

BUILDING INCLUSIVE DIALOGUE ACROSS DIFFERENCE: A CIVIC SCIENCE APPROACH- Jonathan Garlick, Tufts University

WHY CIVIC SCIENCE NOW: Public understanding of science and civic engagement on science issues that impact contemporary life matter more today than ever. From the Planned Parenthood controversy, to the Flint water crisis, and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO), societal polarization about science issues has reached dramatic levels that present significant obstacles to public discussion and problem solving. This is happening, in part, because the complexity and uncertainty of science render it difficult for the public to find it accessible. In addition, systems built to support science do not often reward open-minded thinking, inclusive dialogue and moral responsibility regarding science issues. As a result, public faith in science continues to erode. **In response to this, the discipline of Civic Science informs how science practice and knowledge can serve as tools of empowerment for science literacy, civic engagement, social action, political advocacy and community revitalization.**

GOALS OF CIVIC SCIENCE: Civic Science aims to redefine the roles that key participants- scientists, public citizens and institutions of higher education, play in our national science dialogue by:

1- Redefining the role of higher education in promoting science for public good. To better enable colleges, universities, and health professional schools to cultivate core capacities that can turn science-based information into actionable civic knowledge.

2- Redefining the role of the scientist in society- Civic Science offers a framework for scientists to choose from a range of active roles as appropriate to the context, choices and values presented by a science issue. One role is as a facilitator of increased understanding of scientific information, as well as of dialogue on science issues.

3. Building an inclusive dialogue on science issues- Civic Science aims to create an environment for an exchange of ideas that connects science to daily choices and decisions we face through inclusive dialogue. A diverse spectrum of opinions and beliefs are discussed in ways that inspire curiosity and empathy for other positions, as individuals share personal perspectives on science issues related to their lived experience.

HOW IS DIALOGUE ABOUT SCIENCE ISSUES DIFFERENT AND HOW CAN CIVIC SCIENCE HELP?

1- How can we deal with conversations on science topics that have complexity and emerge with more clarity. This extends beyond difficulties speaking about “hot-button” topics, but how to speak about topics that may be hard to grasp and feel alienating. How can we build spaces for the public to approach science and feel like they are welcome to come in?

2- A goal of Civic Science is to help facilitate the ability of all stakeholders to enter conversations with confidence and a sense of empowerment, to shift from alienation, fear and hype into an inclusive space for reflection by creating a larger framework for dialogue.

3- Scientists can share science information and process in a non-biased way that facilitates an understanding of all perspectives on the science (ie. what we know).

4- Through open dialogue and questions of genuine curiosity, participants can feel curious, hopeful and share their lived experience that inform why they care about science issues (ie. how we feel). Civic Science offers a framework for science issues to be personal, accessible and relevant.

Civic Science aims to create an inclusive science communication environment that advances public problem solving. It works to bring together stakeholders with diverse values and interests to build dialogue where all voices are heard and shared commitments are acknowledged.