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PUBLIC DELIBERATION, DISCURSIVE PARTICIPATION, AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT: A Review of the Empirical Literature

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INTRODUCTION

A large and growing group of scholars, foundations, and public intellectuals agree with Page (1996, p. 1) that "[p]ublic deliberation is essential to democracy." The celebration of public deliberation by citizens has a long history that flows from the city-states of ancient Greece to the town hall meetings of colonial

New England to the salons and cafés of Paris to, most recently, internet forums and chat rooms. At least one tradition within democratic theory has long designated public deliberation as a cornerstone of participatory democracy and representative government (Barber 1984; Connolly 1983; Dahl 1989; Dewey 1954 [1927]; Fishkin 1992, 1995; Habermas 1996; Mansbridge 1983).

Public deliberation is also enjoying a renaissance outside of the academy. President Clinton's initiative on race in the early 1990s was premised on the power and value of public discussion regarding a divisive but often submerged issue. Televised initiatives such as James Fishkin's "deliberative polls," presidential debates modeled after town hall meetings, *Nightline*'s or *Hardball*'s occasional public forums, and even talk shows such as *Oprah* all try to capture the spirit of public deliberation, albeit in ways that are more spectator sport than active involvement for the vast majority of American citizens. For others, the internet holds the potential to blend the advantages of face-to-face discussion with the scale and convenience of modern communication technology. Public deliberation models of varying stripes have been supported by foundations and nonprofits such as Carnegie-Mellon, Kettering, the Pew Charitable Trusts, Harwood, Benton, and the Study Circles Resource Center, resulting in literally thousands of local and national deliberative forums on hundreds of issues, from economic development to crime to social security to campaign finance reform (Jacobs et al. 2000).

As Chambers (2003, p. 307) notes, "It is now commonplace to talk about the deliberative turn in democratic theory. . . . Indeed, this turn is so striking that it has spawned a small industry of review articles and edited volumes attempting to sum up its meaning and content." Unfortunately, empirical research on deliberative democracy has lagged significantly behind theory. In recent years, however, enough research has been conducted on this topic to warrant assessing what we know—and what we still need to know—about the actual and potential relationship between deliberation and other forms of attitudinal and behavioral engagement in democratic life. This essay provides such review.

We begin by defining "public deliberation," placing it in the context of other forms of what we call "discursive participation" while distinguishing it from alternative ways in which citizens can voice their individual and collective views on public issues. We then discuss the expectations drawn from deliberative democratic theory regarding the benefits (and, for some, pitfalls) assumed to derive from public deliberation. The next section reviews empirical research as it relates to these theoretical expectations. We conclude with some brief thoughts on and recommendations for future directions for research in this area.

WHAT IS PUBLIC DELIBERATION?

The concept of public deliberation emerges from democratic deliberative theory. According to Chambers (2003, p. 308), democratic deliberative theory

> begins with a turning away from liberal individualist or economic understandings of democracy and toward a view anchored in conceptions of

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> accountability and discussion. Talk-centric democratic theory replaces voting-centric democratic theory. Voting-centric views see democracy as the arena in which fixed preferences and interests compete via fair mechanisms of aggregation. In contrast, deliberative democracy focuses on the communicative processes of opinion and will formation that precede voting. Accountability replaces consent as the conceptual core of legitimacy. A legitimate political order is one that could be *justified* to all those living under its laws. Thus, accountability is primarily understood in terms of "giving an account" of something; that is, publicly articulating, explaining, and most importantly justifying public policy. Consent (and, of course, voting) does not disappear. Rather, it is given a more complex and richer interpretation in the deliberative model than in the aggregative model. Although theorists of deliberative democracy vary as to how critical they are of existing representative institutions, deliberative democracy is not usually thought of as an alternative to representative democracy. It is rather an expansion of representative democracy.

Public deliberation, then, is the process through which deliberative democracy occurs. Not surprisingly, however, there is no clear consensus regarding its definition, especially as one moves from theory to practice. In the most formal sense, public deliberation is

> discussion that involves judicious argument, critical listening, and earnest decision making. Following the writings of John Dewey, full deliberation includes a careful examination of a problem or issue, the identification of possible solutions, the establishment or reaffirmation of evaluative criteria, and the use of these criteria in identifying an optimal solution. Within a specific policy debate or in the context of an election, deliberation sometimes starts with a given set of solutions, but it always involves problem analysis, criteria specification, and evaluation. (Gastil 2000, p. 22)

Fishkin (1995, p. 41) initially adopts a similarly strict definition but allows for a more realistic assessment by introducing the notion of "incompleteness":

> When arguments offered by some participants go unanswered by others, when information that would be required to understand the force of a claim is absent, or when some citizens are unwilling to weigh some of the arguments in the debate, then the process is *less deliberative* because it is incomplete in the manner specified. In practical contexts a great deal of incompleteness must be tolerated. Hence, when we talk of improving deliberation, it is a matter of *improving* the completeness of the debate and the public's engagement in it, not a matter of perfecting it. . . .

How far one is willing to take the notion of incompleteness before a particular activity can no longer be considered deliberation is, however, far from clear. For example, Page (1996, p. 5), while acknowledging the "face-to-face ideal" that underlies most traditional notions of deliberation, argues that in modern, mass democracies deliberation is largely "mediated" through professional communicators "who not only help policy experts communicate with each other, but also

assemble, explain, debate, and disseminate the best available information and ideas about public policy, in ways that are accessible to large audiences of ordinary citizens." Others argue that deliberation need not even involve direct exchanges between two or more citizens but can also occur through the survey process and/or within the thought processes of an individual citizen. For example, Lindeman (2002, p. 199) defines deliberation as "a cognitive process in which individuals form, alter, or reinforce their opinions as they weigh evidence and arguments from various points of view," whereas for Gunderson (1995, p. 199), "Democratic deliberation occurs anytime a citizen either actively justifies her views (even to herself) or defends them against a challenge (even from herself)."

Additionally, though not always explicitly using the term deliberation, research on other forms of "public talk" (for example, calling into a talk radio show; convincing a friend, neighbor, or coworker whom to vote for; contacting the media or a public official about an issue; informally discussing a community concern) all intersects conceptually with more formal definitions of public deliberation. So too do related linguistic concepts such as bargaining and rhetoric:

> Definitions of deliberation and how to distinguish it from other forms of talk—for example, bargaining or rhetoric—vary a great deal among theorists (compare Elster 1997, Bohman 1996 on bargaining; see Remer 1999, 2000 on rhetoric). Furthermore, even when a strong distinction is made between, say, bargaining and deliberation, this rarely means that bargaining is illegitimate or undemocratic. It means that citizens need to deliberate about and decide when and where bargaining is a fair and appropriate method of dispute resolution (Habermas 1996). Generally speaking, we can say that deliberation is debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants. Although consensus need not be the ultimate aim of deliberation, and participants are expected to pursue their interests, an overarching interest in the legitimacy of outcomes (understood as justification to all affected) ideally characterizes deliberation. (Chambers 2003, p. 309)

For the purposes of this essay, we adopt the definition of public deliberation generally used by Gastil and Chambers, allowing for some reasonable degree of "incompleteness" as described by Fishkin. Thus defined, public deliberation is a specific, important, and idealized category within the broader notion of what we call "discursive participation."

Our conceptualization of discursive participation has five principal characteristics. First, and most obviously, the primary form of activity we are concerned about is discourse with other citizens—talking, discussing, debating, and/or deliberating. Second, we see discourse of this kind as a form of participation. Although analyses of civic and political participation have become more sensitive to the variety of ways in which citizens can act, they seldom include talk as a measure of engagement, focusing instead on activities such as voting, attending

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rallies, working for a political party, lobbying, joining and actively participating in voluntary organizations, protesting, and the like (Brady 1999, Ladd 2000, Putnam 2000, Skocpol & Fiorina 2000). But talking in public with other citizens is a form of participation, one that arguably provides the opportunity for individuals to develop and express their views, learn the positions of others, identify shared concerns and preferences, and come to understand and reach judgments about matters of public concern. Such exchanges are a central way of clarifying and negotiating deep divisions over material interests and moral values; they are also critical for publicly airing disagreements that have not been articulated or have been incompletely stated because so many citizens have withdrawn from electoral and legislative politics (Benhabib 1992, 1996; Dryzek 1990; Elster 1998; Etzioni 1997; Gutmann & Thompson 1996; Habermas 1989; Michelman 1988).

Third, discursive participation can include but is not limited to the formal institutions and processes of civic and political life. It can involve private individuals in informal, unplanned exchanges; those who convene for public purposes but do so outside the normal processes of government operations (for example, in such places as libraries, schools, homes, churches, and community centers); and those who are brought together in settings such as town hall meetings of political representatives and their constituents. Fourth, discursive participation can occur through a variety of media, including face-to-face exchanges, phone conversations, email exchanges, and internet forums. Fifth, it is focused on local, national, or international issues of public concern.

Our definitions of discursive participation in general and public deliberation more specifically do not include a number of talk-centric activities: elite-to-elite discourse, such as campaign debates, congressional deliberations, or television talk shows (e.g., *Meet the Press*); citizen-to-elite communications, such as most school board meetings, call-in radio or television shows (e.g., *The Rush Limbaugh Show* or *Larry King Live*), letters to the editor, op-eds, and other contacts with the media; elite-to-citizen communications, such as press conferences or speeches; "self-deliberation" of the sort considered by Lindeman (2002) or Gunderson (1995); or meetings or conversations about personal issues or concerns that are not directly related to broader public issues. Our definitions also distinguish discursive participation and public deliberation from other, arguably related, forms of civic and political engagement such as voting, volunteering, protesting, and direct public problem solving through community organizations.

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF PUBLIC DELIBERATION

The sustained and even growing interest in public deliberation is premised on a number of reasonable but largely untested assumptions. According to Mendelberg (2002, pp. 153–54),

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> If it is appropriately empathetic, egalitarian, open-minded, and reason-centered, deliberation is expected to produce a variety of positive democratic outcomes (Barber 1984; Benhabib 1996; Bickford 1996; Bohman 1996; Chambers 1996; Cohen 1989; Fishkin 1995; Gutmann & Thompson 1996; Mansbridge 1983, 1996; Sunstein 1993; Warren 1992, 1996). Citizens will become more engaged and active in civic affairs (Barber 1984). Tolerance for opposing points of view will increase (Gutmann & Thompson 1996). Citizens will improve their understanding of their own preferences and be able to justify those preferences with better arguments (Chambers 1996; Gutmann & Thompson 1996). People in conflict will set aside their adversarial, win-lose approach and understand that their fate is linked with the fate of the other, that although their social identities conflict they "are tied to each other in a common recognition of their interdependence" (Chambers 1996; Pearce & Littlejohn 1997; Yankelovich 1991). Faith in the democratic process will be enhanced as people who deliberate become empowered and feel that their government truly is "of the people" (Fishkin 1995). Political decisions will become more considered and informed by relevant reasons and evidence (Chambers 1996). The community's social capital will increase as people bring deliberation to their civic activities (Fishkin 1995; Putnam 2000). The legitimacy of the constitutional order will grow because people have a say in and an understanding of that order (Chambers 1996; Gutmann & Thompson 1996). To summarize, deliberation is expected to lead to empathy with the other and a broadened sense of people's own interests through an egalitarian, open-minded and reciprocal process of reasoned argumentation. Following from this result are other benefits: citizens are more enlightened about their own and others' needs and experiences, can better resolve deep conflict, are more engaged in politics, place their faith in the basic tenets of democracy, perceive their political system as legitimate, and lead a healthier civic life.

Others echo all or parts of Mendelberg's summary of the benefits of a more deliberative public. For example, Page (1996, p. 1) credits deliberation with "ensur[ing] that the public's policy preferences—upon which democratic decisions are based—are informed, enlightened, and authentic." Gastil (2000, pp. 23–25) sees deliberation as a means to more sound individual and collective decisions, as well as to collective action and to greater support for responsive public officials. And Chambers (2003, p. 318) notes that

> a central tenet of all deliberative theory is that deliberation can change minds and transform opinions. . . . Although few adhere to the view that deliberation inevitably leads to consensus, many believe that deliberation under the right conditions will have a tendency to broaden perspectives, promote toleration and understanding between groups, and generally encourage a public-spirited attitude. . . . There is a widespread belief that deliberation and publicity associated with deliberation will have a salutary effect on people's opinions.

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Public deliberation also has been singled out as a unique mechanism for producing collective decisions. Policy entrepreneurs as diverse as urban planners and ecologists have embraced public deliberation as a tool for reconciling competing perspectives. For instance, public deliberation has been used as a method for discussing and negotiating such diverse issues as how to safely produce genetically modified organisms, how to stimulate economic development, and how to encourage efficient and environmentally sustainable uses of energy (e.g., Forester 1989, 1999; Kapuscinski et al. 2003). In an era of great divisiveness over policy issues and partisan positions, the traditional tools of electoral and legislative avenues to collective decision making remain essential. But they have also become deadlocked or have alienated large parts of America. Public deliberation has emerged as a potentially valuable way of breaking (or at least sidestepping) this deadlock.

Although the promise of public deliberation has drawn significant attention from scholars and practitioners, there remain deep doubts about its practicality, political significance, and even appropriateness as a core feature of a vibrant democracy. The holding of civic forums is often considered too infrequent and uncommon to deserve much attention, despite the visibility of occasional efforts. Some analysts are concerned that public deliberation is little more than another enclave of "gated democracy"—a practice reserved for the same group of affluent Americans who disproportionately deploy their checkbooks to lure candidates to their favorite positions or who are already well-endowed with social capital. Yet another complaint is that civic forums are "just talk"—idle chat that is cut off from government decision making about important issues. Perhaps most damning, some argue that a majority of citizens lack the skills and/or opportunities to deliberate effectively, that public deliberation can produce unintended consequences. Price et al. (2003, p. 5) summarizes these consequences as "opinion polarization, . . . shifts in opinion in new and risky directions. . . [and] social-normative pressures that can subvert sound judgment. . . [and that] many citizens do not wish for, and indeed might react negatively toward, efforts to engage them more directly in political decision making through deliberation" (see also Brown 2000, Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 2002a, Mansbridge 1983, Mutz 2002, Sanders 1997, Schudson 1997, Sunstein 2001). Put simply, countering the optimism of proponents of deliberative democracy is a strong and persistent suspicion that public deliberation is so infrequent, unrepresentative, subject to conscious manipulation and unconscious bias, and disconnected from actual decision making as to make it at best an impractical mechanism for determining the public will, and at worst misleading or dangerous.

WHAT WE KNOW—AND DON'T KNOW—ABOUT THE IMPACT OF DISCURSIVE PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC DELIBERATION ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Assessing the impact of discursive participation in general, and public deliberation more specifically, on civic engagement is difficult largely because of the scarcity of empirical evidence. Nonetheless, enough relevant research exists to

draw some broad conclusions and to identify areas where further research is needed.

Political Talk as Civic Engagement

Before turning to the relationship between "political talk," public deliberation, and more traditional measures of engagement, we should note the perhaps obvious point that political talk *is* a type of engagement. Although it is important to understand the impact of public discourse on other indicators of citizenship, much of democratic theory argues that such discourse is a good in and of itself. If so, the extent to which citizens engage in public deliberation and other forms of talk-centered civic and political activities can be used as an indicator of democratic health, much as rates of turnout, charitable giving, volunteerism, or news consumption are often used. But how common is discursive participation?

Eliasoph (1998) suggests that the answer is "not very." Although 53% of American adults report attending meetings of voluntary associations from time to time during the course of a year (Verba et al. 1995, pp. 62–63), Eliasoph, in her aptly named book *Avoiding Politics*, reports that members of volunteer groups (e.g., high school parent associations) and recreational groups (e.g., fraternal associations) assiduously avoided "public-spirited political conversation." Even members of activist groups (e.g., a group trying to prevent a toxic incinerator from being built in their neighborhood) studied by Eliasoph were initially hesitant about the value of political deliberation and, once they perceived its value, were more likely to engage in it in the safety of their own company than in more public settings (see also Conover et al. 2003 on the dominance of "private" over "public" discussion).

Although Eliasoph's research, based on participant observation and depth interviews, finds little evidence of public talk or deliberation, she concludes that this results from a poorly developed public sphere rather than an inherent or natural aversion to politics—a conclusion supported by Skocpol's (2003) historical research on the professionalization of politics in the United States. However, Hibbing & Theiss-Morse (2002a) argue that Americans have no desire to be deeply engaged in the political process. Interpreting a wide range of survey data on public attitudes and opinions, they make the case that Americans not only have policy preferences but also have process preferences, and that for most people most of the time, the preferred process is "stealth democracy." By stealth democracy the authors mean a system in which decisions about what policies to implement, and predecision considerations about (i.e., deliberation of) these policy issues, are left to "objective but largely invisible and unaccountable elites" (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 2002a, p. 239). They elaborate:

> Stealth democracy would not seem to be democracy at all. But we believe it is and here is why. While people are not eager to provide input into political decisions, they want to know that they could have input into political decisions if they ever wanted to do so. In fact, they are passionate about this. But the difference between the desire to influence political decisions and the desire

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> to be able to provide input if it were ever necessary to do so is substantial. (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse 2002a, p. 239)

In the end, however, neither Eliasoph's in-depth but necessarily limited case studies nor Hibbing & Theiss-Morse's more generalizable measures of public attitudes can tell us how much political talk actually occurs in the United States. The reason is that direct survey measures of discursive participation are relatively rare. In his review of political participation measures, Brady (1999) finds only two survey items—discussing politics with friends and trying to persuade someone how to vote—that directly measure citizen-to-citizen talk. Drawing on Barnes et al. (1979), Brady reports that 16% of U.S. adults said they discussed politics with friends "often," and another 37% reported doing so "sometimes." Based on National Election Studies (NES) and General Social Survey (GSS) data collected in the late 1980s, 28%–32% of Americans say they have tried to persuade someone how to vote "often" or "sometimes" (Brady 1999, pp. 750–51). Bennett et al. (1995), using NES data from 1984 to 1992, find that between one third and one half of the American public had no discussions about politics in the past week, but that the average number of weekly discussions ranged between about one and a half and two and a half.

More recently, Keeter et al. (2002) found that 60% of Americans age 15 or older reported talking "very often" about "current events or things you have heard on the news with your family or friends" and that another 32% did so at least "sometimes." In this study, 12% reported that "politics" was discussed "very often" in their homes, with another 35% reporting it was discussed "sometimes." Keeter et al. found that 33% of those interviewed said that during elections they "generally" talk to people to persuade them whom to vote for, and that 11% have done door-to-door canvassing for a political or social group or a candidate at some point in their life (3% reported having done so in the past year).

Wuthnow (1994), in a study of Americans' growing involvement in what he calls "the small group movement," found that 40% of adults reported being a member of "a small group that meets regularly and provides caring and support for its members." Sixty percent of these participants (or 24% of the adult population) described their group's primary purpose as including "discussion." And 45% of group members (or 18% of the adult population) described the focus of their group as a "special interest" related to political issues or current events.

As part of our own work in this area (Cook et al. 2003, Delli Carpini et al. 2003), we conducted a national survey that included six measures of discursive participation. In our survey, 4% of the adult public reported having participated in an on-line forum to discuss a local, national, or international issue of public concern within the past year; 24% had engaged at least a few times per month in an internet or instant-message "conversation" about such issues; 25% had attended a formal or informal meeting to discuss such issues; 31% had tried to persuade someone how to vote; 47% had tried to persuade someone to alter their point of view on a public issue; and 68% had face-to-face or phone conversations about

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public issues at least a few times per month. Nearly one in five (19%) adults had not engaged in *any* of these discursive activities in the past year and only 1% had engaged in all six, but over half (58%) had engaged in two or more, and over one third (36%) in three or more.

Taken as a whole, these survey-based studies suggest that talking about public issues, though perhaps not meeting the expectations of democratic theory, is fairly widespread among the American public, rivaling other forms of civic and political engagement in frequency. Of course, these data reveal nothing about the content or quality of these exchanges. Like other forms of participation, engagement in political talk—especially the more "costly" forms, such as deliberative meetings—appears to be linked to socioeconomic status and education (Bennett et al. 1995; Fung 2001, pp. 89–93), although more work on the predictors of this kind of engagement is needed. This research is largely silent on the benefits that are presumed to flow from a more discursively engaged public.

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Social Psychology Research on Small Group Deliberation

Though not intended to directly test the democratic benefits of public deliberation, research such as that on small group decision making (drawn largely from psychology) can provide both a window into this black box and fertile ground for generating hypotheses. Mendelberg (2002) provides an excellent review of these literatures and draws lessons from them regarding the promise and pitfalls of public deliberation about politics.

One literature reviewed by Mendelberg is that on the "social dilemma" produced by the fact that "the pursuit of narrow self-interest, while rational for individuals, is irrational and harmful for the group" (Mendelberg 2002, p. 155). Tellingly, experimental research on this topic has found that face-to-face communication is the single greatest factor in increasing the likelihood of cooperation (Bornstein 1992, Dawes et al. 1990, Ostrom 1998, Sally 1995). This experimental literature suggests that talking allows group members to demonstrate their genuine willingness to cooperate and to determine others' willingness to do so (Bornstein & Rapoport 1988, Kerr & Kaufman-Gilland 1994, Orbell et al. 1988) and that it helps them to see the connection between their individual interest and that of the group (Dawes et al. 1990, Orbell et al. 1988). In addition, the group consensus that emerges from talk appears to lead to actual cooperative behavior, with more talk leading to more cooperation (Bouas & Komorita 1996). As Mendelberg notes, however, these studies cannot demonstrate that altruism (as opposed to self-interest) is the prime motivator for cooperative behavior.

More troubling, research on complex social dilemmas involving multiple groups suggests that in certain contexts, communication can enhance cooperation among individuals at the expense of that between groups (Insko et al. 1993). Bornstein (1992) found that although communication across groups can increase cooperation between these groups when the group interests are consistent with individual interests, communication within competing groups increases individual and

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in-group cooperation at the expense of cooperation across groups. Several studies have found that communication across groups of unequal size can make group differences more salient and thus decrease cooperation (Bettencourt & Dorr 1998, Miller & Davidson-Podgorny 1987).

Research on small groups also suggests that discussion tends to move collective opinion in the direction of the preexisting views of the majority (Moscovici & Zavalloni 1969, Myers & Lamm 1976, Schkade et al. 2000). Two competing hypotheses seem to explain this tendency. The first—social comparison—assumes that holders of minority opinions either genuinely change their views so as to be part of the mainstream (Baron & Roper 1976, Blascovich et al. 1975, Isenberg 1986, Myers 1978, Myers et al. 1980, Turner 1991) or publicly acquiesce while still holding dissenting views in private (Davis et al. 1977, 1988, 1989; Penrod & Hastie 1980). The second hypothesis, which as Mendelberg (2002) notes is more compatible with deliberative theory, is that support for majority opinion tends to increase after group discussion because majorities, simply because of their size, can offer more novel, valid, and/or convincing arguments (Burnstein et al. 1973, Burnstein & Vinokur 1977, Vinokur & Burnstein 1978). Both the "social comparison" and the "effective argumentation" hypotheses find empirical support in the literature, but Isenberg (1986) and Laughlin & Earley (1982) find that the former is more likely to be relevant in discussions about issues that are heavily value laden.

All is not lost for minority opinions in the deliberative process, however. Mendelberg (2002) points out that minority opinion can lead majorities to consider new alternatives and perspectives (Nemeth 1986, Nemeth & Kwan 1985, Nemeth & Wachtler 1983, Turner 1991), to seek out and process new information (Nemeth & Mayseless 1987, Nemeth & Rogers 1996), and to more generally empathize with the minority's viewpoint (Moscovici 1980). The impact of minority opinion on the majority appears to be enhanced when the former is perceived as novel, objective, consistent, and unified, but not dogmatic (Maass & Clark 1984, Moscovici 1980, Wood et al. 1994); when discussions are not tied to reaching a specific decision (Smith et al. 1996); and when minorities can appeal to or shape norms held by the larger group (Bray et al. 1982, Nemeth et al. 1974, Nemeth & Brilmayer 1987, Moscovici & Mugny 1983, Turner, 1991). Although these findings provide at least indirect support for the democratic possibilities of public deliberation, there is some evidence that speakers "who hold a larger-than-average number of arguments in common with other [group] members"—whether members of the minority or majority—hold disproportionate influence over a group's decision "regardless of their competence or the quality of their arguments" (Mendelberg 2002, p. 164; also see Kameda et al. 1997).

Mendelberg's (2002) review of the social psychology literature on small groups provides several other insights of relevance to public deliberation. On the important question of "who deliberates?", research on juries finds that on average three members of a 12-person jury typically contribute over half the statements, while one in five jurors say little to nothing (Hastie et al. 1983, Strodtbeck et al. 1957).

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Jury members with higher-status jobs, greater education, and higher income talk more and are more likely to be (often incorrectly) perceived as more accurate (Hastie et al. 1983, Strodtbeck et al. 1957). In what is now rather dated research, women were found to be less likely to talk on juries (James 1959, Nemeth et al. 1976, Strodtbeck & Mann 1956, Strodtbeck et al. 1957) and more generally to be less influential in group decisions (Ridgeway 1981). And in trials with a black defendant and a white plaintiff, "African-American jurors report less participation in deliberation, less influence over other jurors, and less satisfaction with the process" than whites (Mendelberg 2002, p. 165; see also Bowers et al. 2001). Finally, in a comprehensive review of the literature on jury decision making, Devine et al. (2001) find that the view held by the majority at the beginning of the deliberative process is likely to reflect the final verdict. This pattern is less predictable for smaller majorities, varies depending on whether the majority supports conviction or acquittal, and is affected by such factors as the structure of deliberation (e.g., the order in which charges are discussed), the frequency and procedure (e.g., secret versus public ballots) with which straw polls are taken, and the quality of counterarguments made by members of the minority viewpoint (Devine et al. 2001, pp. 690–98).

More generally, individuals who score high on the "need for cognition"—defined by Mendelberg (2002, p. 166) as "the motivation to think in depth about the essential merits of a message"—are more likely to participate in deliberative discussions and to generate valid arguments (Cacioppo 1982, Cacioppo et al. 1996, Shestowsky et al. 1998), though they are also more resistant to the views and arguments of others (Petty et al. 1995). Individuals who are perceived by others (correctly or not) as having particular expertise in the subject under discussion are more likely to be influential in the group's decision (Bottger 1984; Kirchler & Davis 1986; Ridgeway 1981, 1987).

The use of language can also affect the negative or positive impact of deliberation. On the negative side of the ledger (Mendelberg 2002, p. 171), research on "Linguistic Intergroup Bias" (LIB) finds that

> people do seem prone to call attention. . .to their own group at the expense of the other. They use LIB to imply that their group's positive and the outgroup's negative qualities are inherent while their group's negative and the outgroup's positive characteristics are accidental or temporary and caused by circumstances. The LIB tends to spike up when the group feels threatened or enters a situation of conflict with another. . . . The LIB appears to elevate both personal and group self-esteem, which suggests that people use linguistic forms and patterns to make themselves feel superior (Maass et al. 1996). The LIB may also undermine feelings of attraction and closeness that can develop during discussion, and thus may undermine affective empathy (Rubini and Kruglanski 1996).

Experimental research on "speech accommodation theory" finds that language can be used to enhance or weaken the positive impact of deliberation, depending on

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circumstances. Giles et al. (1987), Hogg (1985), and Thakerar et al. (1982) demonstrate that members of lower-status groups, drawing on stereotypes of differences in speech patterns and use of language, tend to converge toward the linguistic style of higher-status groups when feelings of threat are low. This convergence increases participants' perceptions that speakers are cooperative, friendly, and effective. However, in circumstances of perceived group threat, language use diverges, reinforcing group boundaries and decreasing the likelihood of cooperation. More generally, the use of certain language (for example, using first names or plural pronouns such as "we") can "create [an] atmosphere and feeling of shared situational assessment, natural understanding, and common destiny" (Sornig 1989, p. 104; see also Dawes et al. 1990). But such feelings also can be used to build group solidarity at the expense of other groups (Mendelberg 2002, Mendelberg & Oleske 2000).

The structure or set of rules under which deliberation occurs is also important to its democratic potential. For example, Mendelberg (2002) identifies three theoretical views regarding the requirement of unanimity versus majority rule in group decision making. Dryzek (1990) argues that requiring unanimity increases the likelihood that participants will develop common understandings of others' perspectives. Manin (1987) and Davis et al. (1975) see majority rule as a more practical expectation that allows individuals and groups to reach decisions while preserving fundamental differences. To Mansbridge (1983), unanimity (or consensus) is possible without silencing minority opinions within friendship groups but is potentially problematic within groups lacking close personal ties, especially when there are significant inequalities across individuals or subgroups. The empirical research from social psychology tends to support Mansbridge's more complex view. Depending on the context, requiring unanimity can lead to a greater belief that the deliberation was fair and comprehensive (Kameda 1991, Kaplan & Miller 1987, Nemeth 1977) and to longer deliberations (Davis et al. 1997). Requiring unanimity can also encourage greater open-mindedness toward the views of others (Kameda 1991). However, the unanimity requirement can also increase the chances of deadlock (Hastie et al. 1983) and increase polarization (Kaplan & Miller 1987, Mendelberg & Karpowitz 2000). There is some evidence that majority rule can be superior to unanimity in counteracting inequities in influence among group members (Falk 1982, Falk & Falk 1981).

More generally, experimental research on jury deliberations suggests that the perception of "procedural justice" (i.e., the perception that the process by which a decision was made was fair) leads to greater support for the group decision. Thibaut & Walker (1975) find that participation in deliberations increases consideration of others' arguments and thus produces fairer outcomes. Tyler and others (Lind & Tyler 1988; Tyler 1994, 2001; Tyler & Blader 2000) have taken this argument further; they find that giving people the opportunity to voice their opinion increases their sense that the process is fair and the outcome legitimate, regardless of whether they agree substantively with the outcome.

Another presumed benefit of deliberation is that collective decisions can be superior to individual ones because more information can be brought to bear.

However, substantial research on this issue suggests that, left to their own devices, groups tend to use information that is already commonly shared, downplaying unique information held by specific individuals that could arguably improve the decision (Gigone & Hastie 1993, 1997; Larson et al. 1998; Larson et al. 1998; Stasser 1992; Stasser & Titus 1985; Stasser et al. 1989; Wittenbaum et al. 1999). Nonetheless, greater discussion can increase the use of new, less commonly shared information (Kelly & Karau 1999) and in the process improve the quality of the decisions reached by the group (Winquist & Larson 1998).

Yet another central issue concerning the democratic potential of deliberation is whether citizens have the capacity and motivation to participate effectively. Once again, experimental research from social psychology suggests that the answer is context dependent. For example, some research finds that when people feel greater accountability for their decisions, they are more likely to be objective and unbiased and to devote greater cognitive effort to reaching an accurate decision (Tetlock 1983, 1985; Tetlock & Kim 1987; Kruglanski & Freund 1983). Individuals who anticipate being part of the majority are likely to enter a deliberative situation prepared to ignore opposing views. Those who anticipate being in the minority, on the other hand, appear more likely to seek out information that supports their views, ignore prior information that contradicts their views (but actively listen to opposing views during the discussion itself), and generate more counterarguments to their own views in preparation for the discussion (Levine & Russo 1995, Zdaniuk & Levine 1996). Less is known about how emotion interacts with reason and cognition to influence the deliberative process. Research on affect suggests that it is likely to play both positive and negative roles; sometimes it leads citizens to disengage from public life, sometimes it leads them to filter new information through their (biased) emotional responses, and sometimes it enhances their likelihood of seeking out new information and engaging with others concerning substantive policy issues (Marcus et al. 2000, Taber et al. 2001, Walton 1992, Wolak et al. 2003).

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Case Study– and Survey-Based Research on Political Deliberation

Research such as that discussed above provides a good deal of indirect support for the democratic potential of deliberation but also suggests that this potential is highly context dependent and rife with opportunities for going awry. Research explicitly devoted to the political consequences of deliberation, though relatively sparse, leads to a similar conclusion.

One approach to better understanding the consequences of political deliberation is observation of people as they deliberate, often combined with depth interviews of the participants. One of the best and earliest examples of this approach is Mansbridge's (1983) study of a New England town meeting and an urban crisis center. Among Mansbridge's central findings are that deliberation can (and should) take different forms depending on both the nature of the issue under discussion and the makeup of the group. "Unitary democracy," in which participants seek

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to reach a consensus opinion, is most effective when participants share underlying common interests and social bonds such as friendship, and when the problem under discussion has an identifiable, "correct" solution. Under such conditions, collective decisions can be reached through open discussion in a way that (in the best of circumstances) satisfies participants both substantively and procedurally and allows for minority views to be aired and taken seriously. "Adversarial democracy," in which decisions are made by majority rule, need be no less discursive, but is the preferred model when underlying interests are different, when participants are less closely tied together, and/or when the problem lacks a single identifiable or acceptable solution. Mansbridge is clear in pointing out that "conflict" can exist in both unitary and adversarial democracy. She also notes that people's interests can change, and so both models of deliberation should be seen as dynamic rather than static. Important to the point of this essay, she argues that citizens' satisfaction with deliberative participation depends heavily on choosing the correct model for the issue and groups involved:

> I believe that every polity contains both common and conflicting interests and that every polity therefore needs both unitary and adversary institutions to make democratic decisions. Unitary democracies that ignore or suppress conflicting interests can do as much damage both to themselves and to their members as can adversary democracies that ignore or fail to develop their members' common interests. . . . Indeed, the unitary model of democracy may produce more overt and angry conflict than adversary democracy, because if a political problem has an underlying correct solution, it often pays to argue things through until everyone concerned accepts this solution as correct. If there is no solution that serves everyone's interest, more debate will not usually produce agreement, and it is often better to cut short a potentially bitter debate with a vote. (Mansbridge 1983, pp. x–xi)

Gamson (1992), using a set of focus group–like discussions about public issues, also draws several conclusions of relevance to public deliberation and civic engagement, including the observation that "ordinary" citizens are capable of meaningfully discussing topics such as affirmative action, nuclear power, international conflict, and economic retrenchment. Citizens are able to engage in such conversations by drawing on (and critiquing) such "conversational resources" as media discourse, experiential knowledge, and popular wisdom. In doing so, they can develop "collective action themes" around issues such as a sense of political agency, identity and, most powerfully, injustice, that can lead from talk to action.

Gastil (2000) provides an overview of assessments of a number of case studies of real-world deliberative initiatives. For example, a 1984 community "visioning process" in Chattanooga, Tennessee, which involved 50 community activists and volunteers meeting over a 20-week period, produced a list of priorities and solutions, including a shelter for abused women and a riverfront park. Spurred by these deliberative forums, the organizers developed a series of neighborhood associations and new nonprofit organizations, and by 1992 most of the solutions

emerging out the forums had been implemented. From 1980 to 1990, a nonprofit organization in Oregon organized hundreds of neighborhood forums across the state in which citizens discussed the state's health care problems. As a result, in 1990 the state legislature created the Health Services Commission, which adopted the same citizen forum model to provide more official guidance and input. Within a year, these forums produced a list of state-wide health care priorities which were used to guide government action in this area.

Qualitative research on the Kettering Foundation's National Issues Forums suggests that

> participation in deliberative forums can (1) change participants' political opinions, (2) increase participants' political self-efficacy and their sense of community identity, (3) widen and diversify participants' political communication networks, (4) make participants more "deliberative" in their political conversations, (5) raise participants' interest in politics, and (6) increase the frequency of participants' political information seeking and political activity. (Gastil 2000, pp. 118–19; see also Gastil 1994, Loyacano 1992)

These and several other case studies of community-based deliberative forums (often initiated by local nonprofit organizations, media outlets, and governments) suggest that "deliberation both developed coherent collective interests and built strong bonds among the citizens who pursued those interests together" (Gastil 2000, p. 120; see also Briand 1999, Sirianni & Friedland 2001, Gill 1996, Lappe & Dubois 1994, Pearce & Littlejohn 1997, Podziba 1998). In an excellent study on informal conversation (rather than formal deliberation) among a group of retired, middle-class whites who meet regularly at a local coffee shop, Walsh (2003a) reaches a more mixed, context-dependent conclusion about the civic benefits of public talk. On the one hand, her work reveals how conversations about politics, coupled with the bonds of identity and friendship, work together to create stronger community and social ties. But she also finds that informal political discussion can have less salutary effects by reinforcing group-based social boundaries and encouraging exclusionary and at times undemocratic understandings of the political world.

More quantitative analyses of the impact of real-world deliberative forums also provide encouraging, if inconclusive and sometimes mixed, evidence that they can produce positive impacts on participants. Delli Carpini (1997) reports that citizens who participated in a series of deliberative discussions about the role of money in politics became more knowledgeable about the issue, more trusting of their fellow participants, and more likely to report participating in other forms of civic engagement. They also overwhelmingly agreed that the recommendations summarized in the project's final report accurately reflected the consensus of the group, even when these recommendations did not reflect their own personal view.

Research by Gastil et al. (2002) finds that citizens who participated in jury deliberations were subsequently more likely to vote in elections. Small-group

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participants in Wuthnow's (1994) survey reported that, as a result of their participation, they worked with the group to help others in the group (74%) and outside the group (62%), donated money to a charitable organization (57%), became more interested in social justice or peace issues (56%), became more interested in political or social issues (45%), volunteered in their community (43%), changed their mind about a political or social issue (40%), and participated in a political rally or worked for a political campaign (12%). Prepost studies of several National Issues Forums find increases in participants' knowledge of the issues under discussion, a greater willingness to compromise, more sophisticated and internally consistent opinions, and movement toward more moderate policy choices (Doble & Richardson 1991; Gastil & Dillard 1999a,b).[1] A study using a quasi-experimental, pretest/post-test comparison group design (Cook & Jacobs 1998) finds that participants in a deliberative forum entitled Americans Discuss Social Security increased their levels of interest in Social Security, knowledge about the program, and plans for political involvement on the issue (though not their actual participation) as compared to a random sample of community residents and nonattending forum invitees.

Not all studies of real-world initiatives are universally positive in their conclusions regarding the democratic benefits of public deliberation. For example, Mendelberg & Oleske (2000) find that participation in a meeting on school desegregation led to intense dissatisfaction among participants, paralleling Mansbridge's (1983) finding of frustration and anger among those attending a New England town meeting (see also Karpowitz 2003). An effort to increase citizen involvement in policy decisions in five cities failed to increase participation rates (Berry et al. 1993). Tyler (1994) and Tyler & Mitchell (1994) find that citizens who believe they have the ability to make arguments to Congress or influence its decisions are less likely to hold favorable attitudes toward that institution. Walsh (2003b, p. 26), in a prepost test of participants in two Study Circles programs that addressed issues of race in their communities, concludes:

> The benefits of participating in civic dialogue are far from obvious. . . . Although the format of the programs has the potential to increase internal and external efficacy, enlarge social identities and lead perceptions of community to be more inclusive, the data are not decisive in these respects. There are signs that exposure to the program has a positive effect on perceptions of responsiveness of local government, but possibly a negative effect on individuals' sense of ability to affect policy, due in part to increasing perceptions that race relations is a complex issue. Analysis of feelings of closeness to various social groups suggests that participating may have a positive effect in this respect, but not universally. For some respondents, there are signs of heightened intergroup conflict.

[1]See also Lindeman (2002, pp. 211–16) on public deliberation regarding health care reform and environmental regulation and Barabas (2000) on deliberations about social security.

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Lindeman (2002) finds evidence that, when given the opportunity to deliberate, citizens showed strong support for health care reform and environmental regulation—but that the federal government failed to act on these issues in ways consonant with public opinion.

Although these findings do not directly challenge the individual or collective efficacy of deliberation, they do suggest that its impact is complex and context dependent and does not assure either citizen satisfaction or government responsiveness.

Experimental Research on Political Deliberation

Experimental research explicitly devoted to political deliberation paints an equally if not more complex picture. In a controlled experiment in which partisan groups were asked to deliberate about ways to reduce the federal budget deficit and specify which programs to cut and which taxes to raise, Gaertner et al. (1999) found that greater interaction across groups reduced bias and increased consensual decision making. However, these results were as likely to occur through a simple exchange of information about each group's fixed preferences as through open discussion.

Stasser & Titus (1985) tested the hypothesis that collective political decisions are superior to individual ones by providing groups of four individuals with information about three fictitious candidates for public office and then asking them to discuss the candidates before choosing whom to vote for. In one condition, all participants received the same information clearly showing candidate A to be the most qualified. In the second condition, the same information about candidate A was available in toto but was equally divided among participants, so that no one individual had enough information to see that A was the superior candidate. Groups in which each participant began with full information overwhelmingly voted in favor of candidate A, with support increasing from 66% prior to discussion to 85% afterward. In contrast, only a quarter of individuals who began with partial information supported candidate A prior to their discussions. Most significantly, and contrary to the expectations of deliberative theorists, discussing the candidates did not result in aggregating information across participants, and support for candidate A actually dropped slightly.

In a test of the impact of procedural justice on perceptions of legitimacy, Gangl (2000) provided subjects with different descriptions of "fair" legislative processes (including one that emphasized opportunities for the public to voice their opinions) and of "unfair" processes. She finds that whereas the "neutral and balanced" and the "nonself-serving decision maker" processes both increased perceptions of legitimacy of the system, the "people have voice" process produced statistically insignificant declines in perceived legitimacy. And Morrell (1999) finds that the individuals assigned to a high-participation condition in a political decision-making experiment were at best no more likely than those in the low-participation condition to be satisfied with the process or to feel it was legitimate; in some cases, they felt it was less legitimate and were less satisfied. Morrell (1999, p. 318)

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concludes that participatory processes "can create an atmosphere of disconnection and dislike. . . . Rather than bringing citizens together, these types of structures of participation can only exacerbate already present divisions."

Hibbing & Theiss-Morse (2002b) conducted a series of four experiments intended to test the impact of different deliberative decision-making processes on perceived legitimacy of the decision and satisfaction and compliance with it. In each of the four experimental conditions, $20 was to be divided between the subject and another participant (usually a confederate). The decision-making conditions varied by whether the subject was given the opportunity to voice reasons for receiving the money and/or to elect the decision maker. They also varied by whether the decision maker appeared to be responsive to the subject's argument. In all conditions, the subject ultimately was given only $3 of the $20 available. In a creative twist designed to test compliance, when the subject went to receive his or her money, the clerk "mistakenly" offered him or her $4 more than was actually awarded.

The logic of the experiments is clear. They provide opportunities for citizen "voice" under different conditions of procedural fairness, holding substantive outcome constant but unfair. Three dependent variables were used: a seven-point scale measuring perceived fairness of the decision maker; a seven-point scale measuring satisfaction with the outcome; and a behavioral compliance measure reflecting whether the subject corrected the mistaken award of four extra dollars. Although results were not always statistically significant (due in part to small n and in part to substantively small differences), the patterns were clear. Voice alone made no difference in subjects' perceptions of fairness of the decision maker, satisfaction with the outcome, or (for the most part) compliance with the decision. Having the opportunity to vote for the decision maker did seem to increase the positive impact of voice on perceptions of decision-maker fairness. And, most tellingly, when subjects had "evidence" of the impact of their voice on the decision (i.e., when the decision maker increased the amount awarded after hearing the subject's reasons for receiving it), voice had a positive effect on perceptions of decision-maker fairness, fairness of the outcome, and compliance.

The Hibbing & Theiss-Morse experiments do not fully capture the notion of public deliberation; for example, the interactions occurred only between subjects and decision makers rather than across subjects, and subjects did not even hear the arguments of other subjects or confederates. Nonetheless, these experiments add to the evidence that the positive impact of discursive participation is strongly context dependent and tied to both process and outcomes. The findings also suggest that in the absence of real influence, the illusion of voice can lead to even greater frustration and disenchantment than having no voice at all—a conclusion that even the most die-hard deliberative theorist would agree with.

More consistently supportive findings for the positive impact of deliberation emerge from research surrounding the "deliberative poll" model developed by Fishkin (1995). Deliberative polls combine aspects of the internal validity provided by experimental design, the external validity provided by actual deliberation about

real-world issues, and the generalizability provided by surveys. For example, in national deliberative polls, a close approximation of a national random sample is recruited via telephone survey to attend a two- to four-day forum in which they participate in facilitated small group discussions about public issues such as crime, world affairs, or pending referenda or elections. Using both qualitative observation and quantitative prepost tests, researchers test the impact of public deliberation on participants' attitudes and opinions. Thus, a deliberative poll is

> both a social scientific quasi-experiment and a form of public consultation. As an experimental manipulation, the treatment consists of exposure to detailed briefing documents, participation in subsequent small group discussions, and the ability to question competing experts and policymakers. The goal is to create a counterfactual public opinion resting on a good deal of information and serious consideration of competing perspectives. Democratic theory assumes that public opinion is so grounded, but empirical research has made it abundantly clear that the "state of nature" (respondents as they are typically found in their day to day environment) bears little resemblance to this democratic ideal. . . . As an exercise in social science, therefore, Deliberative Polling seeks to create the conditions that facilitate the expression of informed and thoughtful opinion. . . . As a form of public consultation, Deliberative Polls provide policymakers with a representation of collective, more informed opinion. (Iyengar et al. 2003, pp. 1–2)

Research on the impact of deliberative polls (Fishkin 1999; Fishkin & Luskin 1999a,b,c; Luskin & Fishkin 1998; Luskin et al. 1999a,b, 2000, 2002) provides evidence that participation in such forums facilitates political learning (as measured by prepost tests of factual knowledge), promotes interpretable individual and collective opinion change on the policy issues discussed (indicating that informed opinion differs from the more "top of the head" responses tapped by opinion surveys), and increases political efficacy (and thus potentially and indirectly strengthens other aspects of citizenship that are positively related to efficacy, such as political interest and civic and political participation). More qualitative observations of the deliberative poll experience (e.g., McCombs & Reynolds 1999) provide additional if less systematic evidence regarding its positive impact on participants' sense of connectedness to fellow citizens, respect for views different from their own, social bonding, and the like.

The Potential of Online Deliberation

Not all responses to the deliberative poll have been positive (see, e.g., Traugott 1992). There have been concerns about the true generalizability of findings given possible, not easily measured biases (who agrees to attend the forum?) and potential idiosyncrasies in the deliberative experience. Also challenged are the durability of changes in attitudes, opinions, and knowledge, and the practicality of the design as a means of increasing meaningful deliberation among the larger population. One

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possible solution to this last issue is the internet. As Iyengar et al. (2003, pp. 2–3) note,

> Obviously, assembling a national random sample at a central location for some extended period of time (usually a weekend) is both cost and labor intensive. Participants must be provided free transportation, hotel accommodations, meals, as well as significant honorari[a] for undertaking the experiment. Moreover, participation in the poll imposes real opportunity costs in the form of disruption to participants' personal and family schedules. . . . The rapid development of information technology has made it possible to replicate Deliberative Polling online.

In addition to significantly lower costs for organizers and participants, online deliberation enables more long-term deliberation, flexibility in when individuals participate, more timely deliberation on emerging issues, and, perhaps most significantly, the possibility of a much larger scale. But can online deliberation capture the experience and benefits of the face-to-face ideal? To address this question, Iyengar et al. (2003) recently conducted online and face-to-face versions of a deliberative poll devoted to foreign policy issues. Initial analysis of the findings suggests that online deliberation

> is a viable process with significant potential for improving practices of public consultation and for illuminating our understanding of the role of deliberation in opinion formation. . . . Already we can see that the online process produced changes that roughly paralleled those from the face-to-face experiment—participants became more informed and underwent significant changes in opinion in a generally more internationalist direction (in comparison to their respective control groups). (Iyengar et al. 2003, p. 18)

More extensive research on online deliberation conducted by Cappella, Price, and colleagues provides more detailed and equally encouraging findings (Cappella et al. 2002; Price & Cappella 2002; Price et al. 2002, 2003). Based on a carefully designed series of monthly facilitated online deliberations run throughout the 2000 election cycle, which involved randomly recruited and assigned participants as well as control groups, their research has found that participation in online discussions can produce greater awareness of the reasons behind opposing views, but can also produce polarization (in the case of opinions regarding the Supreme Court). In deliberations concerning the aftermath of the 2000 presidential-election debacle, these authors observed convergence of opinions regarding the presidency and increases in confidence in political institutions (specifically Congress). Also noted were framing effects (in the case of discussions about gay civil unions); opinion change among undecided participants in the direction of dominant group arguments (on the issue of tax policy); increases in generalized social trust; and increases in a variety of forms of participation, including community engagement and voting.

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SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Although empirical research that directly tests the civic and political implications of discursive participation and public deliberation remains relatively thin, a number of tentative conclusions can be drawn from existing research as well as from the larger body of research available from the social psychology literature. First, despite some arguments and evidence that citizens have little interest in discussing public issues, enough Americans engage in public talk—including in formats that approximate theorists' definition of public deliberation—to warrant a deeper understanding of its role in democratic politics. Second, research drawn from social psychology, though not directly exploring the role of deliberation in democratic politics, provides substantial (if partial and inconsistent) evidence that deliberation can lead to some of the individual and collective benefits postulated by democratic theorists. Third, similar findings emerge from research (case studies, surveys, laboratory experiments, and quasi-experimental designs) explicitly designed to test the democratic, political uses of deliberation. Fourth, there is evidence that the internet may prove a useful tool in increasing the opportunities both for studying deliberation and for increasing its use by and utility for citizens. Fifth and most important, the impact of deliberation and other forms of discursive politics is highly context dependent. It varies with the purpose of the deliberation, the subject under discussion, who participates, the connection to authoritative decision makers, the rules governing interactions, the information provided, prior beliefs, substantive outcomes, and real-world conditions. As a result, although the research summarized in this essay demonstrates numerous positive benefits of deliberation, it also suggests that deliberation, under less optimal circumstances, can be ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst.

Better understanding how these and other contextual factors—both independently and in interaction with each other—affect the positive and negative consequences of public deliberation should be one of the primary goals of future research. Scholars should make a more concerted effort to tie their research explicitly to the specific hypotheses generated by deliberative theorists. We should also draw more heavily on relevant research generated by other disciplines, such as social psychology. We should combine multiple methods to build on the strengths of qualitative case studies, participant observation, survey research, and laboratory and field-based research. And we should take greater advantage of the myriad real-world deliberative experiments that occur every day.

A number of questions seem ripe for more definitive answers. For example, what motivates people to engage in discursive participation and public deliberation? What is the deliberative experience that millions of Americans currently engage in actually like? How do such factors as socioeconomic status, gender, race, and education affect the decision to deliberate, the discursive experience itself, and the individual and collective impact of that experience? What other "rules" besides those discussed above impact the deliberative experience and its outcomes? How lasting are the effects of deliberation? How is deliberation (as both

cause and effect) connected to other attitudinal and especially behavioral aspects of "good" citizenship? What models of deliberation, under what circumstances, are likely to be the most effective? Existing research hints at answers to these and other important questions. But as Hibbing & Theiss-Morse (2002b, p. 30) note, "Prescriptions about how to improve democratic government are too important to leave to the realm of wishful thinking." They are also too important to leave to suggestive and promising, but to date still inconclusive, research.

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