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Future Directions for Public Deliberation

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Many people in many countries are gathering—in a wide variety of settings and formats—to discuss and address public issues. There is a growing movement calling for the development of deliberative civic culture and public institutions. Though this momentum is encouraging, we have been here before. There have been bursts of public deliberation and participation during several periods of the history of the United States—in particular in the Progressive Era and during the Great Depression before the Second World War.[1] Those earlier movements altered our public discourse and governance, but they ultimately faltered. Therefore, it is crucial that we carefully consider how to assess, improve, sustain, and expand today's experiments..

We begin by asking what we can expect from deliberative initiatives. *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century* (to be published in mid-2005 with 16 chapters dedicated to specific forms of public deliberation) will demonstrate the full breadth of deliberative approaches; here we note a few of the findings that appear consistent across those different experiences. We then consider the limitations of deliberation as it is currently practiced, as well as the challenges that will arise if and when deliberation becomes a more high-stakes public process. After recommending ways to advance research on deliberation, we demarcate some of the new frontiers for the practice of public deliberation.

What We Can Expect from Deliberation

Although the *Handbook* raises many unanswered (and perhaps unanswerable) questions, it also substantiates several conclusions. First, people are willing to discuss public issues and can sustain serious, in-depth conversations about technical and/or highly divisive matters. In informal lawn parties, official school councils and public hearings, and many of the public venues discussed in this book, tens of millions of Americans—and probably hundreds of millions around the globe—deliberate with one another and with government officials about public policies and problems.

To be sure, the desire to deliberate is not universal. Many discussions involve only the most motivated citizens who volunteer to participate. Many also tend to attract individuals who are better-off in terms of income, education, and status. Even when participants are randomly selected, some decline the invitation.[2] Even when an event is mandatory, as in the case of jury service in the United States, deliberators are at least somewhat self-selected. Nevertheless, the appetite for deliberation is widespread and cuts across lines of class, occupation, gender, nationality, and culture.

In the United States, 25 percent of adults say they have "attended a formal or informal meeting to discuss a public issue in last year." That quarter of the population is skewed toward more formally educated people, but African Americans and women are at least as likely as white people and men to say that they have participated in such discussions.[3] Thus a diverse group of about 50 million adult Americans say that they are involved in public talk every year. Of course, we have no accounting of the deliberative quality of these public discussions, and there are still too few opportunities in the United States for meaningful deliberation. Very poor people have deliberated in large numbers, for example through the Participatory Budgeting process in Porto Alegre, Brazil and India's Panchayat village council system.

Second, when deliberation is well organized, participants *like* it. In fact, they find it deeply satisfying and significant. One Australian member of a consensus conference is quoted as saying, "It's the most important thing I've ever done in my whole life, I suppose."[4] Often organizers find that participants, once bitten, are eager to deliberate again.

Although many observers derive intrinsic value from public deliberation, its outcomes can be disappointing. Karpowitz and Mansbridge describe a process that suppressed deep differences, discouraged frank statements and expressions of self-interest, and seriously exaggerated the level of consensus. Participants were infuriated and used the more adversarial format of a public hearing to express their critical views about both the process and the outcome of the deliberation. This is only one way in which a deliberation can go wrong and make people less likely to participate again.[5]

Nevertheless, the fact remains that deliberative democracy often proves deeply fulfilling. This is important because deliberation can reinforce support for itself when it is successful.[6] Research on the American jury has found that a conclusive jury experience, in which jurors deliberate and reach a final verdict, can make the participating jurors more likely to seek out future opportunities for participation in public life, such as voting in elections.[7] In this same way, a rewarding turn at public deliberation spark future involvement. This has certainly been the experience of some of the longest running deliberative programs, like the National Issues Forums and Study Circles, in which today's volunteer participants become tomorrow's forum and study circle organizers. For these participants, deliberation was so rewarding that they felt the impulse to join the nascent deliberation movement and bring that same experience to others.

Third, the products of deliberations are often excellent. Deliberators may be asked to develop budgets, design rural or urban landscapes, make policy recommendations, pose public questions to politicians, or take voluntary actions in their own communities. When the tasks are realistic, the questions are clear and useful, and the discussion is well-organized, deliberators often do a good job. They can absorb relevant background materials, seriously consider relevant facts, incorporate and balance a variety of legitimate perspectives and opinions, and make tough choices with full awareness of constraints. Experts are often surprised and impressed by the quality of the public's deliberations, judgments, and actions.[8] Nothing guarantees that a group of citizens will write a wise plan, but neither are judges guaranteed to reach just verdicts or legislators to write good statutes. Though there is no systematic research that compares the outcomes of public deliberation with those of more formal or professional processes (and it is difficult to imagine how such research could be conducted), ordinary people have frequently proven themselves to be capable of generating impressive outcomes across a wide variety of political contexts and policy issues.[9]

Within the community of deliberation advocates, there exist many sharp disagreements over techniques and priorities, but there appears to be an unrecognized overlapping consensus on the criteria for high-quality deliberation. Most agree that a successful deliberative initiative has the following features: (a) the realistic expectation of influence (i.e., a link to decision makers); (b) an inclusive, representative process that brings key stakeholders and publics together; (c) informed, substantive, and conscientious discussion, with an eye toward finding common ground if not reaching consensus; and (d) a neutral, professional staff that helps participants work through a fair agenda. Over time, it is also hoped that deliberative processes can (e) earn broad public support for their final recommendations and (f) prove sustainable over time. Taken together, these objectives are not easily met, but practitioners have developed many strategies to manage—if not overcome—most obstacles to deliberation.

Addressing the Limitations of Public Deliberation

Though deliberation has tremendous value and promise for improving contemporary democracy, it also has several important limitations. Here, we discuss four: the elusive nature of

public agreement; the challenge of organization; the challenge of scale; and the impact of deliberation on public decisions.

Unity and Disagreement

First, deliberation does not often generate a full consensus, especially in larger public bodies. Although people frequently change their views in the process of deliberation and come to understand one another's needs, values, and beliefs better, they rarely reach complete agreement. Because disagreements persist in almost all conversations, a group cannot make a *decision* without some method, such as voting, that forecloses further deliberation, at least for a period of time. Nevertheless, there is a world of difference between a vote that follows rich deliberation and one in which people simply register their "raw" opinions.

Those convening deliberative events should not create unrealistic expectations about the potential for unity and certainty, but it is probably fruitful to encourage at least the impulse to have an open mind and seek mutual understanding, if not agreement. Public deliberation is valuable when it helps participants to learn the reasons for their disagreements and to distinguish subjects on which they can agree from those where they are unlikely to reach accord. Deliberation is also valuable when it helps participants to think through, alter, deepen, and stabilize their perspectives through reflection and discussion, even when it does not cause participants' views to converge.

Organization and Facilitation

Second, good deliberation is not self-generating. The instances of poorly organized public participation that fall below the threshold of proper "deliberation"—for example, most public hearings and meetings in which participants gather to listen to the content of others' policy choices—far outnumber well organized deliberative encounters in which participants hear contesting reasons for diverse options and discuss them. To achieve high-quality deliberation, someone must organize a discursive process, choose a topic, recruit the participants, prepare background materials or invite speakers, provide facilitators, and raise the funds that are necessary to do these things.

In practice, a small group of self-selected leaders must actually organize any process, making choices about methods and agendas. There is no consensus about a best approach that would fit every circumstance.[10] Thus organizers must make decisions that profoundly shape the public discussions that follow. There is a danger that deliberation will be overly influenced by skilled organizers; but the greater danger is having no competent organization at all. Facilitators and the organizations that train and support them are critical to most processes, yet they cannot themselves be completely democratic and deliberative.

Scaling Deliberation Up and Out

Two additional challenges for the practice of deliberative democracy concern its scale. To become politically and socially significant, public deliberation initiatives must scale "out" in the sense of directly or indirectly including many more participants. Most civic innovations in deliberation involve hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of individuals. As a percentage of affected citizens, those who participate directly in such encounters constitute a far lower percentage of the population than even the lowest of low-turnout elections. One way to make formal deliberation more salient for more individuals is to increase the frequency with which such events occur. Another way is to link the conversations that occur inside these deliberations to the broader

public debate—occurring in the opinion pages of local newspapers, in barbershops, and street corners. This linkage is not easy to accomplish, but it can be done. When dozens of newspapers covered the "Listening to the City" deliberations around rebuilding lower Manhattan, tens of thousands of newspaper and Internet readers participated, albeit virtually, in a conversation about urban planning. Some newspapers, such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, have established a track record of facilitating such deliberation; that makes it possible to sustain a deliberative civic conversation even across multiple topics.

In addition to including more participants, public deliberation also faces the challenge of scaling "up" to address problems and policy issues of state, national, and even international concern. The majority of experience, and accomplishment, of public deliberation concerns local issues such as development and planning, public education, race relations, and the like. But more and more aspects of daily life depend on decisions and actions that occur far beyond the boundaries that separate towns, states, and even nations. A few innovations in public deliberation focused on issues at supra-local scale. The "Americans Discuss Social Security" deliberations in 1997 and 1998, as well as several Deliberative Polls in the United States, England, and Denmark considered national policy issues. National Issues Forums generate local deliberations, but they typically address national or global issues. Nevertheless, organized deliberation about such issues remains exceptional, and the policy impact of such initiatives is debatable—a subject we turn to next.

Impact, Authority, and Strategies for Influence

Even high quality public deliberation does not automatically result in social or political change. Most public deliberations do not directly alter public decisions and actions. Indeed, many practitioners of public deliberation have only recently turned their attention from the question of generating and organizing public discussion to that of linking talk to action. For the results of a deliberative process to count, powerful actors must be encouraged, persuaded, pressured, or obliged to heed them. This seldom happens, and rarely does it occur in a fully deliberative way.

Tying the results of a genuine public deliberation process to advocacy or lobbying presents its own set of problems. Whereas deliberation requires continual openness to new ideas and perspectives, lobbying requires a coherent and consistent position. Rose Marie Nierras, a Filippina activist, offers an example of this tension from her own experience. The Freedom from Debt Coalition in the Philippines has conducted fairly broad deliberations about what should be done about the country's debt to foreign lenders. However, once "there's a common position that the Coalition actually can unite [around], in negotiating with the IMF and the World Bank, with the Philippine Government, that common position is the only position we're willing to deliberate on. Outside the boundaries of that, we're not willing as a Coalition to actually entertain any other view than this."[11] If the Coalition continued deliberating indefinitely and failed to negotiate with powerful actors, then many participants would lose patience with the endless talk and refuse to participate. In this sense, deliberation is almost always nested in a political context that is not itself fully deliberative.

Deliberation can, however, have a more direct authority, as in the case of the São Paulo Municipal Health Council, a Brazilian citizen's group that can veto the decisions of local health authorities and block them from receiving federal money.[12] Another promising example of deliberative authority comes from British Columbia (B.C.), Canada. In 2003, the B.C. provincial government established a Citizens' Assembly, made up of 160 randomly-selected citizens, one

man and one woman from each electoral district plus two at-large Aboriginal members. The Assembly's task was to evaluate the existing electoral system and, if necessary, propose a new one. On October 24, 2004, after many meetings and public hearings, the Assembly voted 146-7 (a 95% supermajority, nearly a full consensus) in favor of replacing the existing electoral system with a Single Transferable Vote model, which lets voters rank candidates within multi-member districts. At press time, this proposal was about to go before the full B.C. public, and if approved by the voters in a referendum, it is scheduled to go into effect for the 2009 election.[13]

What the São Paolo and B.C. models demonstrate is that public deliberation can fit into an institutional arrangement in which it has real authority on issues as fundamental as the electoral process itself. In many countries, legislators might find it advantageous to hand off to a deliberative assembly many controversial issues that require sound public policy. In the case of electoral reform, it may be hard for public officials to craft reforms the public can trust, given officials' inherent conflict of interest on the subject. In the case of tax policy, legislators may prefer that citizens themselves raise taxes and reform the tax structure, lest the elected officials draw the ire of those whose taxes go up. There is merit in putting a deliberative assembly's judgment before the voters, as in the B.C. case, but it is also conceivable that the deliberative body could make a final decision (perhaps subject to the same veto authority the governor has over a legislature in the United States).

The B.C. example is exceptional, however, in that the Citizens Assembly originated from within government. Deliberation programs typically are built by citizens (sometimes with the cooperation of public officials) and civic organizations without explicit authority or substantial public influence. To make such deliberative initiatives more consequential, those who organize public deliberations should consider both "inside" and "outside" strategies for influencing public officials.

"Inside" strategies require creating relationships with policy-makers or utilizing administrative or legal requirements that compel them to incorporate public deliberations into their decisions. At that minimal end of this empowerment spectrum, "notice-and-comment" provisions in administrative rulemaking compel officials to respond to concerns raised by participants in these processes. In more highly empowered processes, public powers and resources are actually delegated to publicly deliberative bodies. Some neighborhood councils in U.S. cities, for example, exercise substantial zoning authority, whereas others dispose of substantial public funds for local development and revitalization.

"Outside" strategies, by contrast, rely upon generating political and social pressures that compel officials to respect the results of public deliberation. The "Listening to the City" event organized by AmericaSpeaks received extensive coverage from local and national media that in turn created a political imperative for the public agencies who sponsored the deliberations to respond to the concerns that participants raised. In their book *Deliberation Day*, Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin have developed a compelling argument for how a carefully timed and organized set of public deliberations could alter the character and content of Presidential campaigns in the U.S.[14]

The most influential and robust institutions of public deliberation often incorporate both inside and outside strategies of influence and empowerment. The much lauded and studied Participatory Budget program of Porto Alegre, exhibits both elements. From the inside, the Participatory Budget is a program that is operated by the city's executive and receives elaborate funding and staff support. From the outside, however, there is no public law that institutionalizes the practice of annual popular participation in deliberating about the city's spending priorities.

Organizers fear that such institutionalization would dampen the political mobilization that sustains participatory budgeting. Instead city councilors who receive the budget that grows out of popular participation feel enormous pressure to approve it because of the legitimacy that flows from direct citizen participation and deliberation.

Preserving the Integrity of Consequential Deliberation

To date, most public deliberation has had low stakes for participants, especially in the United States. In some cases, there is no serious effort to change public policy to match the results of the public conversation. The goal of a meeting is to build networks of citizens, to develop new ideas, to teach people skills and knowledge, to change attitudes—rather than to influence government. In other cases, deliberation does have direct consequences for policy. For example, the budget of the District of Columbia is much influenced by the annual Citizens Summit organized by America Speaks. In Brazil, Municipal Health Councils formulate and oversee local health policy. Nevertheless, such cases arise under especially favorable circumstances, when political leaders are either unusually committed to public deliberation or have special incentives to share power with a deliberating group of citizens.

If efforts to promote public deliberation become a more powerful political movement, then citizen deliberation will likely achieve concrete influence, perhaps even when the conditions are unfavorable. At this juncture, deliberation will become a high-stakes process, and with this new status will bring new challenges.

First, who is at the table? In a low-stakes deliberation, it may work well to recruit volunteers, as long one aims for diversity of background and opinion. However, as soon as the stakes increase, organized interests will dispatch their own foot-soldiers. Interest-group politics is an acceptable and unavoidable part of democratic politics: "sewn in the nature of man," as James Madison put it.[15] But interest groups are not evenly distributed. For instance, there are effective national groups for developers and landlords, but not for renters or the homeless. Second, some groups are not internally democratic or transparent; they don't represent the larger populations in whose name they speak. And finally, because of basic collective-action problems, interest groups tend to form around narrow concerns rather than broad ones. Narrow concerns can be legitimate, but interest-group politics introduces a bias against diffuse or general interests.

We are used to these problems in conventional representative political institutions. Public deliberation is supposed to be an alternative. But interest groups may be at least as effective in high-stakes citizens' deliberations as in Congress or the town council.

Since meetings of recruited volunteers can be stacked with committed partisans, some organizers randomly select citizens to participate. But random selection has its own problems. It can be expensive and practically difficult. Though the cost and logistical challenge may be small relative to the significance of the issues at hand, it is still sometimes a challenge to overcome the resistance to spending more money and committing more time to setting up such a selection process. To date, random selection methods have not been embedded in local networks and associations. It must be organized or convened by some group with a budget and an agenda; thus, the agenda and framing of the discussion can be biased, or perceived as biased.

Second, there arises the problem of fairness and equality within a discussion. Lynn Sanders notes that "some citizens are better than others at articulating their concerns in rational, reasonable terms." Some are "more learned and practiced at making arguments that would be recognized by others as reasonable ones." Some people are simply more willing to speak; for example, studies of U.S. juries show that men talk far more than women in deliberations.

Furthermore, some people "are more likely to be listened to than others." For instance, studies of U.S. juries show that they tend to elect white males as forepersons. Studies of U.S. college students show that white students have much more influence than Black students in joint collaborative projects, even controlling for age, socioeconomic status, height, and attitudes toward school.[16]

We have observed how organizers and moderators of low-stakes public deliberation overcome these problems. They deliberately support participants who might be disadvantaged in the conversation. Today's public deliberations are likely to be more equitable than juries or teams of college students because moderators are trained and focused on equality. But what about tomorrow's deliberations? When the stakes go up, individuals with more status or skill will fight back against efforts to support less advantaged participants. They will depict such efforts as "politically correct" or otherwise biased, and they will use their status, confidence, and rhetorical fluency to win the point.

Skilled facilitators might still manage such difficulties effectively, as was done in the case of the aforementioned B.C. Citizens Assembly, but the selection of the facilitator(s) can itself be the source of some contention. In Citizens Juries, the participants have been given the authority to alter discussion rules and even remove the facilitator. That approach—despite its potential for parliamentary-style procedural shenanigans—may be the best way to safeguard the integrity of the process.

Advancing Research

It is difficult to exaggerate academics' interest in deliberative democracy, which has been intense and growing ever since John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas separately advocated it forty years ago. There are too many substantial books to mention, but perhaps one indicator of scholars' interest is the recent publication of at least five *anthologies* on the topic, most of whose contributors specialize in deliberation.[17]

Still, most researchers pay little attention to the practices described in this book. There are many other academic fields in which scholars and practitioners do not communicate well or consistently. Why is there such a gap between scholarship and practice in the field of deliberation?

First, most academics are interested in varieties of deliberation that have clear influence on political outcomes. Therefore, they focus on deliberation in powerful bodies like juries, appellate courts, and legislatures, or on long-term discussions that involve millions of people and play out in the mass media and major institutions. For them, a gathering of a few dozen (or even a few thousand) citizens is insignificant. Scholars of deliberation see themselves as too practical and realistic to devote serious attention to experiments like those described in this book. The Brazilian experience with Participatory Budgeting is a notable exception, precisely because it has achieved scale and political impact.

Practical projects could be used as case studies or laboratories to test hypotheses about how people discuss issues. By design, though, only a few of the projects described in this book are sufficiently *controlled* to serve as ideal opportunities to address the questions on researchers' agendas. For example, if social scientists want to study whether and when groups converge toward consensus positions, they may feel more confident experimenting with a random sample and a carefully selected series of topics, rather than observing an uncontrolled and context-dependent process like Study Circles or National Issues Forums.[18] If they want to assess the effects of deliberation on individuals' attitudes and beliefs, then they may want to select some

participants randomly out of a larger pool and leave the rest as a control group, which is impossible in most real-world contexts. Because they use random selection, Deliberative Polls are among the few processes that have been designed and used as formal experiments. The insights derived from Deliberative Polls are important, but some argue that they do not generalize to other modes of deliberation.

Some of the literature from experimental psychology finds disappointing results when randomly selected groups of people (usually college students) are asked to discuss questions chosen by researchers. For example, such groups often move in the direction of the majority opinion; dissenters drop their opinions to go along with the group.[19] Though these are important and challenging results, it is equally important to study what happens when diverse and motivated citizens are recruited to address pressing problems in their communities, provided with balanced materials, guided by skilled moderators, and asked to reach judgments that have real political consequences. Similarly, if we want to observe how interest groups, politicians, and citizens deal with each other in public deliberations, then we need to study practices that are embedded in politics, not experiments with pre-determined topics and controlled structures.

In 2003, the Deliberative Democracy Consortium convened a meeting of thirty leading researchers and practitioners. Despite the very different perspectives of academic scholars and grassroots activists, both groups agreed that the array of practical experiments and projects now underway in deliberative democracy are significant and promising. In a highly unusual process that itself modeled deliberation, the researchers and practitioners worked together to develop a common research agenda. They decided that the top priorities for research included such questions as

1. How does design and structure affect quality of deliberative process & outcomes?
2. Under what conditions does deliberation affect public policy?
3. In addition to changes in policy, what are other important outcomes of deliberation? Are they measurable; and if so, how?
4. How should we measure the quality of deliberation?
5. What is relationship between deliberation and advocacy/public involvement?
6. What can deliberative democracy movement learn from other social movements?
7. What is the public's interest in deliberation?
8. How can the scale of deliberation be increased, and how can it be institutionalized?

New Frontiers for Public Deliberation

There are many new directions in which researchers and practitioners can develop their understandings and methods of public deliberation. Here, we wish to emphasize three priorities—strengthening the connection between deliberation and dialogue, moving from substantive to cultural conflicts, and considering the potential for cross-national deliberation.[20]

Dialogue and Deliberation

The terms dialogue and deliberation have become popular in communication and political science, particularly in reference to the role of public discourse in participatory models of democracy.[21] Many uses of these two terms entail considerable conceptual overlap. Nonetheless, it is possible to make a clear and useful distinction between them. Public deliberation can be defined as a problem-solving form of discourse, which involves problem analysis, setting priorities, establishing evaluative criteria, identifying and weighing alternative solutions. Through a respectful, egalitarian, and conscientious process, a deliberative body aims toward a

reasoned consensus but often settles, at least provisionally, for a judicious result based on a more humble decision rule, such as two-thirds majority rule.[22]

When a group seeks to deliberate on a public issue, however, it may be necessary to first engage in dialogue.[23] This form of speech is not as concerned with solving a problem as it is with bridging linguistic, social, and epistemological chasms that exist between different subgroups of the potentially deliberative body. The members of a group may have incommensurate discourse norms, in which case one participant's preferred method for showing respect (e.g., asking a direct, challenging question) might insult another participant. Or subgroups may have contradictory linguistic or semiotic associations, such as when the display of the Ten Commandments in a public deliberative chamber causes one group to feel honored and another to feel denigrated. Dialogue may also be important when participants have radically different epistemological assumptions. One group may give greater weight to personal testimony, another to statistical evidence, and a third to correspondence with secular or sacred texts (e.g., founding documents or holy scriptures). This final difference makes it hard to adjudicate competing claims, when each stands on distinct rhetorical ground.

When differences such as these exist within a group, dialogue can help participants come to recognize and understand each other's point of view. Whereas deliberation focuses upon more concrete choices, dialogue seeks accommodation, reconciliation, mutual understanding, or at the very least, informed tolerance. The particular group procedures for such dialogue is not the central question here, but the general method is to create a group environment conducive to honest self-expression, careful self-reflection, thoughtful probing, and perspective-taking. Dialogue generally aims to help different subgroups learn about each other through mutual questioning and reflection. It can take many hours or days (or longer) for a group to move through a series of stages before it arrives at the point where participants truly understand each other's standpoint and appreciate the history and conviction of one another's views.[24]

At least in theory, such dialogue can prepare a group for subsequent deliberation(s). Once each subgroup understands how the other thinks, talks, and reasons, it is easier to avoid conceptual confusions, symbolic battles, and epistemological thickets that would otherwise derail a deliberative process. The dialogic phase does not resolve moral disputes or advance policy goals; rather, it prepares group members for the necessary but challenging process of making common decisions together despite deep, underlying differences.

Cultural Accommodation

In this context, the aim of dialogue might be even more modest than that which might be achieved in other settings. The goal here might simply be *cultural accommodation*. To accommodate another cultural group means to make room for them within the shared public sphere, to co-exist peaceably without crowding out or unduly inconveniencing one another. At a minimum, cultural accommodation means giving due consideration to one another's symbols, understandings, and aspirations. Cultural accommodation can also be defined by contrasting it with related but distinct dialogic aims: The process involves neither competitive negotiation nor pressing for reasoned consensus. The closest conceptual cousin is "strategic compromise," but even that happens later, during the deliberative phase that follows the initial period of dialogue.

The most likely tangible products of accommodation are a modicum of mutual understanding (i.e., conscious knowledge of substantive and symbolic differences), a pragmatic commitment to cultural tolerance, and accord on the value of a loosely defined but shared framework for policy discussion (i.e., agreement to enter a deliberative phase of public talk).[25] The best possible outcome might also produce a willingness on the part of both parties to lower

the rhetorical stakes of the deliberation that follows. With their greater awareness of each other's distinct standpoints, parties might agree to avoid strategic language that, on reflection, is ineffective at persuading the other side and only prolongs the avoidance of policy talk. Taken together, these accomplishments mean that the participants in a subsequent deliberation enter into it with significantly greater cultural security and appreciation, which will help them defuse the brief (but potentially explosive) cultural clashes that are inevitable in any sustained policy discussion.[26]

As a hypothetical example, imagine a small group of U.S. citizens engaging in a cultural dialogue about their views on guns and gun control. Each cultural group would have the chance to explain how it views the world, how its deeper values inform its vision of the future, and how it understands the course of history in terms of its cultural traditions. One participant might explain that from his or her perspective, guns are integral to traditional male roles of father, hunter, and protector. In his view, guns are legitimate signs of military and police authority, as well as the authority and status of the household provider. In expressing these values and aspirations, the speaker would also display key words, phrases, and symbols (e.g., patriotism, the Minuteman), key forms of evidence (e.g., accordance with the Second Amendment), and traditional ways of speaking (e.g., authoritative declaration). Trained moderators and/or participants from other cultural backgrounds could, within a restrictive set of discursive guidelines, ask probing questions of this representative to further clarify the contours of his particular perspective.[27] In turn, another representative could describe why he or she opposes all private ownership of weapons for moral, cultural, and practical reasons.

The point here is not to identify policy choices or weigh the pros and cons of conflicting views; rather, it is to illuminate and understand the cultural grounding of a person's perspective. As a result of this dialogue, participants might emerge with a sharper understanding of their points of difference. Within the broad compact of a pluralist society, each group may come to recognize that the other is entitled to valuing their distinct set of cultural beliefs, symbols, and practices. This is not to say that participants in dialogue simply become moral relativists and cease debating the merits private rights versus social responsibilities, community needs versus individual aims, and traditional hierarchies versus egalitarian norms. Rather, the accomplishment is the recognition that each group has a distinct and coherent set of values and styles and the humbling recognition that with few exceptions, those difference are not subject to debate. There may be no points of agreement on substance or style, but there is likely to emerge a recognition of the depth of disagreement and the virtue of moving from cultural conflict to policy deliberation. The goal of accommodation and coexistence supplants the dream of consensus on the general will.[28]

Sites for Cross-Cultural Dialogue and Deliberation

There are many settings in which it would be appropriate to engage in both dialogue and deliberation in pursuit of cultural accommodation. A popular view of the United States characterizes it as divided between "red" (conservative) and "blue" (liberal) states, a metaphor based on the voting pattern of the 2000 (and now 2004) Presidential election.[29] At the county level, there are red and blue regions within most states, so the divisions exist not only across but also within the nation's regions. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that the differences between these groups are more than partisan political identity; rather, they reflect deeper cultural divisions. For many issues, such as abortion, gun rights, and nuclear power, the pro and con sides of the debate have distinct cultural characteristics that suggest the need for a dialogue before

proceeding to deliberation. Other nations across the globe have their own cultural divides, and in each of these contexts, it may also be important to think more in terms of cultural accommodation than the discovery of a common will.

If dialogue and deliberation is appropriate within a political unit as large as a nation, might there be a kind of public deliberation that could occur across national boundaries? The world trade protests we have witnessed across the globe are a testament to the public's sense that it is shut out of international trade negotiations.[30] No international association or trade organization has won the public's trust. The result is a chain of vocal protests, which often devolve into violence as authorities attempt to suppress the most visible public demonstrations and more anarchistic protestors seek to spark public outrage by enticing even more extreme government reaction. Thus, bilateral or international trade is an issue ripe for an open cross-national dialogue, though it is difficult to envision precisely how to integrate such a forum into existing international associations.

Another issue that might lend itself to global dialogue is international terrorism. There could be a fruitful conversation among citizens from all parts of the world on the roots of terrorism, the experience of living in terror and being victimized by it, the best methods of addressing it in the long term, and perhaps even the perspectives of those drawn to participate in acts such as suicide attacks. Such a dramatic discussion might even attract a large international audience. If expertly facilitated, it could produce dramatic moments of cross-cultural dialogue and increase mutual understanding. More ambitiously, deliberation on these issues might aim to reach a common set of principles embraced by people normally characterized as being unable to speak to each other, let alone live together. Global discourse would not have legislative authority, but it might help to break through one or more international policy deadlock by giving renewed hope to political leaders for the potential of the public to overcome its fear, anger, and despair. If effective, such a dialogue could set the stage for more precise deliberations on what policies best address the threat of global terrorism and the other issues underlying it.

Perhaps this is too much to ask of dialogue and deliberation. After all, the modern history of deliberative democracy is replete with small victories, not sweeping changes. These successes, though, often have come on issues that were thought to be impossibly contentious and in places unaccustomed to public talk. Moreover, many of these processes induced broader changes in the relationships among citizens, the media, and the government. In at least one American city where deliberative forums are used frequently, there is some evidence of a modest shift toward a more collaborative civic culture.[31]

History asks us to remember that the current deliberative movement could disappear as quickly as it has emerged. Nonetheless, we can go forward with a vigilant optimism. Deliberation is having a real, positive impact on communities across the globe. With researchers and practitioners working together, we can incorporate deliberation into twenty-first century democracy.

Endnotes

[1] See John Gastil and William Keith, "A Nation that (Sometimes) Likes to Talk: A Brief History of Public Deliberation in the United States" forthcoming in John Gastil & Peter Levine, *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century* (Jossey-Bass, forthcoming). Also see Peter Levine, *The New Progressive Era*: *Toward a Fair and Deliberative Democracy* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

[2] The reason that some programs, like the Citizens Jury, pay participants considerable sums for their participation is that this ensures that very few of those invited decline. Also, demographic and attitudinal balancing, as described in chapter 7) can ensure a representative set of participants. Finally, those processes that provide incentives and have rigorous recruitment methods are likely to produce more representative cross-sections of the public than more conventional methods of public engagement, such as voting and public hearings. Even jury service, which is ostensibly mandatory in the United States, is not as representative.

[3] Michael X. Delli Carpini, Fay Lomax Cook, Lawrence R. Jacobs, "Talking Together: Discursive Capital and Civic Deliberation in America," *Annual Review of Political Science 7* (2004): 315-344.

[4] Quoted in Carolyn Hendriks, "Planning Cells and Consensus Conferences," forthcoming in Gastil and Levine.

[5] Christopher Karpowitz and Jane Mansbridge, "Disagreement and Consensus: The Importance of Dynamic Updating in Public Deliberation," forthcoming in Gastil and Levine.

[6] On the generally self-reinforcing properties of deliberation, see Stephanie Burkhalter, John Gastil, and Todd Kelshaw, "The self-reinforcing model of public deliberation," *Communication Theory 12* (2002), 398-422.

[7] John Gastil, E. Pierre Deess, and Phil Weiser. Civic awakening in the jury room: A test of the connection between jury deliberation and political participation. *Journal of Politics 64* (2002)*, 585-595.

[8] This renewed confidence in the public's capabilities is, in itself, an important benefit of deliberation. Over time, it can lead to a greater government willingness to draw the public into public life, as in the case of Hampton, Virginia. See Bill Potapchuk, Cindy Carlson, and Joan Kennedy, "Dialogue and Deliberation Redefining Collaborative Governance: Lessons and Inspiration from Hampton, Virginia," forthcoming in Gastil and Levine.

[9] The closest research done to date concerns the American jury. Studies suggest that over the course of the trial and in their private rooms, juries really do deliberate and reach verdicts quite similar to those that judges reach through their own deliberative process. See Valerie P. Hans and Neil Vidmar, *Judging the Jury* (Perseus, 2001) and Valerie P. Hans, *Business on Trial: The Civil Jury and Corporate Responsibility* (Yale University Press, 2000).

[10] For a typology of different approaches to convening public meetings, see John Gastil and Todd Kelshaw, *Public meetings: A sampler of deliberative forums that bring officeholders and citizens together* (Dayton, OH: Kettering Foundation, 2000).

[11] Nierras comments (July 2, 2004), transcribed by Peter Levine.

[12] Vera Schattan P. Coelho, Barbara Pozzoni, and Mariana Cifuentes, "Participation and Public Policies in Brazil," in Gastil and Levine, forthcoming.

[13] Details on the Citizens Assembly are available at http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca.

[14] Bruce Ackerman and James Fishkin, *Deliberation Day* (Yale University Press, 2004).

[15] James Madison, "The Federalist No. 10," in Gary Wills, ed., *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Bantam, 1982), p. 44

[16] Lynn M. Sanders, "Against Deliberation," *Political Theory 25* (1997), 347-76

[17] Anne Van Aaken, Christian List, and Christoph Luetge, *Deliberation and Decision: Economics, Constitutional Theory and Deliberative Democracy* (Ashgate, 2004; James Bohman and William Rehg (eds.), *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics* (MIT Press, 1997); Jon Elster and Adam Przeworski, eds, *Deliberative Democracy* (Cambridge, 1998); James S. Fishkin and Peter Laslett (eds.), *Debating Deliberative Democracy* (Blackwell, 2003); and Stephen Macedo, *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreemen*t (Oxford University Press, 1999).

[18] One of us has tried using National Issues Forums data in a quasi-experimental manner and has experienced these difficulties first-hand. See John Gastil, "Adult civic education through the National Issues Forums: A study of how adults develop civic skills and dispositions through public deliberation. *Adult Education Quarterly*, *54* (2004), 308-328.

[19] Tali Mendelberg, "The Deliberative Citizen: Theory and Evidence" in Michael Delli Carpini, Leonie Huddy, and Robert Y Shapiro (eds.), *Political Decision Making, Deliberation, and Participation: Research in Micropolitics, Vol. 6* (JAI Press, 2002), pp. 151-193.

[20] This section draws on a paper developed with Dan Kahan and Don Braman at the Yale Law School. John Gastil is grateful to them for their contribution to these ideas. See Don Braman, Dan Kahan, and John Gastil, "A cultural critique of gun litigation." Paper presented at a workshop on gun control at Albany Law School, Albany, NY, November, 2003.

[21] The literature on deliberation has grown to the point where general reviews of its theory and practice are available: Burkhalter et al., supra note 6; David Michael Ryfe, "The practice of deliberative democracy: A study of 16 deliberative organizations," *Political Communication 19* (2002), 359-377; Michael X. Delli-Carpini, Faye Lomax Cook, and Lawrence R. Jacobs, "Public Deliberation, Discursive Participation, and Citizen Engagement: A Review of the Empirical Literature," *Annual Review of Political Science* 7 (2004), 315-344. For critiques, see: Luigi Pellizzoni, "The myth of the best argument: Power, deliberation, and reason," *British Journal of Sociology 52*(2001), 59-86; Lynn M. Sanders, "Against deliberation," *Political Theory 25*(1997), 347-376.

[22] Burkhalter et al., supra note 21, at 399-407. This view builds on Dennis S. Gouran and Randy Y. Hirokawa, "Functional Theory and Communication in Decision -Making and Problem-Solving Groups: An Expanded View." In Randy Y. Hirokawa and Marshall Scott Poole, Communication and Group Decision-Making, 2nd ed., pp 55-80 (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1996).. Also see John Dewey, How we think (Heath & Co. 1910). [

[23] Burkhalter et al., supra note 6, at 407-411. This conception of dialogue is adapted from W. Barnett Pearceand Stephen Littlejohn, *Moral conflict: When social worlds collide* (Sage, 1997).

[24] For examples of different approaches to dialogue, see Pearce and Littlejohn, supra note 23, at 181-210.

[25] It is possible that through dialogue, participants will discover some common ground. For instance, an egalitarian might agree with a hierarchist's desired outcome (i.e., a world without crime) despite the persisting disagreement about the means to achieving that goal. Or an individualist might come to appreciate an egalitarian's way of speaking (e.g., passing around a talking stick) as being fair to all individual participants, even while finding it unsuited for his or her own personal discussion style. These points of agreement can help to build mutual trust and respect, but we downplay their likelihood to emphasize the considerable value of the more modest (and more likely) accomplishments of culturally accommodating dialogue.

[26] This chapter was completed in the wake of the 2004 U.S. Presidential election. Many observers commenting on the result have observed a stark cultural divide in the country, with the bulk of the Kerry and Bush supporters having more cultural differences than similarities. In this context, cultural accommodation may be all the more important as a means of bringing together U.S. citizens to work through controversial public issues.

[27] There is no way of knowing in advance precisely how such dialogue would proceed and what it would produce. It may very well uncover points of agreement, and at the very least, the particular nature of the cultural accommodation is impossible to know prior to the dialogue taking place. Were this not so, dialogue would be an ironic process that appears spontaneous and genuine but is actually scripted and subject to precise prediction.

[28] This is a consistent with those views of deliberation that downplay consensus as anything more than an ideal goal, as opposed to an achievable purpose. See, for example, Joshua Cohen, Deliberative democracy: Essays on reason and politics 407-437 (MIT Press, 1997).

[29] David Brooks, "One Nation, Slightly Divisible," *Atlantic Monthly 288* (Issue 5, 2001), 53–65.

[30] Perhaps surprisingly, the protests themselves offer modest opportunities for a kind of deliberation. See Mark West and John Gastil, "Deliberation at the margins: Participant accounts of face-to-face public deliberation at the 1999-2000 world trade protests in Seattle and Prague." *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication 5* (2004), 1-7.

[31] Bill Potapchuk, Cindy Carlson, and Joan Kennedy, "Dialogue and Deliberation Redefining Collaborative Governance: Lessons and Inspiration from Hampton, Virginia" in Gastil and Levine, supra note 1.