, supporting government policies and programs that work.)

Economic, environmental and social instability likely. The country will be facing substantial disruptions and challenges in coming decades. We need to become more "civically mature" as quickly as possible if we are to have the resilience and prosocial instincts we need to build flourishing communities, a thriving democracy, and a strong and equitable economy. Here's why a sense of urgency is needed:

- Evidence points to climate change unfolding at a faster rate than most climate change experts predicted: "The gathering risks of climate change are so profound that they could stall or even reverse generations of progress against poverty and hunger if greenhouse emissions continue at a runaway pace, according to a major new United Nations report."⁴
- Researchers looking at the impact of automation now predict that 47 percent of today's jobs are in the "high risk" category for elimination⁵ and underemployment is already an enormous problem.⁶

³ Ron Haskins (Brookings) assessment of the Obama Administration's use of evidence-based research and competition to foster evidence-based innovation provides a useful summary. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/01/opinion/social-programs-that-work.html>. *Social Programs That Work*. Dec. 31, 2014 but examples of

⁴ *U.N. Panel Issues Its Starkest Warning Yet on Global Warming*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/03/world/europe/global-warming-un-intergovernmental-panel-on-climate-change.html>, Nov. 3, 2014. See also: *Why This New Study On Arctic Permafrost Is So Scary*, <http://thinkprogress.org/climate/2015/04/08/3643953/greenland-permafrost-thaw-microbes>, by Emily Atkin, April 8, 2015; *A 'megadrought' will grip U.S. in the coming decades, NASA researchers say*, http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/todays-drought-in-the-west-is-nothing-compared-to-what-may-be-coming/2015/02/12/0041646a-b2d9-11e4-854b-a38d13486ba1_story.html, Feb 12, 2015

⁵ Frey, Carl B. & Osborne, Mi. *The Future of Employment: How Susceptible are Jobs to Computerisation?* http://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/downloads/academic/The_Future_of_Employment.pdf

⁶ Shierholz, Heidi; Alyssa Davis; & Will Kimball (Economic Policy Institute,| May 1, 2014). *The Class of 2014: The Weak Economy Is Idling Too Many Young Graduates*. "For young college graduates, the unemployment rate is currently 8.5 percent (compared with 5.5 percent in 2007), and the underemployment rate is 16.8 percent (compared with 9.6 percent in 2007). For young high school graduates, the unemployment rate is 22.9 percent (compared with 15.9 percent in 2007), and the underemployment rate is 41.5 percent (compared with 26.8 percent in 2007)... The large increases since 2007 in the unemployment and underemployment rates of young college graduates, and in the

- Our racial and ethnic divisions are growing larger.⁷
- Limiting our ability to take sustained and effective political action, our political divisions are here to stay, especially at the federal level.⁸
- Voter turnout in the 2014 mid-term elections was the lowest since World War II and volunteering rates have been flat or trending slightly downward over the past ten year.⁹
- The lack of a “middle ring” of “civic friendships” with neighbors, colleagues and diverse others that are deeper than the casual connections within our networks but weaker than our close friendships undermines our ability for civic problem solving and action.¹⁰

Civic Opportunities & Solutions

In the absence of viable programmatic or political solutions, in what direction do we look for progress? I'd suggest a “civic solution” – an approach based on the premise that a public campaign with the right kind of leadership can trigger “the better angels of our nature,” with the result that a lot more people (and their employers and congregations) would be willing to volunteer, contribute financially, or otherwise help tackle the major challenges of their community.

What can the social sciences and humanities tell us about the feasibility of this type of approach?

- *The potential for substantial change in attitudes, mindsets and behavior.* The evidence from at least sixty years of social psychology, cognitive psychology, behavioral economics, education research, and marketing is clear that even the smartest of us learn from and are influenced by our experiences and our social groups, far more than we learn from or are moved to act by our intellect.¹¹ This gives us great potential for both good and evil.¹² (A stunning recent example is

share of employed young college graduates working in jobs that do not require a college degree, underscore that the current unemployment crisis among young workers did not arise because today's young adults lack the right education or skills. Rather, it stems from weak demand for goods and services, which makes it unnecessary for employers to significantly ramp up hiring. The long-run wage trends for young graduates are bleak, with wages substantially lower today than in 2000. Since 2000, the real (inflation-adjusted) wages of young high school graduates have dropped 10.8 percent, and those of young college graduates have dropped 7.7 percent.”
<http://www.epi.org/publication/class-of-2014/>

⁷ See, e.g., Pew Research Center. *Stark Racial Divisions in Reactions to Ferguson Police Shooting*. <http://www.people-press.org/2014/08/18/stark-racial-divisions-in-reactions-to-ferguson-police-shooting/>

⁸ See, e.g., Dan Balz, *Why polarization could persist after Obama*, http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/why-polarization-could-persist-after-obama/2014/09/06/4bc3b0d8-352e-11e4-a723-fa3895a25d02_story.html?wpmk=MK0000200

⁹ Wash. Post. *Voter turnout in 2014 was the lowest since WWII*. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2014/11/10/voter-turnout-in-2014-was-the-lowest-since-wwii/> (Nov. 10, 2014)

¹⁰ See Dunkelman, M. *The Vanishing Neighbor: The Transformation of American Community* (2014): “[W]e need to provide Americans not only with the opportunity but also with the wherewithal to develop the types of relationships that once defined the middle rings. That’s not a prescription to restore townshipped community; it’s a strategy to fill some of the holes left untended during a networked era. America’s social character will be a crucial determinant of our national trajectory, and today, it seems, we’re fortunate to be on the cusp of uncovering the tools required to provide future generations with the blessing of self-control.” (Kindle loc. 3352).

¹¹ As Nobel Prize-winning behavioral economist Daniel Kahneman put it with great humility in his highly regarded book *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (p. 417), “System 1, [Fast, automatic, frequent, emotional, stereotypic, subconscious thought], is not readily educable. Except for some effects that I attribute mostly to age, my intuitive thinking is just

the change in support for marriage between same-sex couples, which jumped dramatically for all generations in less than twenty years from 27 to 60 percent.¹³) One implication of this is that ordinary people, or at least the 16 percent or so who constitute the “innovators” and “early adopters,” can be influenced to become more civically engaged if we can find the right mix of communication strategies.

- *We can do better: Promoting prosocial behavior and building resiliency, empathy and a sense of collective efficacy.*
 - At the micro level, there’s ample evidence in social psychology dating back to the famous Robber’s Cave Experiment of the 1950s that interactions structured around achieving shared or *superordinate* goals can create a sense of collective efficacy and social cohesion.¹⁴ Volumes of work from management and leadership research point in the same direction.¹⁵
 - At the macro level, we see approximately twice the levels of giving and volunteering in Utah that we see elsewhere in the country.¹⁶ These differences may be driven by Mormon faith in this context but they provide circumstantial evidence to support the broader hypothesis that the mere fact that we lead very busy lives and feel economically vulnerable does not rule out vastly greater civic engagement if one’s faith (religious or civic) support that engagement. And we do see some progress.¹⁷

as prone to overconfidence, extreme predictions, and the planning fallacy as it was before I made a study of these issues. I have improved only in my ability to recognize situations in which errors are likely: “This number will be an anchor...,” “The decision could change if the problem is reframed...” And I have made much more progress in recognizing the errors of others than my own. The way to block errors that originate in System 1 is simple in principle: recognize the signs that you are in a cognitive minefield, slow down, and ask for reinforcement from System 2, [slow, effortful, infrequent, logical, calculating, conscious thought].”

¹² See, e.g., Maria Konnikova. *The Real Lesson of the Stanford Prison Experiment* (2015).

<http://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/the-real-lesson-of-the-stanford-prison-experiment> .

¹³ Cillizza, Chris. *How unbelievably quickly public opinion changed on gay marriage, in 5 charts.*

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/the-fix/wp/2015/06/26/how-unbelievably-quickly-public-opinion-changed-on-gay-marriage-in-6-charts/>. June 26, 2015

¹⁴ *The Robber’s Cave Experiment* (Sherif 1961): Adolescent boys at a summer camp were divided into two groups. At first, competition between the groups was promoted and the groups learned to dislike each other. Then several “crises” were staged, which required the two groups to work together on “superordinate goals.” In the first “crisis,” for example, the water supply to the camp was cut off and the two groups had to work together to haul the water. The result? By the end of the session, the groups were good friends.

¹⁵ From the role of intrinsic motivation in management literature to theories of transformational leadership, authentic leadership, resonant leadership, and servant leadership, a shared vision or mission is one of the central elements of leadership. [TO-VERIFY]

¹⁶ See the annual data from the U.S. Current Population Survey’s September Volunteer Supplement and IRS tax tables on the charitable giving deductions by state. (CITATIONS)

¹⁷ We are getting nicer and wiser, albeit too slowly. Although there’s ample reason to be pessimistic in the “short-term” – the next 10-100 years – the history of man’s moral and social progress should at least give us some broad grounds for optimism. Prominent conservative sociologist James Q. Wilson notes, “The most remarkable change in the moral history of mankind has been the rise—and occasionally the application—of the view that all people...are entitled to fair treatment.” (Wilson, *The Moral Sense*, p.191)

Steven Pinker (2007) offers evidence of a decline in violence in both the last 50-60 years and over the past several millennia. We have less crime, interstate war deaths, and barbaric punishment than our ancestors. Pinker suggests

- *The nonprofit role.* We can work together more effectively and, echoing Tocqueville, nonprofits have had a central role to play in making this happen.
- *A social ecological model,* a staple of public health curricula, provides a useful holistic framework for expanding the range of policy options to include multi-modal city-wide long-term approaches to tackling what we typically think of as isolated social or educational problems.
- *Large upside potential.* A focus on developing civic solutions or the civic capacity to address one type of problem seems likely to be transferable in many respects to the solution of other types of problems.¹⁸ The habits of collaboration of members of Congress who were part of the Greatest Generation that fought in World War II is a more concrete modern example of this dynamic.¹⁹
- *There are no better alternatives.* Churchill said that democracy is the worst system of government but for all the rest. The same may be true for civic-oriented solutions. The focus on moving financial capital through impact investing, donor advised funds, and pay for success bonds or approaches may be of value but without parallel efforts to find civic solutions that engage and empower community members it may only exacerbate existing inequalities and divisions, however benign investors' intentions.

Social Science: Asking the Right Questions

The revolution in behavioral economics and social and cognitive psychology over the past thirty years highlights the importance of embracing a more complex, holistic and realistic view of communities and human nature than we see in most social science journals. The common focus on letting available data – whether “big data” or available research data sets – drive empirical social science may be having the unintended consequence of presenting an illusion of progress while obscuring the extent to which even evidence-based research findings based on data without key explanatory variables or that have unrealistically short time horizons may be steering policymakers and the public toward less than optimum solutions. To use a simple metaphor drawn from health research, it's as if all our data are focused on optimizing lung surgery outcomes but there's no research examining the impact of smoking on lungs.

At the same time, a more complex and holistic view coupled with a focus on addressing the major social issues of our day can be a creative and powerful tool in creating a vibrant democracy and communities.

As Robert Putnam put it in his American Political Science Association presidential address, "[T]he most important contribution that political scientists might make to public life consists not in answering questions currently being asked, but in framing new questions. Our role here is to highlight ignored

several theories, almost all which point to man's ability to recognize that his interests are better served by cooperation rather than conflict, empathy rather narrow self-interest, hatred or violence.

¹⁸ This argument has been made by a line of “social philosophers” writing about the United States from the 1830s to the present day. See, e.g., the works of Tocqueville, John Dewey and John W. Gardner.

¹⁹ See, e.g., *Does Washington Need Fixing?* (<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/21/weekinreview/21harwood.html>) By John Harwood, Feb. 20, 2010

values, to identify important but under-appreciated factors that affect those values, and to explicate the underlying logic that links facts and values."²⁰

One can think of Elinor Ostrom's 2009 Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech as a refinement of Putnam's perspective:

"The most important lesson for public policy analysis derived from the intellectual journey I have outlined here is that humans have a more complex motivational structure and more capability to solve social dilemmas than posited in earlier rational-choice theory. *Designing institutions to force (or nudge) entirely self-interested individuals to achieve better outcomes has been the major goal posited by policy analysts for governments to accomplish for much of the past half century. Extensive empirical research leads me to argue that instead, a core goal of public policy should be to facilitate the development of institutions that bring out the best in humans. We need to ask how diverse polycentric institutions help or hinder the innovativeness, learning, adapting, trustworthiness, levels of cooperation of participants, and the achievement of more effective, equitable, and sustainable outcomes at multiple scales* [Italics added] (Toonen 2010)....To explain the world of interactions and outcomes occurring at multiple levels, we also have to be willing to deal with complexity instead of rejecting it..."

The social ecological framework developed by Bronfenbrenner and a staple of public health curricula provides a useful framework for thinking about policy research questions from a broader perspective. There are several variations of the model but the core of it divides the social ecology into micro, mezzo, and macro components.

Not surprisingly, the macro perspective focuses on the traditional domain of policy and law. What is different about this approach is its application to public health issues in which changes in micro-behavior – whether hand-washing or smoking cessation – are effected through a range of strategies including community-wide micro and mezzo interventions as well as macro interventions. The DCTMI approach is unusual outside the public health world for taking community-wide micro and mezzo changes equally seriously.

²⁰ APA Presidential Lecture 2003. <http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS293/articles/putnam.pdf>. He begins: "I am skeptical about a value-free social science and about a fact-free philosophical critique. Investigation of the facts is not sufficient to resolve social issues, but it is necessary. Those of us who seek to frame major public issues need to be equally respectful of demands for normative and empirical rigor. To my more scientific colleagues, I urge... "Better an approximate answer to an important question than an exact answer to a trivial question," while to my less scientific colleagues, I urge, "More precise is better." ... Pursuing a more engaged political science will require us to cross other boundaries, too. First of all, a focus on problems, not methods, will require us to seek more active collaboration across disciplinary boundaries—with economics, sociology, psychology, history, and other fields... An engaged political science must talk with our fellow citizens, not just at them. Rather than the European intellectual, a "gadfly" (in the language of Rogers Smith) standing apart from current politics and viewing with a critical, philosophical eye the gap between what is and what ought to be, my hero is the midwestern progressive of a century ago, seeking to learn from the experience of nonacademic reformers. My image of a more engaged political science is neither a wise counselor whispering truth to power nor a distanced gadfly. It is a political scientist engaged in genuine dialogue with our fellow citizens, learning as well as teaching."

A Question: How Can We Restore a Civic Faith Mindset?

As discussed earlier, a shared superordinate goal is central to theories of small group and intergroup dynamics, management, and organization leadership. Without a superordinate goal (or “vision” or “mission”), groups and organizations will not function as effective teams. There is every reason to believe it can play a central role in strengthening the social fabric of cities and nations, too. In the absence of an immediate crisis – a war, a natural disaster, economic depression, or act of terrorism – what superordinate goals can Americans agree on? I am proposing tutoring and mentoring as the short-term goal but, much as we see in the literature on leadership as well as religion, short-term objectives are almost always presented hand in hand with the long term vision or mission. In the context of a community-wide or national effort, that long-term vision is tied up with what I would call *civic faith*.

A mindset is a “set of assumptions, methods, or notations held by one or more people or groups of people that is so established that it creates a powerful incentive within these people or groups to continue to adopt or accept prior behaviors, choices, or tools.”²¹ The concept has been widely adopted both in education research and among a broader public thanks to Carol Dweck’s research on the role of *growth* vs. *fixed mindsets* among students. As any parent, coach, teacher or leader would agree, attitude matters. Her research both parses the concept of attitude into a set of interrelated beliefs – a mindset – and to show how the mindset influences educational outcomes. I think it’s reasonable to expect a similar dynamic at the community level as decades of research in sociology, political science, anthropology, leadership and management suggest.

What do we mean by “civic faith”? I would define it as a set of shared interrelated beliefs or guiding principles:: 1) *Collective efficacy*: A belief and commitment in the practical possibility of human progress, that we are capable of prosocial collective action for the common good; 2) *Universalism*: a belief that we are “in this together,” that we share one “world house,” as Martin Luther King put it; 3) *The good life*: a belief that one’s life is well-spent and satisfying if one organizes it to contribute to the civic good; and, 4) *The good community*: Martin Luther King called it “the beloved community”; Lincoln captured it beautifully in his Second Inaugural: “With malice toward none, with charity toward all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in...”

Others have used slightly different language to describe a similar mindset. John Dewey wrote *A Common Faith* in 1934²²; Robert Bellah and his social science colleagues wrote of a “civil religion” in their popular *Habits of the Heart* (1985).

²¹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mindset> (Retrieved 6/20/2015)

²² “The ideal ends to which we attach our faith are not shadowy and wavering. They assume concrete form in our understanding of our relations to one another and the values contained in these relations. We who now live are parts of a humanity that extends into the remote past, a humanity that has interacted with nature. The things in civilization we most prize are not of ourselves. They exist by grace of the doings and sufferings of the continuous human community in which we are a link. Ours is the responsibility of conserving, transmitting, rectifying and expanding the heritage of values we have received that those who come after us may receive it more solid and secure, more widely accessible and more generously shared than we have received it. Here are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind. It remains to make it explicit and militant.”

Martin Luther King, Jr. put a similar impulse in different language: “The stability of the large world house which is ours will involve a revolution of values to accompany the scientific and freedom revolutions engulfing the earth. We must rapidly begin the shift from a 'thing'-oriented society to a 'person'-oriented society...A civilization can flounder as readily in the face of moral and spiritual bankruptcy as it can through financial bankruptcy.”

In Andrew Delbanco's 1998 William E. Massey Lectures in the History of American Civilization (Harvard), he argues that America has gone through three phases.²³ The first found a transcendent faith in religion. The second, best captured in Lincoln's speeches and Whitman's poetry, found transcendent faith in the idea of America. However, this faith was lost sometime in the 1960s. We are now groping in our fragmented world toward some new sense of meaning, perhaps shared, perhaps not.

Why is this a legitimate research question for research? Why does it matter? It is possible that a focus on mobilizing financial capital, using data test and fine-tune evidence-based programs holds the answer to ending poverty and racism and fixing our education system. But I am skeptical. Both the history of domestic economic and social programs and regulation (think Prohibition) and democracies around the world is littered with failures due less to inadequate design of formal rules but to a myriad of cultural issues²⁴ ranging from corruption to less flagrant “mindsets” that emphasize narrow conceptions of self-interest. Changing the culture or the mindset of ordinary people may, in the long run, prove a more promising approach, just as our greatest political and business leaders have done. Without a sense of shared faith or vision, the policy tools and ideas that are the typical fare of policy debate and research are likely to fail, no matter how well-crafted they are in theory.

Answering the Questions: The Ambiguous Evidence on Evidence-Based Practice

Lawyers distinguish between direct and circumstantial evidence, and both are considered equally valid.²⁵ In contrast, policymakers' focus on evidence-based practice seems rooted in the premise that we can't trust “circumstantial” evidence of program effectiveness.

This may be true in many contexts, as Ron Haskins has argued in articles and a recent book²⁶, but, as we see in the law, in the absence of compelling direct evidence, a range of evidence that leads to the same conclusion may be equally valuable for choosing a course of action.²⁷ And the mere fact that there is

²³ Delbanco, Andrew. *The Real American Dream: A Meditation on Hope* (Harvard Univ. Press, October 1, 2000)

²⁴ See, e.g., Harrison, L. E. & Sam. P. Huntington . *Culture Matters: How values shape human progress* (1997) or Rbt. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. (1993).

²⁵ See, e.g., <http://www3.ce9.uscourts.gov/jury-instructions/node/304>

²⁶ *Social Programs That Work*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/01/opinion/social-programs-that-work.html> and *Show Me the Evidence: Obama's Fight for Rigor and Results in Social Policy*.

²⁷ One could also frame this argument around the concept of “consilience.” “In science and history, consilience (also convergence of evidence or concordance of evidence) refers to the principle that evidence from independent, unrelated sources can “converge” to strong conclusions. That is, when multiple sources of evidence are in agreement, the conclusion can be very strong even when none of the individual sources of evidence are very strong

direct evidence of impact from random controlled trials (to take the most rigorous evidentiary standard) does not, in itself, preclude the possibility that a far more impactful approach that lacks direct evidence isn't a distinct possibility.

Let's take a hypothetical example: An RCT shows that a particular programmatic intervention – let's say the use of computers in the classroom – results in an average 10% gain in reading scores for 1,000 third graders reading below grade level, behavioral problems, and multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which are correlated with a range of poor long-term outcomes. The RCT did not examine long-term trends nor could it measure changes on social-emotional development. Alternatively, (as I am proposing) there is a wealth of circumstantial evidence to suggest that 5-10 hours of intensive tutoring and mentoring per week (much like the quality time that engaged parents provide) by dedicated volunteers could result in a 30% gain in reading scores plus improvements in anxiety levels and mental health.

Given limited funding, where should a policymaker allocate her funds? Like an investor choosing between the safer stock with lower upside potential and the riskier investment with greater potential upside in the longterm, we have no simple way to choose. Perhaps we can think about our risk preferences or having a balanced “portfolio” of public investments, but simple formulas remain elusive.

In sum, the fact that a given intervention hasn't been proven by direct evidence and that short-term outcome measurement may be of limited value should not necessarily disqualify an intervention. Instead, more creative and long-term approaches to evaluation and assessment may be required. The following sections discuss the circumstantial evidence for the efficacy of this approach and the rationale for considering it a legitimate focus of social scientific research.

Relationship to Scholarship on and Practices in the Nonprofit Sector

Much research and practice over the past 10-20 years has been premised on the idea that the lines between the sectors are blurring and emphasizes either the instrumental or advocacy roles of the nonprofit sector. Even the research on giving and volunteering seems to be built on deploying better for-profit-like marketing strategies to increase both. TMI is intended to test the viability of a different model.

Peter Frumkin identifies four roles or dimensions for the sector: expressive, civic/political engagement, service, and social entrepreneurship. However, none of these dimensions adequately capture the idea that a primary role for the sector, recognized by Tocqueville in 1830, was to help shape our understanding of our self-interest, to broaden our “circle of concern”:

"Feelings and opinions are recruited, the heart is enlarged, and the human mind is developed only by the reciprocal influence of men upon one another. I have shown that these influences are almost null in democratic countries; they must therefore be artificially created, and this can only be accomplished by associations. Nothing, in my opinion, is more deserving of our attention than the intellectual and moral associations of America... In democratic countries the science of association is the mother of science; the progress of all the rest depends upon the progress it has made."

on their own. Most established scientific knowledge is supported by a convergence of evidence: if not, the evidence is comparatively weak, and there will not likely be a strong scientific consensus.” (Wikipedia).

This dimension of the sector's work, sometimes embodied in the concept of "civil society," but sometimes not, has also been associated with the frequently cited 1977 pamphlet, *To Empower People: From State to Civil Society*²⁸, on the role of mediating institutions. Traditional conservatives like David and Arthur Brooks have also championed this perspective as have liberals such as E.J. Dionne and others.

On the other hand, in the world of practice, the focus on measuring short-term results or generating earned income often crowds out meaningful attention to the long-term impact, cultural or otherwise, of the sector's work.²⁹

Toward a More Organic Community-Centered Nonprofit Model: Lowering Barriers between Organization and Community

In the world of business, we take it as a given that there are fundamentally different ways to organize a business. Let's take a hardware store, for example. It could be locally owned and operated; it could be part of a chain of stores that are fully owned and controlled by the corporate parent; or it might be a hybrid, a franchise of a national organization that is locally owned and controlled, but which is contractually obligated to meet certain standards and contribute some portion of its revenues to the franchise owner in exchange for the rights to use the franchise brand and distribute its products.

Similar choices exist for nonprofit organizations. However, with a few narrow exceptions, the dominant paradigm emphasizes the professionalization of functions. (Exceptions include Hull House, Habitat for Humanity, and the DC-based A Wider Circle.)

TMI provides new "action research" that sheds light on this ongoing scholarly and practical debate. The focus on short-term concrete results is hard to escape when organization leaders see no viable alternative path. TMI provides an opportunity to test an alternative "integrated" or "holistic" model that may shift

²⁸ Berger, Peter & Neuhaus, *To Empower People: From State to Civil Society* (American Enterprise Inst. 1977). Retrieved from <http://www.aei.org/publication/to-empower-people/>:

"Two seemingly contradictory tendencies are evident in current thinking about public policy in America. First, there is a continuing desire for the services provided by the modern welfare state. Partisan rhetoric aside, few people seriously envisage dismantling the welfare state. The serious debate is over how and to what extent it should be expanded. The second tendency is one of strong animus against government, bureaucracy, and bigness as such.

More precisely, we suggest that the modern welfare state is here to stay, indeed that it ought to expand the benefits it provides-but that alternative mechanisms are possible to provide welfare-state services... The public policy goal is to address human needs without exacerbating the reasons for animus against the welfare state.

Our focus is on four such mediating structures-neighborhood, family, church, and voluntary association. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but these institutions were selected for two reasons: first, they figure prominently in the lives of most Americans and, second, they are most relevant to the problems of the welfare state with which we are concerned. The proposal is that, if these institutions could be more imaginatively recognized in public policy, individuals would be more "at home" in society, and the political order would be more "meaningful." (p.173)

²⁹ The most notable example of this in recent decades has been the failure of the No Child Left Behind testing regime in public education. As historian Diane Ravitch, a former Assistant Secretary of Education under the George H.W. Bush Administration and Clinton appointee to the preeminent education testing panel, succinctly puts it, "[T]he original Elementary and Secondary Education Act had one purpose: to send additional resources to schools enrolling large numbers of poor children. Over the past two decades, ESEA has become a vehicle for those who believe that standards and testing will cure poverty and low performance, a strategy that has failed to attain its goal after two decades of trying." *The Lost Purpose of School Reform*, New York Review of Books, April 2015.

the thinking of both practitioners and scholars across a range of different organization functions. The *traditional model* looks something like this:

- Sources of funding. Focus on large donors, whether government, foundations or wealthy individuals.
- Fundraising practices. Focus on metrics of donor retention and average gift size.
- Accountability, transparency and governance. We look to Form 990s, regulators, or boards of wealthy or powerful directors to ensure that the organization is meeting its mission. A range of websites promise quick technology-driven fixes: Great Nonprofits attempts to collect stakeholder feedback, others look to financial analysis, or various rating systems.
- Who does the program work. Get the professionals in.
- Use of volunteers. Manage them carefully, minimize risk and try to turn them into donors.
- Links to community. Promote “resident engagement” and perhaps get a client on the board.
- Nonprofit competition and collaboration. A consequence of the the prevailing view is that organizations are often competing for the same scarce government or foundation funds. United Way organizations would be well positioned to broaden the base of donors but, for a variety of reasons tied to leadership, seem to have failed to take on that role.

One can imagine a different model. The best example may be found in self-governing religious congregations that usually combine a mission of service to those outside the congregation with a mission of fellowship and personal development.

However, my sense is that most nonprofit researchers and practitioners believe that one can seldom or never translate that model to the secular world. TMI provides an opportunity to test a design for doing just that. Let’s look at the same set of functions in the context of religious contexts and then ask if they could translate to a secular mission-driven organization:

- Sources of funding. Every member has a responsibility to give and all are treated fundamentally the same.
- Fundraising practices. Collective fundraising and programming is typical.
- Accountability, transparency and governance. Imagine a mid-sized church and the dense web of connections between members and between members and staff. More often than not, most members live in the same community and have first-hand experience interacting with church staff. They are well-positioned to assess the work of the staff.
- Who does the program work. Service is an opportunity for individual members to live their faith.
- Use of volunteers. The more that volunteers can do to take active roles involving substantial responsibility, the better. Roles may include board membership, “parish nurse”/faith-based nursing, religious education.
- Links to community. Individual members bring their own dense networks of relationships into the church. “My neighbor just lost her husband... Can you help?”
- Nonprofit competition and collaboration. Collective fundraising and programming is typical.
- Staff and volunteers never lose sight of the civic mission of the organization.

Collective Efficacy, Civic Capacity and Resilience

In an era of deep political divisions and geographic and economic resegregation, an approach that not only helps to address the concrete problem of poor educational outcomes but that also can help to build the sense of collective efficacy, that we can, in fact, work together successfully, is appealing to both ordinary community members and to policymakers.

Robert Sampson elaborates: “Moving away from a focus on private ties, my use of the term collective efficacy is meant to signify an emphasis on shared beliefs in a neighborhood’s capability for action to achieve an intended effect, coupled with an active sense of engagement on the part of residents. Some density of social networks is essential, to be sure, especially networks rooted in social trust. But the key theoretical point is that networks have to be activated to be ultimately meaningful.”³⁰ (p.108)

He goes on to add, “The promise of collective efficacy theory, in my view, is that it reaffirms the importance of thinking about social ways to approach social problems.[italics added] Too often our policies are reductionist in nature, looking to change or incapacitate individuals, usually in a hierarchical fashion with State controls dominant. The perspective here suggests nearly the opposite, although it is not that individuals are unimportant, or that State controls are unnecessary or necessarily unjust. (p.112)

What is the “theory of change”? John W. Gardner³¹ describes it elegantly:

We must continue the work of community building in school, congregation, neighborhood, workplace. It's not just that we shall be building communities. We shall be developing citizens who know out of their own intimate experience the disciplines and satisfactions of community. They will understand teamwork, the observance of shared values, collaborative problem solving and the building of trust.

The "civic capacity" framework used by Xavier de Souza Briggs (co-author of work with Sue Popkin and ex-HUD official) in *Democracy as Problem Solving: Civic Capacity in Communities Across the Globe* (2008) offers a framework that overlaps with the collective efficacy concept’s emphasis on collective action as the ultimate measure of its success. Briggs defines civic capacity as, "The extent to which the sectors that make up a community are (1) capable of collective action on public problems, given the norms and institutional arenas for local action; and (2) choose to apply such capability." This expansive framework for analysis can capture the complexity of communities and integrates a range of domains into analysis including governance structure, the quality of leadership, and the civic culture of communities. The nonprofit sector is a central actor in this framework but by no means the exclusive one.

³⁰ Sampson, Robert . *Neighbourhood and community: Collective efficacy and community safety*. New Economy, Volume 11, Issue 2, pages 106–113, June 2004. Retrieved from: http://www.icjia.state.il.us/public/2012_LE_Workshop/pdf_Files/Reading%20Materials/Neighborhood%20and%20Community.pdf

³¹Gardner was the founder of Independent Sector and Common Cause, former head of the Carnegie Corporation, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare and author of numerous books on civil society and democracy.

And then there's the moral dimension, as Putnam eloquently argued in the New York Times: "The crumbling of the American dream is a purple problem, obscured by solely red or solely blue lenses. **Its economic and cultural roots are entangled, a mixture of government, private sector, community and personal failings. But the deepest root is our radically shriveled sense of "we."** Everyone in my parents' generation thought of J as one of "our kids," but surprisingly few adults in Port Clinton today are even aware of R's existence, and even fewer would likely think of her as "our kid." Until we treat the millions of R's across America as our own kids, we will pay a major economic price, and talk of the American dream will increasingly seem cynical historical fiction."³²

Taking Psychology Seriously

I have observed that depending on readers' personal experiences, they may react very differently to the framework presented thus far. For some, it is simply "unrealistic." For others, who, perhaps, have had more positive experiences in sports teams, civic activities, families and organizations, the idea seems imminently sensible and it's ok if we can't specify a fine-tuned plan up front due to our lack of knowledge. The former approach is premised on two assumptions:

- We can find a way to appeal to the better angels of people's nature and a substantial proportion will respond positively.
- A well-meaning effort, if pursued with energy and commitment, can win the trust of people even though it may not be able to follow the tightly planned and scripted approaches that are commonly found in traditional program design.

This section is intended to outline findings and theories in psychology and related disciplines or subdisciplines that show the plausibility of a program based on the first premise. While perhaps not meeting the level of proof we would like, the fact that supportive evidence comes from a range of perspectives in psychology adds to the base of circumstantial evidence on which we often must depend.

Before starting this discussion, it's important to recognize our limitations if we are to fully appreciate the value of the interventions. Recent evidence has shown that people with wealth or power are, consistent with folk wisdom, less empathetic than the rest of us.³³ And we all tend to empathize more with those who look and act like us. Does it matter? Yes, it can for a host of reasons ranging from lack of support by the wealthy and powerful for public policies that benefit others to favoritism in hiring that results in the systemic exclusion of racial and ethnic minorities. One reasonable response is to use the levers of law and regulation. At the same time, strengthening empathy could provide a complementary strategy so that bypasses the countervailing impulse to resist law or regulation.

³² Putnam, Rbt. *Crumbling American Dreams*, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/03/crumbling-american-dreams>

³³ Grewal, Daisy. How Wealth Reduces Compassion: As riches grow, empathy for others seems to decline Scientific American, April 10, 2012. <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-wealth-reduces-compassion/> and

Inzlicht, Michael and Sukhvinder Obhi. Powerful and Coldhearted. July 27, 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/27/opinion/sunday/are-the-rich-coldhearted.html>.

The Study of prosocial behavior, empathy and altruism. “Prosocial behavior is performed to benefit others, rather than to benefit the self. It often entails risk or cost to the self, such as when one gives resources to others, waits in line, asks for or pays a fair price, or risks one’s life in battle. Yet it is not irrational or self-destructive to perform such acts because, in the long run, belonging to the group provides immense benefits. There are no known societies in which most of the people prefer to live in social isolation, such as in solitary cabins in the woods. Instead, people always prefer to live with each other in social groups and within a cultural framework. Culture improves the biological outcomes (survival and reproduction) of individuals, so people do what is required to belong to it. Most cultures encourage and even require prosocial behavior because it is vital to the system.”

David Sloan Wilson’s well regarded work on prosocial behavior in Binghamton (NY), including *The Neighborhood Project: Using Evolution to Improve My City, One Block at a Time*, is a good starting point: “It is worth quoting the first recorded use of the term, by Hanifan (1916) ...those tangible substances [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit...The individual is helpless socially, if left to himself...If he comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. The community as a whole will benefit by the cooperation of all its parts, while the individual will find in his associations the advantages of the help, the sympathy, and the fellowship of his neighbors (p. 130). This original usage is synonymous with what we mean by prosociality...”³⁴

Positive psychology provides another useful perspective with its emphasis on our innate need to find *meaning* and *purpose* in our lives.³⁵ Also, its offshoot, self-determination theory, with its emphasis on three fundamental motivations of competence, autonomy and relatedness (or *purpose* as Daniel Pink rebrands it) provides a useful framework for understanding options for rethinking how these three motivations play out in the context of work and other aspects of our lives and how experiential civic engagement efforts like DCTMI might tap into those motivations.

The study of *leadership*, and especially of transformational leadership, provides a useful framework for tying social psychological insights into a framework for positive action. From Aristotle’s writings to the methodologically sophisticated psychometric studies of leadership, there is a rich and vast literature on the topic.³⁶

Other theoretical perspectives in psychology may also provide insights on how DCTMI might affect the lives of individual mentors, tutors and other volunteers. These perspectives include research on emotional intelligence, Maslow’s theory of self-actualization or the *ego integrity vs. despair* stage of Erik Erikson’s theory of psychosocial stages.

³⁴ Wilson, David Sloan Wilson, Daniel Tumminelli O’Brien, Artura Sesma. Human prosociality from an evolutionary perspective: variation and correlations at a city-wide scale. *Evolution and Human Behavior* 30 (2009) 190–200.

³⁵ See, e.g., Seligman, Martin, *Flourish: A New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being — and How to Achieve Them*.

³⁶ Day and Antonikis (editors) summary in the 600-page *The Nature of Leadership* is a good starting point.

A Complementary Strategy for Addressing Racism

Camara Phyllis Jones distinguishes between institutional, personally mediated, and internalized racism.³⁷ While the TMI approach doesn't directly address systemic or institutional racism, it would complement strategies that do by providing concrete experiences to help break down the personally mediated and internalized racism that often underlies the institutional. For example, a colleague who does similar civic engagement, mentoring and tutoring work in Missouri describes the impact that mentoring and tutoring has had on some of the Rotarians that she works with: "'Kids should pull themselves up by their bootstraps' is the mindset that some members come in with. But after working as mentors and tutors, they've become advocates for investing in schools. 'I've learned more than the kids,' they'll say. 'I'd heard these stories before but it's different hearing them firsthand.'" And if that Rotarian happens to be an influential business person or civic leader or if TMI were scaled to reach all the students in need of support, that could lead to policy changes that reduce institutional racism.

The successful strategy of the marriage equality movement highlights the potential: "Wolfson speculated that most Americans would come around to gay equality if they merely chatted with a homosexual human... [T]he Freedom to Marry campaign was to build a movement that could weather tragic defeats and live to fight another day. So after the rout in California, plus losses the next year in New York and Maine, the campaign redoubled its efforts to push not just a legal argument but a moral one, a case for marriage equality that every American, not just judges, could understand. At the heart of this push was one thing: conversation. Marriage supporters, gay and straight, were encouraged to talk to their friends, family, and co-workers about who gay people really are and why marriage matters so much to them."³⁸

Another Perspective from Social Science: Changing Civic Culture

Nobel Prize-winning political economist Oliver Williamson has written about four levels of social analysis that we need to understand society. The first two are readily recognized as the domains of economists and lawyers; the third typically engages political scientists and policy-makers thinking about how to alter the structure of institutions. But the fourth, although the hardest to change, may be the most important to focus on today: culture.

As scholar-Senator-policy-maker Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan put it, "The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself." The careful work of Samuel Huntington and Lawrence Harrison and their collaborators in books such as *Culture Matters* and Harrison's *The Central Liberal Truth: How Politics Can Change a Culture and Save It from Itself* builds on this framework.

³⁷ Jones, Camara Phyllis. *Levels of Racism: A theoretical framework and a gardener's tale*. American Journal of Public Health: August 2000, Vol. 90, No. 8, pp. 1212-1215. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.90.8.1212. <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.90.8.1212>

³⁸ Stern, Mark Joseph. Slate. *The Marriage Mastermind: How Evan Wolfson transformed American Society*. http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/jurisprudence/2015/04/evan_wolfson_freedom_to_marry_he_invented_the_gay_marriage_liberty_and_morality.single.html. April 2015.

But the research is not limited to conservatives. In Britain, a number of interesting syntheses of this line of research came out of the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit over the past ten years, including *Achieving Culture Change: A Policy Framework* (2008) and *Personal Responsibility and Changing Behaviour: the state of knowledge and its implications for public policy* (2004)³⁹, and continue to flow from the 260-year-old RSA (formerly known as the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce).

Practicalities: Think Tanks, Do Tanks and Demonstration Projects

The benefits to a university or research organization are several:

- Real innovation. Lots of research and consulting organizations and universities are jumping on the bandwagons of collective impact, impact investing, social entrepreneurship, place-based philanthropy, and pay-for-success. But the civic path seems more promising in the long run even if it may be harder in the short term.
- Addresses fundamental social issues that were ultimate targets of the War on Poverty.
- Provides an approach to addressing racism at a deeper level.
- Solutions focused. Staff appreciates the value of a project that steps back from the usual rush of proposals and product to ask in the broadest possible way, how do we go about transforming outcomes? Funders, too, may appreciate an approach that embraces both a BHAG ("big hairy audacious goal"), as they say in B-school, as well as a realistic plan for realizing it that takes the leadership and social marketing as seriously as program design.
- Integrates head and heart, action and knowledge in way that few if any research projects do. Most of us appreciate the opportunity to "make a difference" while making a living. Some social science projects offer this opportunity but many feel driven by the narrow concerns of government or foundation funders.

The role of think tanks has typically been to advise policymakers, evaluate existing programs, pull the research "fire alarm" to warn policymakers of social or economic problems, and provide a space for thoughtful discussion on policies and programs.

But what if the solution is not even on the horizon? Why not a more innovative and activist role? Inside the Beltway, it feels as though the range of ways a think tank can operate is narrow. However, there are innovative "out-of-the-box efforts at other think tanks and major universities that expand those boundaries. For example, MDRC has long been known for "mounting large-scale demonstrations and evaluations of real-world policies and programs targeted to low-income people."

More recently at MIT, the Dalai Lama Center for Ethics and Transformative Values "is dedicated to inquiry, dialogue, and education on the ethical and humane dimensions of life. As a collaborative and nonpartisan think tank, The Center focuses on the development of interdisciplinary research and programs in varied fields of knowledge, from science and technology to education and international relations. Our

³⁹ Retrieved at https://crawford.anu.edu.au/sparc/pdf/2010/achieving_culture_change.pdf and <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/cabinetoffice/strategy/assets/pr2.pdf>.

programs emphasize responsibility and examine meaningfulness and moral purpose between individuals, organizations, and societies.”⁴⁰

David Sloan Wilson’s Binghamton Neighborhoods Project provides a partial model.

Inherently, this approach cannot be validated in a traditional social science experiment. It seems impossible to test the impact of a long-term mindset in the short-term, especially one that is premised on a message that the leaders of the effort are in it for the long-term since success is likely to be slow.

Nor is mere observation a viable alternative since I feel reasonably confident that there are no other efforts like this underway anywhere else in either the U.S. or the world. There are plenty of limited efforts to promote volunteerism and mentoring or tutoring but I have yet to hear of or uncover any other efforts setting a major goal of getting a tutor or mentor for every youth with academic or non-academic needs or do I see more limited efforts that seek to change the deeper civic culture in a community.

Conclusion

Leadership – “thought leadership” or otherwise – should begin with a vision and then move to a focus on communicating that vision. I get the sense that we too often lack such a vision. But real integrity is about taking the time and making the commitment to work one’s hardest to understand what is needed.

The future today is uncertain. Maybe we can muddle forward into a brighter world but this seems highly unlikely. It ought to be our duty as social scientists to think deeply about these questions and to find solutions – maybe not the simple, fast or mechanistic solutions but the right ones.

Appendix 1: Empirically Testable Propositions

Let me offer a number of simple and testable propositions on which a long-term research agenda could focus:

In the right circumstances, people do respond positively to appeals to “the better angels of our nature,” act altruistically or prosocially, with an awareness of being part of a larger purpose, or defining their self-interest to include a broad and diverse community.

- **Basis/notes:** Steven Pinker, Robert D. Putnam, James Q. Wilson, Jonathan Haidt, David Sloan Wilson

This instinct can be activated by authentic servant leadership -- leaders who lead by example, demonstrate their values through their actions and ways of life, live lives of voluntary simplicity, and who actively communicate their vision of a better world. It can be triggered using either religious or secular “civic” language or framing.

⁴⁰ <http://thecenter.mit.edu/about/mission/>

- **Basis/notes:** 1) Need local leaders who “get out of bed thinking about the project, who pursue the work with a sense of passion and mission.” (STRIVE executive director Jeff Edmondson, 2014); 2) *Moral Ambition: Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches*, by Omri Elisha.

It is most easily triggered to accomplish a specific short-term goal around which there is broad consensus. Could improving education outcomes for all low-income children serve as that short-term goal?

Framing it from a civic perspective will have "spillover effects" in strengthening civic capacity (as defined by Xavier Briggs), community resiliency, social capital, civic engagement and participation, and fostering a sense of collective efficacy. How to measure: household survey.

These generalized effects will better enable communities to tackle other adaptive or “wicked” challenges including other aspects of intergenerational poverty or climate change. Measure: Community case studies.

The nonprofit sector – and especially youth-serving organizations in the context of the Tutoring and Mentoring Initiative – provides a critical institutional support infrastructure for this approach.

These organizations will be strengthened in turn by being able to tap into this prosocial energy to build broader volunteer bases and broader and deeper community funding from individuals and businesses.

- **Basis/notes:** The impact will be less dependence on sometimes fickle or unstable government and foundation funding and greater "organic accountability" as the organizations become more tightly connected to their communities.