THE DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY HANDBOOK

Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century

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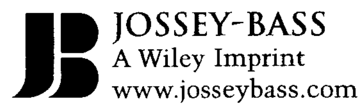

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR PUBLIC DELIBERATION

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The earlier chapters of this book demonstrate the large and impressive body of practice in the field of public deliberation. All kinds of 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, as John Gastil and William Keith note in Chapter One, we have been here before. There have been bursts of public deliberation and participation in several periods of the history of the United States—in particular in the Progressive Era before the Second World War. 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. That understanding might then be translated into actions that enhance the deliberative quality of our society and its politics.

In this concluding chapter, we begin by asking what we can expect from deliberative initiatives. This book has demonstrated the full breadth of deliberative approaches, and 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 suggesting ways to advance research on deliberation, we suggest some of the new frontiers for the practice of public deliberation.

What We Can Expect from Deliberation

Although the earlier chapters of this book raise many questions that remain unanswered, they also substantiate several conclusions. First, people are willing to discuss public issues and can sustain serious, in-depth conversations about technical 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 people in America—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 deliberative events 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.[1] Even when an event is mandatory, as in the case of jury service in the United States, deliberators are still 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 [the] last year." That quarter of the population is skewed toward more 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.[2] Thus, a diverse group of about 50 million adult Americans say that they have been involved in public talk in a given 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. In countries like Brazil and India, very poor people have deliberated in large numbers through programs such those described in Chapter Twelve.

A second conclusion also can be drawn from the previous chapters: 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 in Chapter Six as saying, "It's the most important thing I've ever done in my whole life, I suppose." Often, organizers find that participants are eager to deliberate again.

Although many observers derive intrinsic value from public deliberation, its outcomes can be disappointing. In Chapter Seventeen, for instance, 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.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that deliberative democracy often proves deeply fulfilling. This is important because it means that deliberation can reinforce support for itself when it is successful.[3] 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.[4] In the same way, a rewarding turn at public deliberation sparks future involvement. This has certainly been the experience in some of the longest-running deliberative programs, like the National Issues Forums (Chapter Three) and study circles (Chapter Fourteen), 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.[5] 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. Although 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), the preceding chapters show that given the opportunity, ordinary people have frequently proven themselves to be capable of generating impressive outcomes across a wide variety of political contexts and policy issues.[6]

The community of deliberation advocates encompasses many sharp disagreements over techniques and priorities but also an unrecognized overlapping consensus on the criteria for high-quality deliberation. Many of the contributors to this volume discussed criteria explicitly, particularly in Chapters Two, Six, Seven, Eight, Ten, and Eleven.[7] Within this community, there appears to be broad agreement that a successful deliberative initiative has the following features: (1) the realistic expectation of influence (that is, a link to decision makers); (2) an inclusive, representative process that brings key stakeholders and publics together;

(3) informed, substantive, and conscientious discussion, with an eye toward finding common ground if not reaching consensus; and (4) a neutral, professional staff that helps participants work through a fair agenda. Over time, it is also hoped that deliberative processes can (5) earn broad public support for their final recommendations and (6) prove sustainable. Taken together, these objectives are not easily met, but practitioners have found many ways of managing—if not overcoming—the obstacles to deliberation.

Addressing the Limitations of Public Deliberation

Although deliberation has tremendous value and promise for democracy, the chapters in this volume also reveal 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

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 on which 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

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 the properly 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.[8] As explained in Chapter Two and demonstrated in the chapters that followed, civic organizers of deliberation are a diverse group with many internal debates. Organizers' decisions can never be perfectly democratic and deliberative, yet they profoundly shape the public discussion that follows. Thus, there is a danger that deliberation will be overly influenced by skilled organizers, but the greater danger is having no competent organization at all.

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. The innovations discussed in this volume typically involve hundreds, or perhaps thousands, of individuals. Those who participate directly in such encounters constitute a far lower percentage of the population than the voters in 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 within these deliberations to the broader public debate that is 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 on rebuilding lower Manhattan (Chapter Ten), tens of thousands of 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 (see Chapters Four, Seven, and Thirteen), and 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 for 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 have focused on issues on a superlocal scale. The Americans Discuss Social Security deliberations in 1997 and 1998 (Chapter Ten), as well as several deliberative polls in the United States, England, and Denmark (Chapter Five), considered national policy issues. National Issues Forums (Chapter Three) 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, or obliged to heed them. This seldom happens, and rarely does it occur in a fully deliberative way.

Whereas deliberation requires continual openness to new ideas and perspectives, lobbying requires a coherent and consistent position. Rose Marie Nierras, a Filipina 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 [behind], 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."[9] 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 frequently 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, described in Chapter Twelve. Another promising example of deliberative authority comes from British Columbia, Canada. In 2003, the British Columbia provincial government established the Citizens' Assembly, which was 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 percent 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 districts that have multiple representatives. At press time, this proposal was about to go before the full British Columbia public, and if approved by the voters, it is scheduled to go into effect for the 2009 election.[10]

What the British Columbia model demonstrates 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 controversial issues that require sound public policy. In the case of electoral reform, it might be hard for public officials to craft reforms that 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 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 British Columbia case, but it is also conceivable that the deliberative body could make a final decision (perhaps subject to the same veto authority that a governor has over a legislature in the United States).

The British Columbia 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 policymakers or enacting administrative or legal requirements that compel them to incorporate public deliberations into their decisions. At the minimal end of this empowerment spectrum, notice-and-comment provisions compel officials to respond to concerns raised by participants during their rule-making processes. In more highly empowered processes, public powers and resources are actually delegated to public deliberative bodies. Some neighborhood councils in U.S. cities, for example, exercise substantial zoning authority, and others dispose of substantial public funds for local development and revitalization.

Outside strategies, by contrast, rely on generating political and social pressures that compel officials to respect the results of public deliberation. The Listening to the City event organized by America*Speaks* (Chapter Ten) received extensive coverage from local and national media that in turn created an imperative for the public agencies who sponsored the deliberations to respond to the

concerns that participants had 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 United States.[11]

The most influential and robust institutions of public deliberation will likely incorporate both inside and outside strategies of influence and empowerment. The much lauded and studied participatory budget program of Porto Alegre, discussed briefly in Chapter Twelve, exhibits both elements. From the inside, the participatory budget program is operated by the city's executive and receives elaborate funding and staff support. From the outside, however, no public law 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 councillors 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, 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 may be to build networks of citizens, to develop new ideas, to teach people skills and knowledge, to change attitudes, but not 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* (see Chapter Ten). In Brazil, municipal health councils formulate and oversee local health policy (see Chapter Twelve). 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 as 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 demo-

cratic politics: "sewn in the nature of man," as James Madison put it.[12] But in-
terest 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 groups in whose name they speak. And finally, because of problems inherent
in collective action, 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 general values.

We are used to these problems in conventional representative political insti-
tutions to which public deliberation is supposed to be an alternative. But interest
groups may be at least as effective in high-stakes citizens' deliberations as in Con-
gress or a town council.

Since meetings of recruited volunteers can be stacked with committed parti-
sans, some organizers randomly select citizens to participate. But random selec-
tion has its own problems. It is expensive and practically difficult. Although 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. Random selection must be organized by some group with a budget
and an agenda; thus, the agenda and framing of the discussion can be biased or
perceived as biased.

Then 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. col-
lege students show that white students have much more influence than black stu-
dents in joint collaborative projects, even controlling for age, socioeconomic status,
height, and attitudes toward school.[13]

We have observed how organizers and moderators of low-stakes public de-
liberation 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 to focus 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.

A skilled facilitator might still manage such difficulties effectively, as was done in the case of the aforementioned British Columbia Citizens Assembly, but the selection of the facilitator itself can be challenged. In Citizens Juries (Chapter Seven), 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.[14]

Unfortunately, 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 a 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 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. However, only a few of the projects described in this book incorporate designs that 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 might feel more confident experimenting with a random sample and a carefully selected series of topics rather than observing a messy and context-dependent process such as a study circle or a National Issues Forum.[15] If they want to assess the effects of deliberation on individuals' attitudes and beliefs, then they might 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 deliberative polls (Chapter Five) use random selection, they are among the few processes that have been used as formal experiments. The insights derived from deliberative polls are important, but they may not generalize to other practices.

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 in order to go along with the group.[16] Although 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 one another in public deliberations, then we need to study practices that are embedded in politics, not experiments with predetermined topics and controlled structures.

One objective of our book is to demonstrate that there is a body of diverse practice that merits serious academic investigation. These projects are valuable experiments precisely because they exist in the real world.

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 under way in deliberative democracy are interesting 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 questions such as the following:

- How does design and structure affect quality of deliberative process and outcomes?
- Under what conditions does deliberation affect public policy?
- In addition to changes in policy, what are other important outcomes of deliberation?
- How should we measure the quality of deliberation?
- What is the relationship between deliberation and advocacy or public involvement?
- What can the deliberative democracy movement learn from other social movements?
- What is the public's interest in deliberation?
- 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 both researchers and practitioners can take public deliberation. Here, we wish to emphasize three priorities: strengthening the connection between dialogue and deliberation, moving from substantive to cultural conflicts, and considering the potential for cross-national deliberation.[17]

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.[18] Many uses of these two terms entail considerable conceptual overlap, as is evident in the preceding chapters in this volume. 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 that involves problem analysis, establishing evaluative criteria, and identifying and weighing alternative solutions. Through a respectful, egalitarian, and conscientious process, a deliberative body aims for a reasoned consensus but often settles, at least provisionally, for a judicious result based on a more humble decision rule, such as simple or two-thirds majority rule.[19]

When a group seeks to deliberate on a public issue, however, it may be necessary to first engage in dialogue.[20] This form of speech is not as concerned with solving a problem as with bridging linguistic, social, and epistemological chasms 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 (for example, asking a direct, challenging question) might insult another participant. Or subgroups might have contradictory linguistic or semiotic associations—for example, when the display of the Ten Commandments in a public deliberative chamber causes one group to feel honored and another to feel denigrated. Another instance of difference that might require dialogue is 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 (for example, founding documents or holy scriptures). This final difference makes it hard to adjudicate competing claims, because each stands on distinct rhetorical ground, cast in terms of values that are not easily compared.

When differences such as these exist within a group, dialogue can help participants come to recognize and understand one another's point of view. Whereas deliberation focuses on policy choices, dialogue seeks accommodation, reconciliation, mutual understanding, or at the very least, informed tolerance. The particular group procedures for such dialogue are not the central question here, but the general method is to create a group environment that is conducive to honest self-expression, careful self-reflection, and thoughtful probing and perspective taking. Dialogue generally aims to help different subgroups learn about one another through a series of mutual questioning and reflection sessions. It can take many hours or days for a group to move through a series of stages and arrive at the point where participants truly understand one another's standpoints and appreciate the history and conviction of one another's views.[21]

At least in theory, such dialogue can prepare a group for deliberation. Once each subgroup understands how the others think, talk, and reason, it is easier to avoid conceptual confusions, symbolic battles, and epistemological thickets that could 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

When used as a foundation for subsequent deliberation, the aim of dialogue might be even more modest than in other settings when no deliberation is anticipated. The goal of dialogue might simply be *cultural accommodation*. To accommodate another cultural group means to make room for it within the shared public sphere, so that the groups can coexist 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 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 (that is, 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 (that is, agreement to enter a deliberative phase of public talk).[22] The best possible outcome might be a willingness on the part of all parties to lower the rhetorical stakes of the deliberation that follows. With their greater awareness of one another'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 potentially explosive cultural clashes that are inevitable in any sustained policy discussion.[23]

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 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 (for example, patriotism, the minuteman), key forms of evidence (for example, accordance with the Second Amendment), and traditional ways of speaking (for example, authoritative declaration). Trained moderators or participants from other cultural backgrounds could, within a restrictive set of discursive guidelines, ask this representative some probing questions in order to further clarify the contours of his particular perspective.[24]

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 each other group is entitled to value its 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 of private rights versus social responsibilities, community needs versus individual aims, and traditional hierarchies versus egalitarian norms. Rather, the accomplishments are the recognition that each group has a distinct and coherent set of values and styles and the humbling recognition that with few exceptions, those differences are not subject to debate. There might be no points of agreement on substance or style, but it is likely that the groups will arrive at 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.[25]

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 2004 presidential elections.[26] 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. On 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 directly into 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 are 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.[27] 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 protesters 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, although it is difficult to envision precisely how to integrate such a forum into existing international associations.

An 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 for addressing it in the long term, and perhaps even the perspectives of those drawn to participate in acts such as suicide bombings. 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 who are normally characterized as being unable to speak to one another, let alone live together. Such a body would be unlikely to have legislative authority, but it might help to break through one or more international policy deadlocks by giving renewed hope to political leaders for the ability of the public to overcome its fear, anger, and despair. If effective, such a dialogue could set the stage for a more precise deliberation 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, this book illustrates a modern history of small victories, not sweeping changes. These successes, though, have often come on issues that were thought to be impossibly

contentious and in places where people were unaccustomed to public talk. Moreover, many of these processes induced broader changes in the relationships among citizens, the media, and the government. Chapter Eighteen even demonstrates a modest shift toward a more collaborative civic culture.

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. The initiatives described in this book show that deliberation is having a real, positive impact on communities across the globe. With researchers and practitioners working together, we can deeply incorporate deliberation into twenty-first century democracy.

Notes

1. 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 Seven, 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.
2. Delli Carpini, M. X., Cook, F. L., and Jacobs, L. R. (2004, May). "Talking Together: Discursive Capital and Civic Deliberation in America." *Annual Review of Political Science, 7,* 315–344.
3. On the generally self-reinforcing properties of deliberation, see Burkhalter, S., Gastil, J., and Kelshaw, T. (2002). "The Self-Reinforcing Model of Public Deliberation." *Communication Theory, 12,* 398–422.
4. Gastil, J., Deess, E. P., and Weiser, P. (2002). "Civic Awakening in the Jury Room: A Test of the Connection Between Jury Deliberation and Political Participation." *Journal of Politics, 64,* 585–595.
5. This renewed confidence in the public's capabilities is, in itself, an important benefit of deliberation. Over time, it can lead to a greater willingness on the part of governmental leaders to draw the public into public life, as in the case of Hampton, Virginia (Chapter Eighteen).
6. The research that is most relevant to this issue of comparing nonprofessional with professional deliberation 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 Hans, V. P., and Vidmar, N. (2001). *Judging the Jury.* New York: Perseus, 2001; and Hans, V. P. (2000). *Business on Trial: The Civil Jury and Corporate Responsibility.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
7. Contributors were not asked to provide such criteria, but many did so spontaneously. This alone is a testament to the fact that this community thinks very carefully about its aims, always looking for ways to improve public discussion methods to better meet these objectives.
8. For a typology of different approaches to convening public meetings, see Gastil, J., and Kelshaw, T. (2000). *Public Meetings: A Sampler of Deliberative Forums That Bring Officeholders and Citizens Together.* Dayton, Ohio: Charles F. Kettering Foundation.

9. Nierras's comments were made at the LogoLink partners' meeting, Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex, July 2, 2004; transcribed by Peter Levine, and reproduced with the speaker's permission.
10. Details on the Citizens Assembly are available at http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca.
11. Ackerman, B., and Fishkin, J. (2004). *Deliberation Day.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
12. Madison, J. (1982). "The Federalist No. 10." In G. Wills (ed.), *The Federalist Papers.* New York: Bantam, 44.
13. Sanders, L. M. (1997, June). "Against Deliberation." *Political Theory, 25*(3), 347–376.
14. Van Aaken, A., List, C., and Luetge, C. (eds.). (2004). *Deliberation and Decision: Economics, Constitutional Theory and Deliberative Democracy.* Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate; Bohman, J., and Rehg, W. (eds.). (1997). *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press; Elster, J., and Przeworski, A. (eds.). (1998). *Deliberative Democracy.* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press; Fishkin, J. S., and Laslett, P. (eds.). (2003). *Debating Deliberative Democracy.* Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell; and Macedo, S. (ed.). (1999). *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreement.* Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
15. One of us has tried using National Issues Forums data in a quasi-experimental manner and has experienced these difficulties firsthand. See Gastil, J. (2004). "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,* 308–328.
16. Mendelberg, T. (2002). "The Deliberative Citizen: Theory and Evidence." In M. Delli Carpini, L. Huddy, and R. Y. Shapiro (eds.), *Political Decision Making, Deliberation, and Participation: Research in Micropolitics.* Vol. 6. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press, 151–193.
17. This section draws on a paper that was developed with Dan Kahan and Don Braman at the Yale Law School. John Gastil is grateful to them for their contribution to the ideas discussed. See Braman, D., Kahan, D., and Gastil, J. (2003, Nov.). "A Cultural Critique of Gun Litigation." Paper presented at a workshop on gun control at Albany Law School, Albany, N.Y.
18. The literature on deliberation has grown to the point where general reviews of its theory and practice are available; for example, Burkhalter, S., Gastil, J., and Kelshaw, T. (2002). "The Self-Reinforcing Model of Public Deliberation." *Communication Theory, 12*(4), 398–422; Ryfe, D. M. (2002). "The Practice of Deliberative Democracy: A Study of 16 Deliberative Organizations." *Political Communication, 19,* 359–377. For critiques, see Pellizzoni, L. (2001). "The Myth of the Best Argument: Power, Deliberation, and Reason." *British Journal of Sociology, 52*(1), 59–86; Sanders, L. M. (1997). "Against Deliberation." *Political Theory, 25*(3), 347–376. Among the most influential works on the subject are Gutmann, A., and Thompson, D. (1996). *Democracy and Disagreement.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; and Fishkin, J. S. (1995). *The Voice of the People.* New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
19. Burkhalter, Gastil, and Kelshaw (2002), "The Self-Reinforcing Model of Public Deliberation," 399–407. This view builds on Gouran, D., and Hirokawa, Y. (1996). "Functional Theory and Communication in Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Groups: An Expanded View." In R. Hirokawa and M. S. Poole (eds.), *Communication and Group Decision-Making.* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 55–80; and Dewey, J. (1910). *How We Think.* Boston: Heath.
20. Burkhalter, Gastil, and Kelshaw (2002), "The Self-Reinforcing Model of Public Deliberation," 407–411. This conception of dialogue is adapted from Pearce, W. B. and Littlejohn, S. (1997). *Moral Conflict: When Social Worlds Collide.* Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage.
21. For examples of different approaches to dialogue, see Pearce and Littlejohn (1997), *Moral Conflict,* 181–210.

22. It is possible that through dialogue, participants will discover some common ground. For instance, an egalitarian might agree with a hierarchist's desired outcome (for example, a world without crime) despite the persisting disagreement about the means through which to achieve that goal. Or an individualist might come to appreciate an egalitarian's way of speaking (for example, 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.
23. 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.
24. There is no way of knowing in advance precisely how such dialogue would proceed and what it would produce. It might very well uncover points of agreement, but 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.
25. This is consistent with those views of deliberation that downplay consensus, seeing it as an ideal goal rather than an achievable purpose. See, for example, Cohen, J. (1997). *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 407–437.
26. Brooks, D. (2001). "One Nation, Slightly Divisible." *Atlantic Monthly, 288*(5), 53–65.
27. Perhaps surprisingly, the protests themselves offer modest opportunities for a kind of deliberation. See West, M., and Gastil, J. (2004). "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, 5,* 1-7.

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Note: List compiled by Jillien Dube.