

7 BOOK REVIEWS

Deliberative Democracy for the Future: The Case of Nuclear Waste Management in Canada. By Genevieve Fuji Johnson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008; pp. 169. \$24.95 paper.

We face an impending high-level nuclear waste crisis (not to mention low-level and transuranic waste). The countries that use nuclear technologies are now grappling with how to address the ever increasing quantities of high-level nuclear waste resulting from nuclear power and weapons development. The United States is no exception. According to former Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham (2002), “We have a staggering amount of radioactive waste in this country . . . with more created every day” (p. 1). The Department of Energy (USDOE, 2008) estimates that in April 2008 there were 56,000 metric tons of spent fuel and 22,000 canisters of defense related high-level nuclear waste from reprocessing; by 2035, the United States will have approximately 119,000 metric tons of high-level nuclear waste. In 2002, after a twenty-year process of researching a federal high-level nuclear waste repository site, the Secretary of Energy, the President, and both houses of Congress authorized the siting of the Yucca Mountain High-Level Nuclear Waste Repository in Nevada. In June 2008, the Department of Energy (DOE) submitted a license application to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for the Yucca Mountain site. Pending licensing, Yucca Mountain will be the home to 70,000 metric tons of high-level nuclear waste. And yet, as the previously mentioned DOE estimates indicate, by 2035 US will still be faced with almost 50,000 metric tons of waste in excess of the capacity of the Yucca Mountain site.

There is no doubt that we need a solution to the nuclear waste crisis. Yet, creating a solution has proven to be quite difficult. High-level nuclear waste siting decisions in the United States have been intensely controversial from the over twenty-year struggle over the Yucca Mountain High-Level Nuclear Repository, to the ill-fated Monitored Retrievable Storage program, to the recently defeated Private Fuel Storage proposal to temporarily store 40,000 metric tons of nuclear waste on the Skull Valley Goshute reservation. Nuclear Waste storage poses a considerable technical challenge due to the over 100,000 year half-lives of the isotopes in radioactive waste. However, nuclear waste storage is not merely a technical issue. More importantly, there are communicative, social, ethical, political and cultural considerations that must be addressed when a society attempts to create a solution to nuclear waste. Genevieve Johnson’s book, *Deliberative Democracy for the Future: The Case of Nuclear Waste Management in Canada* examines the ethical dimension of the puzzle of nuclear waste storage. Johnson, a political scientist, specifically examines the case of nuclear waste siting from an applied ethics approach. What can Johnson’s analysis contribute to communication, specifically argumentation scholars? And, what, if anything, can Americans learn from Canada’s nuclear waste siting process?

The thesis of Johnson’s manuscript is that the deliberative democracy ethical framework is superior to utilitarian or deontological ethical frameworks for public policy decisions that involve “risk, uncertainty, and long-term consequences” (p. 3). She begins her book by highlighting justice, legitimacy, and determinacy as the key normative concepts of ethical policy analysis. After establishing the importance of ethical policy analysis, Johnson explains the Canadian nuclear waste siting process and its ethical implications. In an exhaustive chapter on the ethical schools of welfare utilitarianism, modern deontology, and deliberative democracy, Johnson makes her case for the superiority of deliberative democracy as an

ethical framework, applying its tenets to the case of nuclear waste siting in Canada. The application of the frameworks to the case study brings life to the chapter by providing some tangible and practical comments on the usefulness of each approach for the real-world case of nuclear waste siting. Johnson concludes her book by delving more deeply into the attempted application of the deliberative democracy framework by the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO). While she recognizes NWMO's process as perhaps "the most serious effort to realize the principles of deliberative democracy in public policy decision making in Canada" and reviews the successes of the program, Johnson also evaluates the pitfalls of the process (p. 97). Pitfalls included varying degrees of several issues: these issues include the exclusion of key voices and topics, unequal treatment of issues raised by stakeholders, lack of reciprocity, deficiency of a transparent process for showing how stakeholder expertise was incorporated in the decision, and aboriginal nations' concerns that their sovereignty was not upheld in the process. Ultimately, Johnson notes the importance of a commitment to the process by all stakeholders, especially the dominant actors (the NWMO in this case). She concludes that, pending solutions to the problems of will and dominance, deliberative democracy is the most promising ethical framework for ethical policy analysis in nuclear waste and similar cases.

Johnson's book provides a solid argument in favor of deliberative democracy as framework for ethical policy analysis and illuminates the controversy over nuclear waste siting in Canada. However, upon completing the book, I was left wanting a more robust theorization of the practice of deliberative democracy. Johnson's treatment of the flaws of the Canadian nuclear waste siting process could have been enhanced by engaging the corpus of communication scholarship on public participation in environmental decision making (e.g., Depoe, Delicath, & Elsenbeer, 2004). While recognizing that Johnson's purpose is to focus on decision making from an applied ethical policy making approach, Johnson's book would have benefited from a deeper treatment of two important concepts: 1) standing of participants, and 2) the question of whether public input is actually incorporated into the final decision. Communication scholarship has identified that a major constraint of current processes of public participation is the unequal standing given to experts and non-experts, valuing the former over the latter (e.g., Fisher, 1987; Goodnight, 1982; Katz & Miller, 1996; Waddell, 1990, 1996). Johnson glossed over this by stating "views generally understood as non-expert are not less informed. They are, instead, differently informed . . . by life experiences, cultural practices, orally transmitted knowledge, and so on" (p. 84) but not providing sufficient evidence or analysis to suggest that the decision makers (NWMO) considered "non-expert" knowledge to be as important as "expert" knowledge. As Frank Fischer (2000) argues, any deliberative democratic model of public participation must make efforts to flatten the hierarchy between expert and non-expert knowledge. It is unclear from Johnson's treatment whether the Canadian case study succeeded or failed in incorporating citizen expertise into the process. If it was successful, empirical evidence of that success would be helpful in theorizing new models of public participation based on deliberative democracy.

Similarly, Johnson only briefly mentions the concern of several citizen groups that their input was not incorporated into the ultimate decision of the NWMO. In their list of the flaws in current models of public participation, Stephen Depoe and John Delicath (2004) state: "Public participation often lacks adequate provisions to ensure that input gained through public participation makes a real impact on decision outcomes" (p. 3). Although Johnson recognizes this pitfall in the NWMO's decision making process, she does not reveal how the deliberative democratic framework could address this flaw. This and the lack of treatment of

the expert/non-expert hierarchy highlight the difficulty of showing how a deliberative democratic framework works in practice. Deliberative democracy may be a superior ethical framework for public policy, but this does not necessarily translate to practice. Indeed, Johnson's case study reveals that NWMO did not achieve the ideals of the framework in practice. While the book potentially provides a foundation for engaging in this difficult task, Johnson's book could benefit from additional theorizing attending to the practice of deliberative democracy in public policy.

Despite its shortcomings, this book can speak to scholars in multiple areas of communication, particularly argumentation scholars interested in public controversy, environmental communication scholars interested in public participation in environmental decision making, and nuclear communication scholars. Johnson's book reminds us of the important ethical component of public controversy. By attending to ethical frameworks, argumentation scholars can analyze how ethical ideals are translated, constituted, or contradicted in the everyday arguments made by participants in public controversy. We might learn more about the nature of public controversy through scholarship that draws on complementary aspects of argumentation theory, applied ethics, and policy analysis. Johnson's book and others like it can also be useful for environmental communication scholars interested in public participation in environmental decision making. Johnson reminds us that ethical frameworks and political theory do play a foundational role in models of public participation in environmental decision making. William Kinsella's (2004) concept of public expertise provides a nice example of how communication research on public participation is enhanced through a consideration of the discursive aspects of a deliberative democracy framework (drawing from Fischer, 2000). Finally, because of its focus on the case of nuclear waste siting in Canada, this book may be of use to nuclear communication scholars that examine the "overlapping spheres of organizational and public communication produced in and around the nation's nuclear-industrial infrastructure" (Taylor, Kinsella, Depoe, & Metzler, 2005, p. 364). Although it does not take a communication perspective, the book is informative and allows for needed comparisons between the controversies over nuclear waste siting in different countries.

In closing, what can citizens and decision makers in other countries learn from Johnson's rendering of the nuclear waste siting process in Canada? For those of us in the United States, I believe there is much to learn. Despite the pitfalls of the deliberative democracy framework employed in the Canadian nuclear waste siting process, they stand in stark contrast to the technocratic model used in the United States' over twenty year process of decision making about high-level nuclear waste storage (Endres, in press a, in press b; Ratliff, 1997). In order to ethically move forward with siting a nuclear waste storage facility in the United States, we must recognize and agree on two things. First, whether we agree or disagree with the use of nuclear technologies, we need to develop a solution to the waste. And, second, as Johnson's book reminds us, we need to develop a *just process* for making that decision. Regarding the latter, we are falling short. We can learn much from the successes and pitfalls of Canada's attempt to employ a deliberative democracy framework to decision making for nuclear waste siting decisions.

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Pragmatism, Democracy, and the Necessity of Rhetoric. By Robert Danisch. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2007; pp. 190. \$39.95 cloth.

John Dewey's talk at Cooper Union on December 7, 1941 was titled "Lessons from the War in Philosophy." Ignoring the calamity in Hawaii that morning, he focused solely on the Great War. Robert Danisch appropriately begins his incisive *Pragmatism, Democracy, and the Necessity of Rhetoric* by explaining Dewey's failures as a speaker that day. The shortcoming of Dewey's address, Danisch insists, stemmed from "pragmatism's inability to develop a suitable rhetoric embedded in its own principles" (p. 2). The broader version of this claim, pragmatism needs rhetoric, is developed throughout the book, but the converse claim, rhetoric needs pragmatism, is advanced more sporadically. Danisch envisions classical rhetoric and pragmatism as twin projects with different vocabularies but shared commitments, and he uses the central concepts of the rhetorical tradition to highlight their substantial overlap. He writes, "Classical rhetoric and pragmatism share a specific orientation to the world, an orientation that informs the beliefs and practices of each" (p. 2). Both intellectual projects take as facts the instability of meanings, social flux, human uncertainty, and the absence of time-immemorial truths; both projects are pluralist and anthropocentric; both are concerned with social processes, persuasion, and developing the resources of good judgment.

The book's seven chapters are organized around five case studies that detail the rhetorical sensibilities of influential pragmatists. Following an introduction that succinctly develops the central premises of pragmatism and classical rhetoric, the first two case studies, on William James and John Dewey, aim to prove that rhetoric, although seldom mentioned by these

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