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Popular Deliberation and Group Involvement in Theory

Just what is it about the political system that needs improving? Political theorists have long been convinced that a successful democratic governmental system will accomplish three tasks: (1) It will make good decisions; (2) it will be perceived as legitimate; and (3) it will help the people in society become better people. In considering systemic reforms, as we do in this chapter, we are not implying that the American political system is a failure; rather, we are recognizing only that the extent to which any democracy is accomplishing these three tasks can always be improved and that every effort should be made to do so. But the first goal of any reformer should be to do no harm, and, on the basis of the findings presented in Part II, we fear that the reform proposals currently attracting the most attention would actually do significant harm.

REFORMING (OR IMPROVING) AMERICAN POLITICS

Ideas for improving the political system are probably about as numerous as people, but to help organize the various types of changes that could be preferred, we offer Figure 7.1. In this figure, the governing process is divided into two steps: predecision consideration and the decision itself. The key players in each step can either be the people themselves or elites. Though overly simplistic, this conceptualization at least makes it possible to categorize reforms according to the particular procedure advocates want to modify.

Four Governing Processes and Possible Reforms

Elites Consider, People Decide. Beginning with the upper-right quadrant of the figure, some governing processes entail preliminary discussions

Decision by...		Pre-decision Consideration by... People	Elites
	People	▸ Town hall meetings and juries ▸ Navajo democracy	▸ Ballot measures (initiatives and referenda) ▸ Teledemocracy
	Elites	▸ Volunteer groups ▸ Policy juries ▸ Deliberative opinion polls	▸ Standard representative government

Figure 7.1. Categories of democratic procedures, with examples.

and consideration by elites but leave the final decision to ordinary people. The clearest example of this would be the referendum process (currently operating in 26 states) in which state legislatures discuss and formulate language addressing a particular problem, but then leave the final decision to the people of the state who have the opportunity to vote yes or no on the proposal. Initiatives are proposals that originate outside the legislature and (like referenda) are voted on by ordinary people, so they may belong in the upper-left quadrant, but the actual operation of initiatives indicates that many proposals emanate from elite segments of society or at some point are commandeered by elites in (frequently expensive) contests to influence the final decision of the voters (see Magleby 1984; Broder 2000).

Numerous writers believe American politics would be improved by expanded use of this form of direct democracy. Cronin (1989: ix–x), for example, argues that "a country willing to share more political power with its citizens will find a citizenry willing to participate in the workings of government." Gerber (1999) believes that ballot measures, or even just the threat of ballot measures, serve as a useful prod to needed government action (Lascher, Hagen, and Rochlin 1996 have a decidedly less favorable view). While seeing some negatives to the initiative and referendum process, Bowler, Donovan, and Tolbert (1998: 264–70) contend that it is not, as some have averred (see Gamble 1997), a threat to minority rights. Citrin's (1996) account is quite balanced, but he does see the use of ballot measures as responding to the people's "positive yearning for voice – for the chance to be heard and to participate" (290).

Even more enthusiasm exists among political writers these days for utilizing modern telecommunications technology to give people the

opportunity to make direct decisions on policy matters. Though these technologies could be employed in many different fashions (as we see below when discussing the lower-left quadrant), the relevant procedure at this point works as follows. Similar to the standard referendum or elite-driven initiative process, elites formulate and present proposals to the people, who then, in the comfort of their homes, use the Internet or a television with a coaxial cable to register their preference on the proposal. Variations of teledemocracy are being widely discussed and considered (see Grossman 1995; Morris 1999; and Becker and Slaton 2000, to name a few). To be sure, some of the proposals for teledemocracy involve communication among ordinary people, but generally this communication is of the "on line" variety and thus is quickly discounted by supporters of real, face-to-face deliberation. Under most teledemocracy procedures, face-to-face deliberation is limited to elites.

Regardless of the specifics, advocates of teledemocracy tend to be wildly enthusiastic about the prospects afforded by advances in communications technology, as is indicated by Ornstein's (2000: 15) summary: "The advent of the internet has thrilled and excited a core of populist and direct democracy advocates who have become the leading proponents of 'cyberdemocracy.' The Net, they say, is the key to freeing citizens from the bonds of so-called representative democracy." Many of these advocates believe citizens' heightened role in the system would lead ordinary people to feel empowered and to pay more attention to politics. Even setting aside any perceived advantages of cyberdemocracy, many observers simply view it as increasingly inevitable in light of technology and people's presumed desire to play a more active part in politics (see Naisbitt 1984; Rosenthal 1998; Morris 1999; Solomon 2000).

Elites Consider, Elites Decide. When, however, the elites not only formulate the proposals but also decide on the proposals, governmental procedures are best described as standard representative government, the lower-right portion of Figure 7.1. Placing responsibility for both proposal consideration and proposal selection in the hands of elites is the usual procedure in the United States and in virtually all democracies.[1] The justification for such an approach was

[1] Besides the twenty-six states in the United States, only Switzerland makes extensive, regular use of ballot measures, though this could be changing (see Butler and Ranney 1994).

perhaps most famously stated by James Madison, who saw the need to "refine and enlarge the public views by passing them through a chosen body of citizens" (Federalist no. 10). Similarly, Edmund Burke (1949 [1774]: 115) spoke glowingly of the "mature judgments" and "enlightened conscience" of elites.

Since consideration and decision by elites already make up the main governing process in the United States, it might make sense to assume that supporters of such a process would not be eager to see any reforms. Not so. In fact, advocates of representative government are remarkably open to reforms, since many of them believe that current problems with the system stem not from the general practice of deferring to elites but from the particular manner in which elites consider and decide upon proposals. Thus, defenders of representative government could eagerly pursue campaign finance reforms, gift-giving restrictions, and other limits on special interest influence so that elite considerations and decisions would be (or would appear to be) based more on the merits than on money. Relatedly, those sympathizing with representative government might urge steps to make elite consideration more decorous, civil, and useful. Brady and Theriault (2001) believe dissatisfaction with Congress to a great extent springs from members' tendency to engage in unnecessarily shrill, extreme, and partisan debate (see also Uslaner 1993). Indeed, experimental work by Funk (2001) shows that people respond more favorably to civil debate than to hostile debate. People who believe representative government is the best procedure quite often are among the most active in seeking reforms in the way elites consider and decide upon policy proposals.

People Consider, Elites Decide. For all the interest in campaign finance reform and expanding direct democracy by the use of ballot measures or the Internet, even more energy and academic interest have been devoted to procedures in which the people are involved in a richer fashion at the earlier stage of the governing process – the consideration and formulation of policy proposals (the left side of Fig. 7.1). We begin with procedures providing for the people's participation in consideration while elites make the final decision, the lower-left quadrant.

The primary motivation behind these procedures is that the system would be improved if people were more involved. Advocates do not believe it sufficient when people are limited to making a final decision either on the candidates who will become decision makers or on policy decisions themselves. Benjamin Barber (1984) refers to such procedures as "weak democracy." What he and many others prefer is strong democracy, which he describes as "public reasoning . . . in the participatory mode," as "ongoing civic participation," and as ordinary people involved in "deliberation" (151). Kettering Foundation official (and former Cabinet member) David Mathews (1994) echoes this desire for the people to be intimately involved with the consideration of policy proposals, for them to deliberate. To underscore this point, he uses the American jury system. "Deliberation . . . is what makes twelve of our peers a group to whom we literally give life-and-death powers. We don't just trust twelve people with those powers under any condition. We only trust them under the condition that they deliberate long and carefully. The same is true of democratic politics" (111).

In this quadrant, people's role does not extend beyond deliberation. Elected officials are still responsible for making final decisions, but those who favor this general style of political process desire reforms that would allow elected officials to be informed by rich and sustained deliberations on the part of ordinary people. How would this occur? Specific proposals are incredibly numerous, incredibly diverse, and incredibly imaginative. Here, we only scratch the surface.

Perhaps the most discussed method of increasing people's presence in the "consideration-formulation-deliberation" stage is somehow to increase their involvement in the many volunteer organizations existing around the country. Drawing on the work of James Coleman (1990), Robert Putnam has popularized the concept of social capital, a reservoir of expectations, obligations, and trust that builds up as a result of satisfying interactions with other people in informal settings and especially in group activities. More important, perhaps, Putnam makes claims for the ability of social capital to boost political capital. He believes social capital plays a big role in "making democracy work" (1993) and that the United States is experiencing political difficulties because of a decline in social capital (1995). Putnam painstakingly documents the post-1960 decline in Americans' associational involvement with their fellow citizens and pleads that we "find ways to ensure that by 2010 the level of civic engagement among Americans then coming of age in all parts of our society will match that of their grandparents" (2000: 404). Journalist David Broder (1996: 4) is in general agreement with Putnam, saying that "unless more Americans start working with each other on

shared civic enterprises, and learning to trust each other, the formal government of this nation will probably lurch from one credibility crisis to the next."

The hope is not that citizens take over authoritative political decision making but that they become more active in groups which would, in turn, foster skills (see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), interests, and, as a result, communication with those who *do* make political decisions. In this way, citizens would be more active in the formulation and consideration of policy proposals. Others, however, believe that the existing group structure, as varied as it is, is not sufficient to provide decision makers with a sense of people's preferences. They advocate special structures to fulfill this need.

James Headlam (1933) calls for the empaneling of "citizen issue juries." Political theorist Robert Dahl (1970) urges the use of "minipopuli." Sociologist Amitai Etzioni (1972) wants to merge sampling and electronic communications to find out what ordinary people are thinking. Similarly, Ivor Crewe and Martin Harrop (1986) want to create an "Electronic 500" (see also MacDonald 1986). And James Fishkin (1991, 1995) has actually experimented with deliberative opinion polls in the United Kingdom and the United States.[2] The uniting goal of all these ideas is to obtain something approximating a random sample of people who are then provided information and a special opportunity to discuss the topic at hand. As a result, the group will be able to engage in informed deliberation that will be much more valid and much more useful than standard public opinion surveys, since the latter usually entail relatively uninformed opinions and never provide for deliberation among citizens. The contention is that if real decision makers could see informed but otherwise typical people deliberating with each other on the key issues of the day, those decision makers would be better able to act in the real interests of the people (see, esp., Fishkin 1995: 161–76; McCombs and Reynolds 1999).

People Consider, People Decide: The most radical reform proposals would not stop with people deliberating prior to turning decisions over to elites. They would instead entail ordinary people considering and formulating proposals and then making a final decision on the proposals as well. Existing institutions of representative government would not be necessary, as the people would engage in rich, pure direct democracy.

[2] Some advocates see the real potential for modern communications technology, not in allowing the people to render a final decision (as we discussed pursuant to the upper-right quadrant), but in allowing people to deliberate with each other rather than making the final decision. As Ornstein (2000: 15) described the goals of such individuals, they want to reduce Congress to a chamber that merely "waits for public instructions before making any decisions."

The best illustration of such an approach to governing is the classic New England town meetings. The way these work is that residents of the town attend periodic meetings, discuss issues affecting the town, and then vote to determine the specific approach that will be used to resolve those issues. Discussion and decisions are made entirely by ordinary people and not by any designated set of elites. The American jury system provides another example of the people both considering and deciding, since it involves ordinary Americans discussing the evidence of a case and then deciding the outcome. As with town meetings, consideration and discussion are not preliminary to elites making the decision but rather to ordinary people making the decision.

An important variant of these strategies is when no distinction is made between the consideration phase and the decision phase. A good example of this approach is Etzioni's (1996: 221) description of "Navajo democracy, in which dialogues continue until all members of a tribe embrace a given position." This is a style of consensus decision making in which no voting or other formal decision-making structure is necessary. Instead, discussion proceeds until the decision is apparent. This is similar to the approach advocated by Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson (1996). They believe that all problems, even incredibly difficult moral disputes, can be worn down and conquered by the deliberative process. People just have to stay with it long enough (and follow some rules that we discuss below in this chapter). As they put it, when citizens disagree, "they should continue to reason together" (1). But the key point is that, whether consideration and resolution are viewed as two separate steps or one in the same, procedures in the upper-left quadrant do not require elite involvement. The people do it all.

Taking Stock

Having assayed the various procedural options of democracy as well as examples of reform strategies employing these options, it is apparent (if it were not before) that the range of democratic forms is incredible. Accordingly, we are not be able to evaluate each and every

form in light of the findings we reported in Parts I and II of this book. But we evaluate what seems to us to be the primary concern of political writers early in the twenty-first century, and that is to get ordinary people more deeply involved in the political arena, with deep involvement understood to mean something more than voting Democrat or Republican or voting for or against Proposition X.

As such, we do not have a great deal more to say about the procedures listed on the right side of Figure 7.1. This is not because these proposals are less important – indeed, locating ways to make representative democracy more palatable to ordinary people or determining the degree to which people should be involved directly in the decision-making stage of the political process is profoundly important. But popular involvement in the consideration of political matters is the central concern for us for two reasons: first, because of the extent to which it dominates discussions of how to improve the American polity; and second, because it requires the people to invest more of themselves in politics, and our empirical results speak directly to the people's willingness to make a greater investment in politics.

In the remainder of this chapter, we present the justifications theorists (and some empiricists) have offered for getting the people more involved in voluntary associations and in political deliberation. Then, in the next chapter, we hold the theorists' contentions up to the light of empirical work, much of it recent and much of it utilizing various experimental designs. We find that reality casts a dark cloud over theoretical claims that popular involvement either in volunteer organizations or in serious deliberation benefits the political system. As a result, in the last substantive chapter of the book, Chapter 9, we take a more careful look at the kinds of procedures that *would* improve the American political system in light of people's perceptions and lack of political motivation.

THE ALLEGED BENEFITS OF GREATER INVOLVEMENT IN VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS

The siren call of social capital as a way to understand the decline of civil society in the United States has enticed many political scientists and pundits. There is something decidedly appealing and hopeful in the idea that so many of society's problems can be remedied by getting people to be more socially engaged. Social capital, according to James Coleman (1988), is a resource available to a society, much

as physical capital and human capital are resources. Social capital develops in the relations among people. We discuss the arguments behind social capital, in particular, Robert Putnam's version of this idea.

According to Putnam (1993, 1995, 2000), social capital is the product of dense social networks, which he associates with active and involved membership in voluntary associations. Numerous studies have shown that members of voluntary associations are better democratic citizens: They are better informed, more politically active, more efficacious, and more supportive of democratic norms, and they have greater self-respect and are more politically skilled (see, e.g., Almond and Verba 1963; Verba and Nie 1972; Milbrath and Goel 1977; Verba et al. 1995). Putnam (1993) argues that voluntary association membership generates even greater rewards for society itself, including greater economic performance and more effective government performance.

Why is voluntary association membership so beneficial to individuals, political systems, and the society as a whole? According to Putnam (2000: 134), "the touchstone of social capital is the principle of generalized reciprocity – I'll do this for you now, without expecting anything immediately in return and perhaps without even knowing you, confident that down the road you or someone else will return the favor." People directly engaged with other people in voluntary associations develop this sense of generalized reciprocity because they learn to trust others and they learn to generalize this trust to people they do not know (what Putnam refers to as "thin trust"). Generalized reciprocity is essential to civil societies because it lowers transaction costs and lessens frictions. When people trust one another, they can more easily navigate their daily lives and more efficiently transact business. Governments can expend fewer resources to obtain the same outcomes if they are not constantly using resources to enforce laws and punish lawbreakers. If people are trusting of others and have a sense of generalized reciprocity, they will create a better society by being more willing to take care of others' welfare and by giving time and money to good causes (117).

Putnam's concern is that there has been a decline in voluntary association membership (see Putnam 1995, 2000). Fewer Americans are involved in groups that allow their members to interact directly, such as bowling leagues, Elks clubs, and Parent-Teacher Associations. Instead, if Americans do join groups, they join those that are faceless, such as the American Association of Retired Persons, the

Environmental Defense Fund, and the American Civil Liberties Union. People are nominal members of these groups, paying their dues but not being actively involved. They do not engage directly with other members and therefore cannot develop generalized reciprocity or trust. More broadly, Americans are increasingly engaged in individualistic, private pursuits. Democratic society suffers, according to Putnam, when people do not interact with their fellow citizens.

The solution to the problem, according to social capitalists, is to get more people involved with each other, and one way to do that is to get them to become active members of voluntary associations. Getting people more involved in individualistic pursuits, such as national interest groups or even voting, will not give democratic society the boost it needs. Other theorists concerned about the individualistic tendencies in American democracy are those who promote political deliberation. For them, involving people in deliberative settings will take care of many of modern democracy's ills.

THE ALLEGED BENEFITS OF ENHANCING POLITICAL DELIBERATION AMONG ORDINARY PEOPLE

Voting, whether it be for a candidate or on a policy proposal, is generally a private, individual act. Modern political commentators tend to react quite negatively to this atomistic, individualistic version of democracy. Indeed, for a growing number of political observers, the essence of true democracy is not individual-actor decision making but decisions that are made only after intense, sustained, social interactions.[3] Deliberation has become the concept de jour of political theorists and in some cases has taken on nearly religious overtones. Exhortations to deliberate seem to be everywhere. All problems are the result of a "failure to communicate," and if something is wrong with a democratic polity, insufficient deliberation must have been the cause. After all, when a problem develops, is it not best to talk about it in hopes that it can be resolved? Who could deny the benefits of deliberation? Thus, whether it comes by people being more involved in voluntary groups or by creating new fora for discussing policy problems, the goal of many theorists is to increase the amount of interaction and, especially, deliberation among ordinary people.

[3] Though see some of the essays in Macedo (1999) for negative assessments of deliberative decision making.

Better Decisions

Perhaps the most obvious alleged benefit of democratic deliberation is that it leads to better decisions than would have occurred if there had been no deliberation. This sentiment is manifested in Condorcet's Jury Theorem (1994 [1785]). According to this theorem, each person on the jury has private information; that is, information the others never had or did not retain. If each person reveals this private information to others on the jury, the decision subsequent to deliberation will be a step above that which would have occurred had no deliberation taken place. A similar, if less formal, justification is offered by Abramson (1994: 205) when he characterizes deliberating juries as "collections of wisdom [in which] . . . people change their minds not out of expediency but because their views actually have shifted through hearing the views of others."

The logic leading to the conclusion that deliberated decisions will be better decisions extends well beyond the jury box. After all, "two heads are better than one" is a general-purpose aphorism. It is only common sense. What could be more reasonable than believing that decisions are improved by bouncing ideas off of others and sopping up information they provide? John Rawls (1971: 359), for example, makes the straightforward point that "discussion is a way of combining information and enlarging the range of arguments" and will therefore "improve matters." Benjamin Page (1996: 2) agrees: "Since policymaking is complicated and full of uncertainties, an individual citizen's personal experience and reflection, alone, can get her or him only so far. Sound political judgment requires exchanging knowledge and ideas with others." James Fishkin (1995: 28) is thinking along these same lines when he asserts that decisions made in scattered isolation are decisions based on "partial knowledge, partial arguments, and unanswered misrepresentations." And Robert Dahl (1989: 104–5) equates deliberative decisions with "enlightened understanding" and the opportunity for citizens to "discover and validate."

Sometimes, the justification for deliberation is not that resultant decisions will simply be better informed but that they will be more sensitive to the needs and concerns of others with whom one has deliberated.[4] Benjamin Barber (1984: 152), for example, writes that "[c]ommunity grows out of participation . . . civic activity educates

[4] This sentiment is found in many of the works of communitarians.

individuals how to think publicly as citizens." He takes making citizens capable of public thinking as "a single, crucial end" (197). In fact, Barber believes that participating in democratic deliberation leads people to think not of "me" but of "we" (153). In this, of course, Barber is closely following Rousseau, who saw the democratic process as a way for a person to reaffirm partnership with the general will (Rousseau 1946 [1762]).

Better (That Is, More Legitimate) System

Not only do theorists assert that democratic deliberation leads to better decisions, they also argue that it encourages people to view decisions as more legitimate and valid. If people have the opportunity to be involved in the decision or if they at least believe the decision was based on an inclusive and responsible debate of the relevant issues, they may feel better about processes and decisions (Ely 1980: 181). Recent writings connecting legitimacy to democratic deliberation are plentiful.[5] To provide two examples, Seyla Benhabib (1994: 26) points out that people may "accept the . . . will of a . . . process that has been fairly and correctly carried out," even if there are "grave doubts about the rationality of the outcome," and Iris Marion Young (2000: 5–6) believes "the normative legitimacy of a democratic decision depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decision-making process."

Scholars of the legislative process, not surprisingly, have been particularly interested in the connection between deliberation (among representatives rather than ordinary people, in this case) and legitimacy. Why, they have asked, are legislatures so omnipresent when few of them have real power? The usual answer is that visible, open, democratic deliberation, such as that typically occurring in legislative bodies, makes people feel better about the governmental process, so legislatures help secure legitimacy.[6] As summarized by Packenham (1970: 530), the belief is that, traditionally, the existence of a legislature has "reduced tension, provided reassurance, and generally enhanced satisfaction with or acquiescence with . . . government." People need to know, or at least need to think, their voices

[5] See, for example, Manin (1987), Cohen (1989), Dryzek (1990), Tyler (1990), and Keohane (2001: 10).

[6] This theme can be found in the writings of Beer (1966), Packenham (1970), Loewenberg (1971), Loewenberg and Patterson (1979), and, especially, Wahlke (1971).

are being heard, and representative assemblies are probably the most realistic way to achieve this eventuality. In modern mass democracies, where face-to-face interaction among ordinary people seems to be prohibited by geography and by population size, legislatures act as a vital source of system legitimacy – of diffuse support, to use Easton's (1965) well-known phrase.

Unlike the claims that people's involvement in deliberation leads to better decisions, the belief that such involvement makes people feel better about the system actually has some empirical basis. As Lind and Tyler (1988: 170) put it, "one clear finding from research . . . is that people like to have an opportunity to present their views before policy decisions are made." Tyler, Rasinski, and Spodick (1985) conducted three experiments and all supported this conclusion. In the first, they found that within a random sample of people who had recently been defendants in an Illinois traffic and misdemeanor court, those who felt they had been given the opportunity to present evidence in their case were more satisfied with their experience, regardless of whether they won or lost their case, than those who felt they did not have voice. In the second experiment, students in an introductory psychology class were asked questions about a class they had taken the previous term. Those who felt they had input into that class, in terms of demonstrating their knowledge and influencing the grade they received, evaluated the class more favorably regardless of their grade. And finally, in the third experiment, random groups of students were asked to read different scenarios about a city council. In one the council solicited citizen input before making a budget decision, and in the other, citizens did not have much opportunity to speak to the council. Once again, where the process allowed public input, respondents tended to react more favorably and the decision itself was of less consequence.

Tyler's (1990) later work on why people obey the law even more directly tests the hypothesis that if people have voice in a process, they will view the decision itself as legitimate even if the decision is undesirable. Tyler contacted people in the Chicago area who had recent experience in the legal system and asked them about their level of satisfaction and the degree to which they felt they had some input into their case. He found that people who believed they had a voice were much more accepting of an adverse decision. Tyler concludes that procedural justice, and, in particular, allowing citizen input, is a logical way to get people to feel better about their experiences with government and the like. Echoing Marx, he even

worries that the effect is so powerful that decision makers will become skilled in coopting people by only pretending to allow them a voice (Lind and Tyler 1988).

Better People

A final justification frequently tendered by theorists is that the very act of being involved in issue-based discussions makes better people, regardless of what it might mean for the quality of public policy or for the system. Such involvement, claimed John Dewey (1927: 148), is necessary for "the full development of human beings as individuals." This belief in the personal edification and improvement function of deliberative democracy has been around for centuries.[7]

Rousseau, for example, is often identified as an early adherent of the notion that involvement in the give and take of political discussions would improve people, but this encapsulated version is not directly on target. Rousseau lived much of his life as a recluse, and his *Discourse on Inequality* can be read as contending that society has failed and that anyone involved in society will be doomed to unhappiness. But by the time he wrote *The Social Contract*, Rousseau had concluded that it is possible to live in society without forgoing the individual freedoms he deemed so important. In fact, Rousseau (1946 [1762]: 262) believed that social order could be an improvement over the natural state of man in that it "substitutes justice for instinct in behavior, and gives to his actions a moral basis." Association with such a society can change a person from a "limited and stupid animal into an intelligent being" (263). How will this magic be performed? In the process of interacting with others on societal and political issues, a person's "ideas take on a wider scope, his sentiments become ennobled, and his whole soul elevated" (263). It is easy to understand why Rousseau is held up as an early leader in recognizing the ability of democratic deliberation to improve the people doing the deliberating.

But this conclusion falls short of providing an accurate feel for Rousseau's ideas. The trouble is, Rousseau believed the positive effects of this kind of societal interaction would accrue only in a very specific (and unusual) kind of society. First of all, the society has to be based on a common interest and governed on the basis of that common interest (256). Lacking this common interest, all that remains is an aggregation of individuals and not a true society. Not surprisingly, a true society in Rousseau's eyes can happen only when the society is small, technologically and economically simple, and socially homogeneous. Thus, Rousseau had hopes that a true society could come to pass among the people of mid-eighteenth-century Corsica (for whom he drafted a constitution); he would, no doubt, be more pessimistic about the prospects for a true society among the people of the early twenty-first-century United States.

[7] See Tocqueville (1951 [1848]: vol. 1: 252), Mill (1977: 68), and many others.

Rousseau had no time for representative assemblies, arguing, instead, that legislatures should be composed of the whole people assembled, such as can be found in the assemblies of the Swiss Cantons and New England towns. The ideal political arrangement for Rousseau is "groups of peasants deciding the affairs of State beneath an oak tree" (384). But Rousseau did *not* support open communication among these well-shaded peasants; rather, he believed there should be no communication that might be construed to encourage divisions of interest, development of factions, or anything not based on the general will (390). The goal was not, as it is for some deliberative democrats, getting in touch with the unique problems and concerns of our diverse fellow citizens, but, rather, reconfirming the tenets of the general will shared by all of society. Anyone behaving otherwise should not be involved. This is not a vision of society that would be endorsed by the American Civil Liberties Union. The plight of real, minority views and people is assumed away since there cannot be any diversity in a true society. This sleight of hand leaves Rousseau with a far different view of the edifying potential of deliberation: not to expose people to other views or to make them more empathetic to those who are different from them, but to make sure people remain in touch with a unitary general will.

Even more than Rousseau, perhaps the name most readily associated with the ability of democratic processes to improve and educate people is John Stuart Mill. Mill was convinced this relationship existed, and to support his hypothesis he cited the intelligence of Athenians during their democratic period and the cleverness of nineteenth-century Englishmen. The latter phenomenon, he was certain, existed because English citizens occasionally took part in democratic situations such as juries and parish offices (1977 [1861]: 290). Mill contended that participation in public affairs would educate participants and have an invigorating effect on them. As James Carey (1987: 14) has more recently stated, "the public will begin to reawaken when they are addressed as a conversational

partner and are encouraged to join the talk rather than sit passively as spectators."

Yet while Mill valued deliberation, he conceded that if democratic systems were to be practicable in anything but the smallest communities, personal, peasant-level involvement in political discussions could not be a prerequisite. Unlike Rousseau, Mill was quite comfortable with representative democracy, believing that the process of "periodically elected deputies" (1977 [1861]: 305) would still involve the people broadly enough to generate the alleged beneficial consequences. In fact, in direct contrast to Rousseau, Mill was quite elitist. He believed that only a very few people would have original thoughts and that "these few are the salt of the earth" whose presence keeps the human condition from being nothing more than "a stagnant pool" (1977 [1859]: 78). Though they both believed democratic involvement leads to self-improvement, Rousseau and Mill had quite different notions of what self-improvement entails and what kind of involvement is necessary to achieve this improvement.

In the modern era, this concept of self-improvement through political participation has been adopted with gusto by communitarians and deliberation theorists. Pateman (1970), Barber (1984), and Etzioni (1996), to name just a few, contend that if people play a vital role in decision making, they will become better informed, they will be more open to the ideas of others, they will become better debaters, they will be more cooperative, and they will be better people. One of the more enthusiastic champions of this point of view claims that, were citizens to be directly involved in deliberation, "America would see an immediate and invigorating rise in interest in politics. . . . Politics would be on the lips of every man, woman and child, day after day. As interest rose, a demand would be created for more and better sources of news" (Wolff 1970: 36–7).

Although most modern writers seem to agree with Rousseau in terms of the type of participation necessary for self-improvement (intimate rather than indirect involvement) and with Mill in terms of the nature of the improvement that results (broad-based, empathetic, and educative gains rather than merely a melding with the general will), disagreement is substantial. Moreover, the claims made by modern writers for popular deliberation extend well beyond personal improvement. Given their breadth and diversity, we conclude this chapter by summarizing the assertions of modern theorists regarding greater popular involvement in politics. We break them down into two overarching categories: communitarians and deliberation theorists.

COMMUNITARIANS AND DELIBERATION THEORISTS

The communitarian movement, which flowered in the 1970s and 1980s, is best seen as a reaction to liberal individualism (see Avineri and de-Shalit 1992). Whereas liberalism stresses universal morality and the autonomy of each individual, communitarianism tends to follow Hegel by casting its lot with collections of individuals who share particular values.

For many communitarians, deliberating and interacting with our neighbors not only leads to better decisions, a more legitimate politics, and better people, but improves communities and therefore society itself. David Mathews (1994: 2), for example, writes that "working together with others to solve common problems recreates a sense of community." This sense of community is desirable because communities give our lives meaning and are morally good (see Taylor 1992). The value of people's lives "is only a reflection of and is derivative from the value of the life of the community as a whole" (Dworkin 1989: 497). Communitarians trace society's problems to a lack of community so are eager to recreate the sense of community they believe existed in a halcyon era (see Putnam 2000).

For some communitarians, a sense of community is actually a prerequisite for meaningful deliberative involvement. Sandel (1996: 5) believes that "to deliberate well about the common good requires . . . a sense of belonging, a concern for the whole, a moral bond with the community whose fate is at stake." As a result, Sandel continues, "to share in self-rule . . . requires that citizens possess . . . certain qualities of character or civic virtues" (5–6). It is unclear what should be done when such values are absent. Presumably, since they are a precondition for self-rule, a nondemocratic mode of decision making would be required.[8]

Communitarians themselves are a diverse lot. Etzioni (1996), for example, thinks it desirable for people to change to a different, small community if they do not approve of the views of their current

[8] Communitarians often maintain consensus is really present if we look hard enough for it, and they go to great lengths to concoct methods of fabricating consensus. See, for example, Kay (1998).

community, whereas Sandel (1996) sees no reason why communities have to be small and contends that the entire United States could be a national community. More traditional communitarians blanch at the notions that attachment to the values and virtues of one community could be traded in willy-nilly for the values of another or that values could be watered down sufficiently to attract the active allegiance and participation of 270 million diverse people, so it would be a mistake to leave the impression that communitarians are, well, a community.

Communitarians are less concerned with the precise nature of people's interaction with other people than with interaction occurring. This is one of many things that sets communitarians apart from deliberation theorists. As the label implies, deliberation theorists have thought long and hard about the preferred nature of people's interactions and deliberations. Perhaps the leading figure in this movement has been Jurgen Habermas. Like the "Navajo democrats" we met earlier, Habermas (1984: 42) contends that consensus will result "if only the argumentation could be conducted openly enough and continued long enough." The difference is that Habermas sets down some very specific deliberation guidelines that must be met if a consensus solution is to result. For example, all participants must be equal and their actions must be rational (a rational action is one for which everyone agrees there was a good reason). If there is a dispute about rationality, it must be resolved by norms that are themselves "acceptable to all who are potentially affected by the norm" (Habermas 1987: 49). In other words, participants must agree upon the rules of evidence so that something approaching a scientific process of verbal exchange is achieved (see also Chambers 1996: 136). Irrelevant information and bad logic will be driven out; useful information and tight logic will allow the group to move to a unified conclusion (Habermas 1996). The great advantage of Habermas over Rousseau and many communitarians is that he can discard the extremely questionable notion that there is a single general will just waiting to find expression. For Habermas, people begin from what seem to be vastly different positions but through reasoned discourse they can arrive, democratically, at the same place.

In their important work, *Democracy and Disagreement*, Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson (1996) use terminology different from Habermas's but express similar ideas. Like Habermas, Gutmann and Thompson believe disagreements, even incredibly divisive moral disagreements, can be worked out through the deliberative process. For this to happen, however, evidence the deliberators introduce must be consistent with scientific rules and must not, therefore, be based on unverifiable or unchallengeable notions (52–94). Supporting a point by invoking faith in a supreme being would not be following this tenet of "reciprocity." The similarity between Habermas's "ideal" deliberation and Gutmann and Thompson's reciprocity-based deliberation is apparent.

John Dryzek (2000) offers a contrasting view. He contends verbal interaction among people does not need to follow restrictive rules to be beneficial. He values humor, anecdotes, even rambling remarks, and prefers the phrase "discursive democracy" to "deliberative democracy." As he puts it, "political equality, human integrity, reciprocity, publicity, and accountability are undeniably important values, but the best way for people to learn these values is through the practice of deliberation rather than through being told that they must abide by these principles" (47). Dryzek believes wide-open communication is better suited to solve complex social problems because "it provides for coherent integration of a variety of perspectives" (173).[9]

So, communitarians want to eliminate conflict by denying any exists (Sandel 1996; Kay 1998), by breaking into small, homogeneous groups where it does not exist (Putnam 2000), or by prohibiting discussion of contentious topics (Etzioni 1996: 104–5). Deliberation theorists admit that conflict exists and that society is not well served by pretending it does not. They believe that deliberation, if conducted properly, makes it possible for people to work through conflict to the benefit of individuals and the collective. But they are at odds over the "proper" conduct of deliberation. Rousseau (1946 [1762]) wants to permit only comments that are consistent with the belief that there is a general will; Habermas (1987) and Gutmann and Thompson (1996) want to permit only comments that meet rational, scientific, and fairness standards; and Dryzek (2000) wants to permit any and all comments, no matter how irrelevant.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have summarized the various approaches to democratic government and reform proposals relevant to those

[9] Presumably, Putnam and others in the "join more groups" school would have some sympathy for Dryzek's points, since discussion in most informal group settings is more likely to be discursive than rational.

approaches. Numerous views exist regarding the proper role for ordinary citizens in a democracy. We paid particular attention to the arguments of those who believe either popular involvement in group activities or in deliberation is the solution to the dilemmas facing democracy. Many theorists have emphasized the ability of personal group involvement and deliberation to lead to better decisions, to lend legitimacy to the system, and to improve the people so involved.

The strong consensus on these points is somewhat surprising, given that theorists have vastly different perceptions of a "good" political system. Some believe all that is required of a good system is for the people in it to be in touch with a general will; some believe it consists of working toward consensus after beginning with very diverse specific wills. Some believe the end result is to create a sense of community by cooperating on problems together; some believe the deliberative process itself is the end. Some think deliberation has to be direct; some see nothing wrong with electing deputies to do our deliberating for us (Madison, of course, went so far as to say deliberation by elected deputies was preferable to direct deliberation). Some are communitarians; some are liberal individualists. Some are glad that each community has its unique deliberative style; some think deliberation must be governed by universal norms of conduct.

Regardless of these differences, the core notion is that greater popular involvement is what is needed to improve American democracy. Absent this involvement, democracy is superficial, thin, and certainly undesirable. Any other form of democracy is cold, impersonal, and unsatisfying. To interact with fellow group members, residents of a community, or inhabitants of a nation is the essence of being a democratic citizen – or so we are told by the advocates of deliberative democracy. Though this position seems to be commonsensical, in the next chapter we make the case that, in light of people's desire to avoid politics, democratic procedures entailing sustained personal involvement may not be preferable to other forms of democracy.

8

The Realities of Popular Deliberation and Group Involvement

The fact that there are many forms of democracy means there are numerous ways for the people to be involved in politics. Political theorists believe people would enjoy politics if only the system would allow them to get involved in an appealing political forum. Theorists further believe the political system would be improved if people played an active role in the consideration of various policy proposals – if people would get together and work collectively on matters, discussing them, learning from each other, and striving for a common goal. Only then, theorists argue, will people learn to trust each other, to appreciate the needs of other people, to care about politics, and to trust the government. Two very different strategies have been advocated for facilitating the needed interaction with other individuals: getting people more involved in self-selected, volunteer groups and creating environments in which diverse people are brought together to deliberate on policy matters.

In contrast to theorists' speculations, the results presented in Part II indicate to us that people's dislike of politics runs deep and is unlikely to be eliminated if they would only get involved with other people in political procedures. Some people react negatively to any political dispute. Many more believe politics is largely unnecessary, since they are convinced there is a popular consensus on important national goals and do not care about the specific means used to achieve those goals. People get upset with government because politicians spend too much time on unimportant matters, not because politicians vote down issues about which people care. Misplaced attention indicates to the people that politicians are not in touch with what really matters to ordinary Americans (remember, people tend to believe that if a topic is not important to them, it is

probably not important to other ordinary people). As long as the government is involved in many matters and individuals care about few, they will consistently perceive the government as misplacing its attention and as being out of touch.

This means that just getting people more involved in politics is not going to do any good, absent making them understand that Americans as a group care about a variety of issues and have different ideas for attacking those issues. We believe stronger political involvement will not make people more trusting, more tolerant, more other-regarding, or more supportive of government. In fact, it may even be the case that such involvement, in and of itself, will make people more upset by immersing them in the very political arena they dislike so much. In sum, our findings lead us to exactly the opposite set of expectations as those offered by normative theorists. They believe increased interaction with other people will boost political capital and otherwise enhance people and the political system. We believe increased interaction will not boost political capital at all and may very well do damage.

Fortunately, in recent years a growing number of scholars has begun to test the claims of political theorists regarding the consequences of political involvement. In this chapter, we summarize the findings that bear on the ability of increased interaction to improve the political system. In doing so, we separate the two main strategies proposed: getting people more involved in existing groups and forcing people to discuss politics in more diverse deliberative settings. This separation is necessary because the two strategies are so different and, accordingly, have unique strengths and weaknesses. We turn first to findings regarding the consequences of group involvement and then, in even more detail, to those bearing on the consequences of people deliberating with others. In each case, the clear conclusion of empirical research is that enhanced involvement in politics does not have the benefits theorists claim.[1]

GROUP INVOLVEMENT

Are Putnam and the other advocates of more group participation[2] correct in their belief that such activities will create political capital?

[1] To be sure, some recent theorists have raised serious questions about the benefits of enhanced popular involvement in democracy. See Ackerman (1980, 1989); Riker (1982); and Mueller (1999).

[2] See, for example, Barber (1984); Mathews (1994); Broder (1996); and many others.

Careful study of the nature of these groups undermines the logic behind such expectations. The best work in this area has been done by sociologist Nina Eliasoph (1998). By systematically observing many volunteer groups of the kind championed by the social capitalists, Eliasoph documents that members of these groups typically are socialized to oppose "debating, talking, pretentiously holding forth" (45). One group member "assumed that when activists got up on the public stage, it must be for the purpose of getting attention, not for instigating public discussion" (143). Eliasoph's summation is right on target: "In an effort to appeal to regular, unpretentious fellow citizens without discouraging them, [the groups] silence public-spirited deliberation" (63). "In practice, the way they tried to show that good effective citizenship was possible was to limit their circle of concern and try not to care about issues that were not close to home" (83). So, "instead of discussing potentially upsetting issues, most meetings featured in-depth discussions of practical fundraising projects" (31). Eliasoph observed one meeting at which a participant committed the faux pas of raising a difficult, controversial issue. After a long silence, the chair of the meeting said dismissively, "I'm sure someone'll be coming to talk to you to figure out a solution" (33).

It is apparent that real groups often work to shut out divisive voices in the unlikely event they arise, but very often such voices are never even heard in the first place. The fact that voluntary community groups are self-selected means that members tend to look and think the same, leading to what Mark Peel (1998: 339) calls "the communitarian fallacy of homogeneity." When interaction occurs in such a context, the local results are comforting, but the implications for the larger picture are truly alarming. Diana Mutz and Jeffrey Mondak's (2001) work discovered that "voluntary associations provide very little exposure to dissimilar political views. . . . precisely because they are *voluntary*, these associations are characterized by extreme homogeneity" (11; see also Beem 1999 and Mutz 2001).

This point is illustrated nicely by Robert Axelrod's (1997) imaginative computer simulation of "the dissemination of culture." As he describes it, when interactions are "based on self-selection, people will tend to interact with others who are already quite similar to them on relevant dimensions. . . . Such self selection could result in an even stronger tendency toward both local convergence and global polarization. . . . The implications for resolving the tensions inherent in a multicultural society are problematic" (174). Problematic would seem to be an understatement. Axelrod's pictures of societal devolution, based simply on the assumption that people prefer to

associate with people with whom they share at least one trait, are disconcerting (157). An original Madisonian multiplicity is gradually reduced to just three "regions," and, more to the point, complete stability eventually arrives to these three regions because, after a large number of iterations, "members of adjacent regions have absolutely no features in common" (156).

This is not the kind of society any of us want, and Axelrod's simulation confirms Margaret Levi's (1996: 49) shrewd observation that "by themselves dense networks support localism. . . . they promote trust of those you know and distrust of those you do not." Indeed, the dangers of substantial voluntary group membership are apparent in Berman's (1997) finding that Weimar Germany had an incredibly rich voluntary associational life but that it was composed too heavily of bonding rather than bridging groups and thus could not stop, and perhaps facilitated, Hitler's rise. Strong in-group bonds sustain rigidity and bigotry (Blau 1974; Mutz 2000).[3]

A sense of community can be a wonderful thing, but if it develops only because members screen out dissenters, silence activists, narrow concerns, and stifle debate, it becomes a terrible thing. Voluntary community group activities may help us learn certain civic skills (see Verba et al. 1995) and they may accomplish commendable local objectives. Our point is only that they all too often do nothing to help people learn how to come to a democratic solution on divisive issues of the day. In fact, there is a real danger that voluntary group organizations will diminish people's ability to appreciate the challenges and frustrations of democratic governance. Rather than the needed understanding of politics in adversarial settings, these groups unwittingly promote misunderstanding. As Huckfeldt et al. (1995: 1049) find, "private citizens who confine their interactions within the boundaries of cohesive social groups remain secluded and largely unaffected by the larger climate of opinion."[4] The more participants see local groups make progress on noncontroversial, service-based goals, the more these groups tend toward government bashing: "Look what we did! Why can't those bozos in Washington do the same thing?"

This self-congratulatory air is apparent in the following attempt to justify why young people (like the author of the passage) do not vote.

[3]As Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus (1982) recognize, tolerance presumes disagreement, so tolerance cannot be successfully enhanced by dealing with people who already share our views.

[4]See also Huckfeldt and Sprague (1995).

"While our generation may seem more apathetic and less informed, we volunteer more, and we're more spin-savvy and independent-minded. . . . Just because we don't vote doesn't mean we don't care" (Murphy 2000: 41). One of the young people Murphy interviewed asserts that "most of the things I do for my community, I don't need to rely on Congress to get done for me." Another said that "volunteering is much more important than voting and it involves a much more serious commitment," and Murphy cites poll data indicating young people believe volunteering is a more effective way of bringing about change than voting (43–4). The tone indicates a complete absence of understanding of the challenges of governing and an apparent belief that if we all just become active in groups close to our heart, the country would work just fine. It betrays a failure to appreciate, to use Ridout and Espino's (2000: 6) example, that "it is easier for a group to get speed bumps installed in a neighborhood" than to come up with a nationwide plan for dealing with air pollution.

When people *are* confronted with diversity, they often withdraw from politics or fail to become more trusting. Diana Mutz's (2000: 1) empirical work consistently shows that "people whose political networks involve greater political disagreement are less likely to participate in politics." As a result of this finding, her conclusion that "people avoid politics as a means of maintaining social harmony" (4) is perfectly reasonable (see also Ulbig and Funk 1999). Similarly, the results of Ridout and Espino (2000: 6) show that only for groups that concentrate on noncontentious local issues does level of activity correlate with trust. To the extent group involvement facilitates social capital, it appears to result from the fact that such activity encourages people in their desire to believe that "everybody else is like me."

An important distinction needs to be made between social and political capital. They are not the same, not even positively related, and on occasion are inversely related to each other. Consider the following statement, representative of current wisdom on the condition of American government: "unless more Americans start working with each other on shared civic enterprises, and learning to trust each other, the formal government of this nation will probably lurch from one credibility crisis to the next" (Broder 1996: 4). The empirical evidence, on the other hand, shows that working together on shared enterprises does little to improve the credibility of government or the level of trust in fellow citizens (but see Brehm and

Rahn 1997).[5] Norris (1996: 479), for example, points out that "it is not self-evident that turning off the television, and talking with our neighbors, or even going bowling, is necessarily the best way of addressing the long-term problem of confidence in American government." Stolle (1998: 521) actually finds that the longer people belong to groups, the *less* trusting they are. La Due Lake and Huckfeldt (1998: 569) also raise questions about the politically relevant consequences of social capital, and this leads them to conclude, as have we, that not all participation is desirable: "Political activity cannot be meaningful unless it is informed." So we should not be surprised that Brehm and Rahn (1997: 1018) find that "civic engagement negatively affects confidence" in government. How could volunteer groups be expected to develop political capital if the groups' primary concern is maintaining an "egalitarian method of building a sense of togetherness" (Eliasoph 1998: 43) by trying "hard not to care about issues that would require too much talking to solve" (23)? As Newton and Norris (2000: 65) state, "whatever voluntary associations may or may not do for social capital, they seem to hold little importance for political capital."

Putnam and others have presented evidence that joining groups may increase social capital, although even here the fact that the results are not from randomized experiments makes it impossible to reject the counterhypothesis that a certain kind of person has higher levels of social capital to begin with and also is more likely to participate in groups (see Uslaner 2001). Sorting out the causal order, if any, requires better panel data than are currently available. The closest researchers have come to this approach is work done by Martin and Clairbourn (2000). Using the panel data of Jennings and Niemi, they find that group membership in one wave does not predict trust in a succeeding wave. This result is a serious blow to the claim that group membership has an independent effect on trust and other political variables.

The evidence that joining volunteer organizations helps people to appreciate the diversity of society's political views or the difficulty of coming to a solution in the face of that diversity is virtually nil. This is why some of the more careful surveys of research in this area conclude that "a person's degree of social trust or level of civic engagement [has] little or no direct effect on his or her confidence in government" (Putnam et al. 2000: 26), and, more broadly, "there is not a close or consistent association between social and political trust, between social trust and political behavior, or between activity in voluntary associations and political attitudes of trust and confidence" (Newton 1999: 185). Thus, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that "social capital is not necessarily translated into political capital" (Newton 1999: 185–6).

In advocating more group membership activity, Mathews (1994: ch. 7) refers to it as "politics that is not called politics," but it is clear from the above that the reason it is not called politics is because it isn't. As Bernard Crick (1992: 18) points out, politics is the "open canvas of rival interests." If there are no "rival" interests among the members of a volunteer group, as Eliasoph's work indicates, politics cannot occur. People can become involved in such groups without having to face up to the fact that different Americans have different priorities and that government has a tough assignment in dealing with this diversity.[6] As a result, group activity usually does little if anything to promote the kind of political capital that is truly needed in the United States.

[5] The inability of civic engagement to help political attitudes should have been apparent to Broder (1997: 8B) when he realized just a few months later that "we're not such a nation of civic slugs after all." How can the low credibility of government be due to Americans' failure to work together on shared enterprises if they are actually doing a fair bit of such work?

GETTING PEOPLE TO DELIBERATE MORE

The obvious inadequacies of voluntary groups have led many theorists to devise mechanisms through which potentially dissimilar people can get together to discuss political issues. We discussed several of these imaginative procedures, including policy juries and deliberative opinion polls, in Chapter 7. In light of the inability of volunteer groups to improve political capital due, we believe, to the fact that such groups do not help members appreciate and deal with diversity, it is perfectly reasonable to attempt to manufacture situations in which deliberation occurs among people who are not particularly alike. Participation in a discussion of policy issues with a random sample of fellow Americans should be a wonderful way to see the different concerns people hold as well as to see the difficulty

[6] Bridging groups have real potential to help on this front, as Putnam recognizes, just as bonding groups have real potential to do harm. After making the important distinction between bridging and bonding groups, Putnam (2000: ch. 1) drops it. At no point does he perform separate analyses of bridging and bonding groups. He should.

of pleasing everyone in the group. The instincts of the people who propose such ideas are correct in the abstract. Unfortunately, in specific practice, getting people to participate in discussions of political issues with people who do not have similar concerns is not a wise move. The reasons are numerous and usually related to the difference between deliberation in the ideal and the real worlds.

To their credit, deliberation theorists are quite candid about the fact that they are describing something other than a realistic exchange. Habermas (1987) uses the phrase "ideal speech situation" and Gutmann and Thompson (1996: 3) explicitly state that "actual deliberation is inevitably defective." But at some point recognition alone becomes insufficient. What good does it do to describe a type of situation that everyone agrees never occurs in the real world?[7] The assumption of these scholars seems to be that whereas less-than-ideal speech situations will generate fewer benefits than ideal speech situations, any verbal interaction, however imperfect, is better than nothing. In short, the prevailing assumption is that deliberation is a "no-lose" situation.[8]

We challenge this assumption and believe that deliberation in the real world can be and often is dangerous, a point recognized previously by others (see Riker 1982; Ackerman 1989) but all too often ignored. As is indicated by the empirical evidence we are about to summarize, real-life deliberation can fan emotions unproductively, can exacerbate rather than diminish power differentials among those deliberating, can make people feel frustrated with the system that made them deliberate, is ill-suited to many issues, and can lead to worse decisions than would have occurred if no deliberation had taken place. While inconsistent with the expectations of theorists, all of these findings are right in line with what we reported in Part II. People dislike political disagreements or think them unnecessary. They would rather continue with their comfortable fantasy that all Americans pretty much have the same political interests and concerns than come face-to-face with someone who seems reasonable but who has different interests and concerns. People get frustrated by details and many simply tune out of the exchange because they feel uncomfortable or inadequate discussing politics.

To organize the many empirical findings bearing on the consequences of political deliberation, we use the three main reasons democratic theorists have offered for getting the people more involved: improving decisions, improving the (legitimacy of the) political system, and improving people. We take them in that order.

[7] As Frederick Schauer (1999: 24) accurately states, "choosing decision procedures in a nonideal world should involve some empirical evaluation of the likely consequences and outcomes of the alternatives." Stokes (1998) offers a balanced account of the pros and cons of deliberation in the real world (see also Johnson 1998). Bohman's (1996: 132) laudable goal is to show that deliberation can work in nonideal settings, but in the end he provides no evidence, only hopeful assertions. He is reduced to empirically groundless calls for "more participation in social life generally."

[8] Gutmann and Thompson (1996: 44) recognize the dangers of deliberation: "It may be feared that extending the domain of deliberation has the risk of creating even greater conflict than it is intended to resolve. . . . More issues come to be seen by more citizens as matters of principle, creating occasions for high-minded statements, unyielding stands, and no-holds-barred opposition. . . . Moral argument can arouse moral fanatics." But they justify their continued faith in deliberative democracy in the face of these "real risks" by claiming that "no democratic political process can completely avoid the risks of intensifying moral conflict" (44) and by persisting in their enlightenment belief that "the assumption that we know the political truth can rarely if ever be justified before we deliberate. . . . By refusing to give deliberation a chance, moral extremists forsake the most defensible moral ground for an uncompromising position" (44–5). While we agree with Gutmann and Thompson on the dangers of people claiming that truth has been revealed to them, the more relevant point is that many people *do* believe truth is revealed, not discovered. We cannot assume away these people.

Does Deliberation Lead to Better Decisions?

To begin to understand the full impact of deliberation on decisions, we return to the case of juries. Recall that proponents of deliberation view juries as pristine illustrations of its advantages. Twelve people arrive at a better decision by sharing private information in an open, discursive setting, weeding out inappropriate information and building on valid points, talking until a consensus is reached and justice is rendered in the form of a decision superior to that which would have resulted if the jurors had cast their votes in isolation.[9]

Interestingly, those who have been instrumental in shaping the current legal process in the United States clearly have reservations about free and open discussion among ordinary jurors. This is why the process attempts to limit the private information jurors may have acquired prior to the beginning of the trial. Potential jurors are eliminated from the pool if they display preexisting information about

[9] In Brazil, jurors promptly cast secret individual votes after hearing the evidence. No deliberation is permitted and the majority rules (Abramson 1994).

the case or parties in the case. Those who make it onto the jury are often told by judges during the trial to banish certain points and evidence from their memories and at the end of the case are given specific instructions about what they can and cannot consider. Jurors are sometimes sequestered so that they are less likely to encounter additional information that they might share with others on the jury during deliberations. In short, jurors are circumscribed in what they hear, what they know, and what they can discuss. These restrictions are clearly at odds with the view that participants should each have the "opportunity to raise issues, voice objections, and enter new alternatives into the discourse" (van Mill 1996: 734).

Why, then, would these constraints be applied? The restrictions placed on juries bespeak a fear that, if given the chance, jury decisions would be influenced by all sorts of wild, extraneous, and irrelevant facts and beliefs. Jurors are forced to stick only to what legal professionals determine are the "real" issues and "legitimate" evidence, because there is concern that regular open debate would lead to the consideration of inappropriate factors. Are these fears merely the product of an arrogant legal process that delights in demeaning the capabilities of ordinary people relative to legal professionals?

Unfortunately, the restrictions described above are needed. Consider the following case involving the real-life jury experience of one of the authors of this book. Since in this case jurors did not follow the instructions of the judge, it provides a window into what might happen if juries were at liberty to do what they wanted. The facts of the particular case involved a twenty-five-year-old mother whose car was hit by a train at an intersection. Though the mother, who was driving, survived the collision, her child, a passenger in the car, was killed. The mother claimed the railroad was at fault because the intersection was improperly maintained and was therefore unsafe. She sued the railroad for damages, primarily damages due to the loss of companionship she suffered as a result of the tragic death of her child. The railroad argued the intersection was safe and that, even if it were not, the mother merited no money for loss of companionship because there was evidence she was a casual drug user (not on the day of the accident) and had been involved in an extramarital affair. The jury was charged with deciding (1) whether or not the railroad was culpable in any fashion for the accident, and, only if the answer was yes, (2) the value of the lost companionship.

Of course, the woman's sex life and other private pursuits were totally irrelevant to the matter of the intersection's safety and should

have come into play (according to common sense as well as the instructions given to the jury) only if the jury deemed the railroad partially culpable for the accident. But two members of the jury brought up the woman's habits during discussions of the intersection and accident. What is more, this information, which in a properly functioning speech setting should have been driven out by relevant information, took on an ever-increasing presence in the jury's deliberations, even among jurors who had not initially mentioned anything about sex and drugs. Visions of a child ignored by a hedonistic, philandering parent were so strong that real evidence about the distance of unobstructed vision at the intersection and the train's speed were driven out. The jury ultimately decided to award the woman only $250, just enough to cover the cost of her child's funeral. Even in the contrived world of American juries (where efforts are quite consciously taken to structure deliberation), it cannot be assumed that inappropriate points will be ignored and legitimate evidence will rise to the fore. Quite the contrary.[10]

In more natural settings, without the protections that have been built into jury deliberation, the irrelevant is even more likely to drive out appropriate information in group discussions. Popkin (1991: 218) is right when he argues that "new and personal information, being easier to use, tends to drive old and impersonal political information out of circulation." Public opinion research consistently finds that people pay most attention to the personal, the titillating, the unusual, and the exciting. The irrelevant often trumps the relevant. For example, despite serious allegations and convincing evidence during Watergate, public opinion did not turn against Richard Nixon until the tapes revealed he routinely used profanity in the White House. Bill Clinton's popularity took a serious hit when air traffic was delayed because he was receiving a haircut in Air Force One. Later, people became more likely to say he was doing a good job as president after the Lewinsky scandal brought him under attack first from Kenneth Starr and then from Congress. If public opinion focused on the relevant, Nixon's efforts to cover up the burglary would have been more important than his proclivity for locker room banter with aides, just as Clinton's policy actions, not his haircuts

[10] For more evidence of problems with Condorcet's jury theorem, see Austen-Smith and Banks (1996). And for evidence that the example just described is consistent with conclusions of systematic research on jury selection, see Kerr, MacCoun, and Kramer 1996.

and perceived victimization, would have been the key factor in the public's opinion of his performance as president.[11]

John Zaller's (1992) work on survey response casts further doubt on people's ability to give thorough, dispassionate consideration to issues. Zaller's findings follow those of Converse (1964) in suggesting that respondents typically are influenced by information that is most accessible in their minds – usually something that happened recently, not the most compelling and appropriate bit of evidence that may be buried deep in their brains. And there is little reason to believe such a pattern of relying on easily remembered but perhaps tangential information surfaces only when an interviewer happens to be on the telephone. In many circumstances, particularly deliberative ones, people are easily manipulated and are susceptible to points that are not relevant or logically consistent – especially if those events deal with the sensational.

Individual opinions do not become less problematic in the context of deliberative settings. Group environments may even lead to worse decisions (see Janis 1982). We fully agree with Lupia and McCubbins (1998: 226–7) when they write,

> were persuasion and enlightenment the same things, deliberative environments would indeed be the ideal solution to the mischiefs of complexity. Regrettably, they are not the same. Deliberation differs from enlightenment when the most persuasive people in a group are not knowledgeable or . . . have an incentive to mislead. . . . The mere construction of a deliberative setting does not guarantee that the cream of the collective's knowledge will rise to the top.

Thoughtful adjustment to previously held beliefs is not common, and when it does happen it is often not the result of reasoned argument and relevant information. As our jury example illustrates, opinions are often altered by irrational, rather than rational, factors. And the example provided is not an aberration. The "most influential book ever written" on jury deliberations concludes that "deliberation changed votes less through the force of reason and more through peer pressure and intimidation" (Abramson 1994: 197, summarizing the findings of Kalven and Zeisel 1970: 488). This being the case, the edifying potential of deliberation is unrealized.

[11] In another example of a bias in the public's information usage, Frank Baumgartner and Bryan Jones (1993: 118–24) show that major catastrophes generate far more attention than ordinary events even though the sum total of the damage done by these ordinary events (like car accidents) far exceeds that done by catastrophic events (like airplane crashes).

Research from Solomon Asch and Muzafer Sherif provides the psychological underpinnings of one problem with the deliberative setting: people's tendency to conform. Asch (1951) and Sherif (1935, 1937) discover in separate experimental studies that people have a strong urge to conform to the group even when minimal pressure is put on group members. Whereas Sherif finds that subjects conform to a group decision when there is no clear right answer, Asch shows that many people conform to a group's obviously wrong decision. Verba (1961: 22) summarizes their findings: "When the opinions of other group members are revealed to the individual, even if no other pressures are applied, he will change his views to conform more closely to that of the group. This takes place even in those cases where the group opinion is not objectively more correct than that of the individual *or is objectively wrong*" (emphasis added). Subsequent research has attempted to clarify how and why conformity works as it does, but the fact remains that people are readily willing to conform in group settings.

Research on polarization effects suggests that group decisions can differ significantly from individual decisions, and not always for the better. According to Fiske and Taylor (1991: 498), "Many people think that groups represent the voice of reason and compromise; decisions made by committee are supposed to be safer than decisions made by individuals. A closer look at group decisions reveals that this is not at all the case." After group deliberation, individuals' attitudes become polarized toward more extreme alternatives. For example, individuals who have a tendency to take more risk will come to a much riskier group decision after discussion. This phenomenon is known as the "risky shift" (Stoner 1961, cited in Fiske and Taylor 1991). Similarly, individuals tending toward caution will make a much more cautious group decision (McCauley et al. 1973). A good example of polarization effects comes from Myers and Bishop (1970), who conducted an experiment on people's racial attitudes. They found that unprejudiced students became more unprejudiced after a group discussion (moving +0.47 on a seven-point scale), whereas prejudiced students became more prejudiced after a group discussion (moving a much greater −1.31 on a seven-point scale). Group discussions affect collective outcomes, but not always for the best.

The media are unlikely to offer much help in raising the level of discourse. The media are more than eager to contribute to people's thirst for the personal and irrelevant. Authors of stories in the media delight in regaling the public with explanations for why politicians do what they do. They attribute base motives to virtually any act (see Kerbel 1999). Issue-based discussions become rare as policy disputes are replaced by aspersion casting. Reporting on appropriate public policy takes a back seat to tales about which politicians will benefit from certain strategies – tales the people are predisposed to accept. Evidence of rational discourse is hard to find in sound bites. Overall, the current tenor of political debate in the United States does not inspire confidence in the ability of ordinary people to engage in deliberation – and the orientation of the media is not the only reason. In fact, we believe the major reason is the lack of motivation of the American people. As Kuklinski et al. (2001: 413) point out, people who lack motivation tend to make bad judgments.

Does Deliberation Lead to a Better (That Is, More Legitimate) System?

Deliberation theorists argue that

> deliberation contributes to the legitimacy of decisions made under conditions of scarcity. Some citizens will not get what they want, or even what they need . . . [but] . . . the hard choices that democratic governments make in these circumstances should be more acceptable even to those who receive less than they deserve. . . . Even with regard to political decisions with which they disagree, citizens are likely to take a different attitude toward those that are adopted after careful consideration of the relevant conflicting moral claims. (Gutmann and Thompson 1996: 41–2)

We agree that citizens will have a "different attitude" toward decisions adopted after open deliberation of conflicting moral claims. We just happen to think that often their attitude will become more negative rather than more positive.

But what about Tom Tyler's experimental evidence (summarized in the last chapter) that showed participation or voice in the process made people feel better about outcomes, even if the people perceived the outcomes themselves as negative? As it turns out, the legitimizing capabilities of "voice" apply only under limited circumstances. In fact, under standard political circumstances the evidence shows voice typically diminishes, rather than enhances,

legitimacy. The best work in this area has been done by R. L. Cohen (1985). Cohen correctly observes that most of the evidence for the positive effects of voice has been generated in studies of legal arrangements[12] or other situations in which the decision maker has no vested material interest in a particular outcome. Opportunities to participate in these situations unquestionably make people feel better about the process and the outcome.

But Cohen discovers that as soon as the setting is shifted to one in which the decision maker, or allocator, might receive differentiated payoffs depending upon the decision rendered, any salubrious effects of voice vanish and are replaced by "frustration" effects (see also Folger 1977). The evidence is clear that when the allocator and the recipient are in more of a zero-sum relationship, a real danger exists that people will perceive a process permitting voice to be insincere. This only makes sense. Imagine two situations, both involving a person (A) making a decision that benefits A at person B's expense. In one situation, A makes the decision without any input from B. In the other situation, A makes the decision after B has made an impassioned plea for an outcome more beneficial to himself. Is it not likely that B would be less accepting of the outcome in the second situation? After all, B's opportunity to provide input into the decision makes it certain that A was aware of B's plight. A looked B right in the eye and decided against B and for A. Is there any reason to expect that such a situation would produce anything other than frustration effects? In the eyes of participants, the opportunity for voice was obviously nothing but a sham.[13]

These results are incredibly damaging to Lind and Tyler's (1988) contentions about the beneficial consequences of voice. They try to

[12] Thibaut and Walker (1975); Tyler, Rasinski, and Spodick (1985); Tyler (1990).

[13] Another important reason Tyler's research on reactions to legal procedures cannot be generalized to attitudes toward government is the degree to which the participant sees the outcome as relevant. Obviously, a person cares about the outcome of his or her own court case, but as we saw in Part I, many people do not have strong feelings about most of the issues on the government's agenda. Attitudes toward government are harmed when people see officials fighting over issues that are of little relevance to the observers, even if the observers are encouraged to offer an opinion on these matters about which they care little. And as Diana Mutz (1992: 19) wisely observes, the perception of politics as distant has been exacerbated by the nature of modern existence: "[P]olitics has long been peripheral to most people's day to day concerns, but the nationalization of American mass media has inadvertently furthered the perception that politics is something 'out there,' divorced from day to day life experiences" (see also Mutz 1998).

pass them off by claiming that if Cohen had permitted "stronger voice" in the process, subjects would have been happy. "Even under conditions of severe conflict of interest... any relatively strong procedural justice difference will produce higher satisfaction and distributive fairness" (183–4). But they offer no evidence for this contention and it seems more likely to us that stronger voice would lead only to stronger frustrations with a high-handed and selfish decision maker.

Lind and Tyler (1988) also try to refute Cohen's contentions by saying the frustration effect "is a very rare phenomenon indeed" (183) and that frustration effects tend to occur "only when there are other reasons to be suspicious of the procedure" (201). They further claim that people have a "tendency to believe that procedures function as they are said to function" (184). This is the key difference between our position and that of Lind and Tyler. Far from being "rare," we believe that such situations are the norm, certainly in the political arena. People are incredibly suspicious of the motivations of political decision makers. People believe almost every action by members of Congress is produced by selfish desires: to get reelected, to raise campaign money, to get a free trip overseas or some other gift, or to increase the chances of receiving a cushy, well-paying job upon leaving Congress. The accuracy of people's perceptions is not at issue here, only that these negative perceptions of politicians' motives are extremely common. People are always looking for ulterior reasons for the actions of decision makers, and unless heroic constraints are in place (such as those surrounding judges), they assume such base motives are present.

Evidence that voice in nonlegal political settings leads to feelings of less legitimacy can be found in several places, including Tyler's own research on politics. He hypothesizes that the perceived ability to "make arguments to" or to "influence decisions of" a political body (such as Congress) should lead an individual to be more favorable toward that body, but he finds that this relationship never materializes. In fact, the relationship is always negative and sometimes reaches statistical significance (see Tyler 1994; Tyler and Mitchell 1994), suggesting that the greater a person's perceived involvement with a political entity, the less that person tends to like or respect that entity. In standard political situations, then, the research indicates that participation generally leads people to be more frustrated and to view the process and outcome as being less legitimate, not more.

Further evidence that inclusive procedures do not increase and may decrease satisfaction in standard political situations can be found in recent experimental work. As mentioned above, Amy Gangl (2000) created an experimental setting by having respondents read passages describing different styles of congressional process. Some subjects read of a legislative process that was procedurally fair (neutral decision makers, balanced discussion of the issue, and a wide variety of voices included). Others read of a legislative process that was procedurally unfair (self-serving decision makers, combative discussion of the issue, and only one side included). Gangl's results show that, as she predicted, the "neutral, balanced" process markedly increased subjects' perceptions that the process is legitimate, as did the "non-self-serving decision maker, combative" process.[14] But Gangl was perplexed to find that the "people have voice" process elicited no significant increase in perceived legitimacy. In fact, the sign was usually negative. But such a result is perfectly consistent with mounting evidence that voice, whether it be weak (vote) or strong (deliberative), does not make people feel better about political processes. People want neutral, non-self-serving decision makers, and if they can get them without having to participate themselves, they will be happy.

Michael Morrell (1999) presents similar results employing a completely different experimental approach. Rather than having subjects read about a process, Morrell had them actually participate in one of two possible processes. His hypothesis was that "citizens participating in strong democratic procedures will have higher levels of collective decision acceptance than citizens participating in traditional [i.e., weaker] liberal democratic procedures" (302). But he was surprised to discover that the participatory decision-making process did not lead to heightened satisfaction or to perceptions that the process was more legitimate. In fact, in some manifestations of the

[14] Care must be taken not to place too much emphasis on the quality of debate in determining people's satisfaction with the process and outcome. While, as shown by Gangl and also by Funk (2001), people respond more favorably to balanced, civil, constructive debate than to shrill and unbalanced debate, the more interesting point is that when a group being exposed to no debate is included in the experiment, the subjects in that "no-debate" control group accord the greatest legitimacy to the process (Morris and Witting 2001). In other words, people respond more favorably to a process with no debate at all than to one with either civil or not-so-civil debate. People are sending the message that improving the level of political debate is a good idea but getting rid of political debate is a better one.

experiment, the subjects involved in the participatory process saw the process as less legitimate and, accordingly, were less satisfied with it.

Morrell accurately concludes that his results "do not support Barber's contention that strong democratic procedures will create greater collective decision acceptance" (310), because "the group using traditional liberal democratic procedures showed greater levels of collective decision acceptance, assumption reevaluation, and group satisfaction than the group using strong democratic procedures" (313). Morrell's attempted explanation for his findings is directly in line with our beliefs. Participatory procedures "require participants to open themselves up in ways with which they may not be comfortable" (317) and "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" (318). Tali Mendelberg's extremely thorough literature review of the psychological research on the consequences of citizen deliberation in politics comes to a very similar conclusion. Noting that deliberation typically brings inequality and greater conflict, she characterizes the empirical evidence for the benefits of citizen deliberation as "thin or nonexistent" (2002: 4).

This pattern of results is not confined to the experimental laboratory. For example, Greenberg's (1986) analysis of the consequences of various levels of worker involvement in workplace governance leads him to conclude that participation in coop affairs and decision making plays no role in workers' sense of satisfaction. And when local administrators in five cities went to great lengths to involve their citizens in policy making by devolving decisions to neighborhood levels and reducing participation costs, participation rates (and almost certainly levels of perceived legitimacy) were unchanged (Berry, Portney, and Thomson 1993).

On top of all this, people are frustrated by the plodding pace and inefficient nature of government, something largely attributable to deliberation. The central reason for inefficiencies is that democracy requires everyone to have their say. As Stark (1995: 96) puts it, "the more a system values giving everyone a voice . . . the less it can value speed and effectiveness. All those voices have to be heard." So in addition to the other delegitimizing elements of participation, it also is a direct contributor to the governmental inefficiencies people dislike so much.

Why do people approve of the Supreme Court more than any other political institution? Is it because people are routinely involved

in Supreme Court decision making? No. The Court is more insular than any other political institution, and people like it for that very reason. People do not have to participate in or even see the deliberations of the Court (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995). From the standpoint of preserving public support, Chief Justices Warren and Rehnquist were quite right to fight to keep the press as far away from the Court as possible.[15] If someone made a videotape of the justices vigorously debating in conference and showed it to everyone in the nation, people would not feel warmed by the frank sharing of views, whether the exchanges were characterized by reciprocity or not. If anything, deliberation reduces people's satisfaction; it does not increase it. This is true whether they are involved in the deliberation themselves or whether they observe others doing it. The relentlessly open quality of congressional procedures is one of the reasons Congress is among the least liked institutions, political or nonpolitical.

Does Deliberation Lead to Better People?

Are we as people improved when we deliberate with other people? There is one stream of empirical evidence that appears to be supportive of the argument that face-to-face interaction improves people – or at least makes them behave more sympathetically to others. In Stanley Milgrim's famous experiments on obedience, he found that people were less likely to administer what they thought to be a lethal dose of electricity to another person if they could actually see the person. Compliance was reduced even more if the experimental subject was required to physically push the "victim's" hand onto the electrode plate (Milgrim 1974; see also Tilker 1970). Similarly, Latane and Darley (1970) found that even a brief meeting with a person who later had a (simulated) epileptic fit greatly increased the likelihood that the new acquaintance would respond to cries of distress.

While face-to-face interaction is likely to heighten positive emotions such as empathy, it is also likely to heighten negative emotions. As Mansbridge (1983: 273) accurately points out, "in conditions of open conflict, the physical presence of one's opponent may . . .

[15] On December 5, 2000, the *New York Times* ran an editorial stating that by agreeing to televise its proceedings, the Supreme Court would "bolster the credibility and legitimacy of the institution" ("Televising the Highest Court" 2000: A30). This assertion is incorrect, to say the least.

heighten anger, aggression, and feelings of competition." As a result, "assemblies designed to produce feelings of community can . . . backfire." Gutmann and Thompson (1996: 42) concede that a greater reliance on deliberation will bring "previously excluded voices into politics" and that this in turn brings the "risk of intensified conflict." Amazingly, they see this as an advantage. "The positive face of this risk is that deliberation also brings into the open legitimate moral dissatisfactions that would be suppressed by other ways of dealing with disagreement" (42). If igniting the people's dormant disagreements is the positive face of deliberative democracy, we hesitate to consider the negative face.

The truth of the matter is that, as we saw in Part II, most people do not react well when confronted with opposing views. We want people to agree with us, and deliberation makes it more difficult to think everyone does. As mentioned in Chapter 6, psychologists have convincingly demonstrated that humans have a strong desire to engage in false consensus, to project their positions onto others.[16] After all, our positions seem sensible, so other sensible people must agree with us. When others disagree with us, we tend to denigrate their positions, to claim that their view is atypical and perhaps the result of some "special" interest rather than a true, real-American interest. Or else we harden our original stance. As Diana Mutz (1997: 107) discovered, "When exposed to the contradictory opinions of others, a person strongly committed to his or her viewpoint would be most likely to generate counter-arguments defending his or her initial position."[17] MacKuen (1990) finds that people will usually just clam up when they sense that their interlocutor is not a kindred spirit (see also Noelle-Neumann 1984). Whatever our response, research demonstrates that disagreement creates a negative psychological tension (Petty and Cacioppo 1981; Eagly and Chaiken 1993).

A major problem with deliberation, as people see it, is the inequalities that quickly surface in public discussions, especially given some people's distaste for conflict. The best examples of this come from studies of direct deliberative democracy in action: New England town meetings. Mansbridge's (1983) fascinating account of the events and sentiments surrounding town meetings in the real but fictitiously named New England town of Selby is the most revealing. After observing town meetings, Mansbridge interviewed many of the participants and concluded that the face-to-face deliberative version of democracy actually "accentuates rather than redress[es] the disadvantage of those with least power in a society" (277). The major reason for this exacerbation is simply variation in people's communication skills. As a retired businessman from Selby put it, "some people are eloquent and can make others feel inferior. They can shut them down. I wouldn't say a word at town meetings unless they got me madder'n hell" (62). Another said, "[W]e have natural born orators, don't we? I think we do. It's just the same as anything else. They carry more than their share of the weight" (83). A farmer had similar sentiments: "There's a few people who really are brave enough to get up and say what they think in town meetings . . . now, myself, I feel inferior, in ways, to other people . . . forty percent of the people on this road that don't show up for town meeting – a lot of them feel that way" (60; see also Eliasoph 1998: ch. 2). All in all, it is difficult to dispute Mansbridge's conclusion that "participation in face-to-face democracies can make participants feel humiliated, frightened, and even more powerless than before" (7).

[16] See Marks and Miller (1987); Mullen and Hu (1988); and Mullen et al. (1985).
[17] See also Patterson (1980); Kaplowitz et al. (1983); Geer (1989).

The fact that deliberation in real-world settings tends to disempower the timid, quiet, and uneducated relative to the loquacious, extroverted, and well schooled is particularly difficult for deliberation theorists to swallow, since much of the theory's original appeal was based on its radical elan. True justice and democracy, the claim went, is possible only with noncoercive public debate. In the real as opposed to theoretical world, this position is patently unrealistic. Nancy Fraser (1989, 1992) and others convincingly point out that Habermas's model of radical, deliberative democracy would produce serious negative consequences for the influence of women and the lower, less-educated classes. For example, drawing on the work of Margolis (1992) and Tannen (1994), Susan Hansen (1997: 75) notes that "the content and style of political discourse is alienating to many women." Habermas himself has realized the error of his ways. His more recent work (1996) supports representative democracy after his early work (1973) was dismissive of anything other than direct popular participation. The chorus in the interest-group pluralism heaven may sing with a decidedly upper-class accent, but in direct deliberation heaven it sings with a decidedly white, male, educated, confident, blowhard accent.

As a result of disparities in elocution and willingness to speak publicly, a widespread perception in Selby is that a small group of people control decisions in the town meetings. The interviewees made

countless references to "they." The following remark is typical: "If you don't say what they want to hear you're not even acknowledged.... If you don't agree with them, they don't want to hear you" (Mansbridge 1983: 69). Needless to say, when deliberative democracy repeatedly fosters this kind of reaction, it is not increasing the tendency of the people to view the political system as legitimate. If anything, it makes matters worse than would be the case with representative democracy or nondeliberative direct democracy (ballot propositions). Seeing the process up close led people in Selby to conclude that "no one *likes* each other" or there are too many "personalities involved" or "they get so darned *personal* at town meeting" (63).

The unwillingness to get involved in conflict leads to a spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann 1984) in which only a small group of people speaks and the others seem to give their assent but really are scared to participate. Soon, many decide they will not even attend the deliberative sessions. Though systematic figures are difficult to marshal, there is little dispute that attendance at New England town meetings is down sharply across the region. Hampson (1996) notes that in Hampton, Connecticut, there would be 900 people at town meetings in the old days, 200 even a few years ago, and now only 50, with nearly half of them town employees or school board members. He continues: "The highlight of the political year used to be the town meeting where the budget was voice-voted up or down. But for the past five years voters have insisted the Hampton budget be approved via referendum" (2A). It is important to note that it is the ordinary town residents who ended deliberation on this key matter. No evil, aggrandizing power structure took away their opportunity to assemble. Rather, the people of Hampton did not want to meet on this issue, probably for the same reasons the residents of Selby had such negative perceptions of deliberative democracy: too much inequity, too much time wasted, and too much group think. The people were not forced out of deliberative politics, they put themselves out.[18]

Also important is the distinct possibility that the decline of the town meeting can be linked to growing diversity. Several of the residents of Selby, at least, spoke longingly of the days when long-term

[18] Fiorina similarly reports that in the New England town where he once lived, a movement sprang up to prohibit any proposal adopted at a town meeting from going into effect until it was approved in a townwide vote (personal communication). This movement was motivated by the (obviously correct) belief that those townspeople involved in the town meeting were highly unrepresentative.

residents made up the entire population of the town. For example: "[Selby] has always been such a peaceful town. But now these people come in... and then they just argue and won't trust anyone" (Mansbridge 1983: 68). Jack Gould's (1940) earlier study of New England town meetings came to much the same chilling conclusion. One participant told him that problems for town meetings arise when diversity is present. Difficulties are created, he said, because of "outlanders who speak different languages and whose... makeup is at odds with town meeting tradition" (60).

It is certainly possible that deliberative democracy could work if interests were primarily unitary but will fail when "these people come in" and government appears to be nothing but arguing. This is essentially the conclusion at which Mansbridge (1983: 276–7) arrives and we agree.[19] But we question the importance of a political process that can work only when "interests are similar" (277). As Andrew Schedler (1997: 4) notes, "politics presupposes plurality, homogeneity precludes politics." Virtually any governmental arrangement will work if all the people in the polity agree with each other. With that level of consensus, politics is unnecessary and perhaps impossible. But such a level of consensus on real issues in real-life politics is patently unrealistic.[20] Why create a decision-making structure that can work only in the fairy-tale, homogeneous, apolitical land of small New England towns of long ago or in voluntary organizations that come together because members already agree on a local, noncontroversial goal? Diversity is reality, but it brings people into conflict

[19] Consistent with these notions are the findings of Tali Mendelberg and John Oleske (2000). They closely observed two real-life meetings on school desegregation. One meeting had participants of various races, and the other was all-white. They found that "deliberation at the segregated meeting maintained consensus; but deliberation at the integrated meeting maintained the conflict between whites and others with people becoming angry and defensive," and the meeting ending in "alienation" (26–7). Relatedly, after describing "Navajo democracy," in which deliberation continues until the problem is solved, Etzioni (1996: 221) admits that it was tried in "several counterculture communes" and that the procedure failed miserably except when the "agenda was quite limited and the social bonds and normative preexisting understandings... were strong." Etzioni concedes that this approach will work only if people are willing to "leave some issues out of the debate" (104–5). Once again, it appears deliberation works only on easy issues or when there is preexisting agreement and homogeneity (see also Mansbridge's (1983: Part III) account of the "Helpline Crisis Center" when budget issues became difficult). Deliberation works only when it is not needed.

[20] Iris Marion Young (2000: 4) agrees.

with one another and people do not like conflict. Morris Rosenberg (1954–5) conducted interviews in Ithaca, New York, in the early 1950s. Several of his interviewees subscribed to the sentiment that "there is no harm in avoiding unnecessary conflicts" by staying away from politics (350). This sentiment, our evidence suggests, is a major reason people do not engage in politics.[21]

One final claim made by supporters of increased popular participation and deliberation is that interaction with other ordinary people will lead individuals to be more other-regarding. As Dryzek (2000: 21) puts it, through democratic participation people will become "more public-spirited, more tolerant, more knowledgeable, more attentive to the interests of others." Once again, however, empirical research casts doubt on the claim of theorists. Experiments by Adam Simon and Tracy Sulkin (2000) on people's generosity to others in small group settings confirm that "the presence of communication seems to encourage more exploitative outcomes" (16), a result directly at odds with the expectations of theorists. And real-life behavior seems consistent with these experimental tendencies. William Simonsen and Mark Robbins (2000) discuss the so-called "Eugene decisions," an effort to engage citizens in local decision making. They found that, contrary to expectations, the more citizens were involved in and knowledgeable about city decisions, the more they wanted to cut taxes and cut services, especially in planning, park maintenance, and building maintenance. They conclude that liberals should not support greater involvement by the public unless they are willing to see governmental programs cut. Presumably, if the study had been done in a city that was not so homogeneous (Eugene is 93 percent white), people would have been even more leery of government spending. In light of the findings reported by Simonsen and Robbins, one reviewer of their book wisely asks, "Do we really need more participation if it is going to result in policies that fail to take into account the common good?" (Kraus 2000: 955).[22]

Deliberation will not work in the real world of politics where people are different and where tough, zero-sum decisions must be made. Democracy in authentic, diverse settings is not enhanced by town-meeting-style participation; it is probably diminished. Given the predilections of the people, real deliberation is quite likely to make them hopping mad or encourage them to suffer silently because of a reluctance to voice their own opinions in the discussion. Representative democracy at least affords representation to those who shy away from the give and take of politics. The bigger the role deliberation plays, the less influence such people have. When deliberation alone is expected to produce a result (as Gutmann and Thompson advocate and as is illustrated by Etzioni's "Navajo democracy"), people who choose not to participate in deliberation would be left with no input whatsoever.[23]

CONCLUSION

The evidence indicates that political capital is not increased when people join more groups or when they deliberate with people who do not necessarily share their views. For us, the essence of political capital is being able to deal with political disagreements in a constructive fashion or at least to appreciate the difficulties inherent in doing so. Why would joining self-selected, frequently homogeneous groups teach people about dealing with political diversity – especially when these groups typically pursue universalistic or at least noncontroversial goals? And why would thrusting people into settings where they come face-to-face with people who disagree with, and are different from, them and then requiring them to deliberate on political matters they would rather avoid make them happy, empathetic, other-regarding, and enlightened people? Why should they view such

[21] While people have probably always been put off by conflict they believe to be unnecessary, part of the public's dissatisfaction with politicians in recent decades may result from the fact that diversity in the United States is more apparent than it was several decades ago. Though it is impossible to say for sure, what happened in Selby to cause people to turn away from town meetings might have happened to the nation: Women, the poor, African-Americans, homosexuals, Hispanics, and others, have become significantly more noticeable in American society and politics. Diversity increases the system's attention to matters that seem not to concern the majority and may help to turn people away from democratic politics. The people's instinct is to dislike anything that makes it harder for them to pretend politics need not exist, and diversity tends to do just that.

[22] For an account of the negative consequences associated with unrealistic conceptualizations of what good citizenship entails, see Schudson (1998).

[23] For somewhat different reasons, rational choice scholars have also raised questions about the alleged beneficial consequences of deliberation, especially when preferences are dissimilar (see, e.g., Riker 1982; Austen-Smith and Riker 1987; Austen-Smith 1990). Relatedly, Fred Frohock (1997: 833–4) points out that public reason and deliberation "cannot resolve disputes" when "deep pluralism" exists. Mill (1977) went so far as to say true democracy was impossible in multiethnic societies.

a process as good and legitimate? The simple fact is that the "join more groups" strategy asks far too little of the American public and the "deliberate with people who are not like you" strategy asks far too much. The first does not expose people to sufficient diversity, and the second often dumps too much of it on them.[24]

Groups are useful for many purposes. Similarly, deliberation is going to have to be a part of any realistic democratic polity, so we do not want our remarks to be misconstrued. But the findings in Part II reveal that the core of people's dismissive views of politics, the reason many of them believe that stealth democracy is somehow preferable to real democracy, is their belief that political conflict is unnecessary and evil. And the empirical evidence just summarized regarding the consequences of group involvement and of exposure to deliberation indicates that neither of the main approaches currently being advocated by normative theorists holds much potential for getting people to deal with political conflict in a more realistic, comfortable, and accepting fashion.

If we are correct that neither volunteer groups nor forced deliberation is the solution to people's negative attitudes toward democratic realities, what is? As usual, pointing out the strategies that will not work is easier than identifying strategies that will, but the effort must be made. In the next chapter we review the potential benefits of decision-making strategies that focus less on the people than on elected officials and, specifically, on how those officials present themselves to the people. As such, our attention is on possible ways of making standard representative democracy (the lower-right quadrant of Fig. 7.1) more palatable to the people.

[24] As Morrell (1999: 319) notes, "strong democratic procedures may be too much to ask, at least for now."