In the early part of this century, Mary Parker Follett called for studying democracy in small groups—the "heart and core" of democracy. Since that time activists, philosophers, social critics, and political scientists have discussed the subject. Their writings, though brief and only partial, provide a starting point. These works, combined with the vast literature on large-scale democracy, provide pieces of fabric that can be trimmed into patches and sewn together, making a quilt that displays the essential features of a small democratic group.

I begin by introducing the concept of a demos, a useful shorthand term for a body of people who govern themselves democratically. The demos is usually a large social group, such as a nation or state, but it can also refer to smaller democratic groups. I define small group democracy by specifying the features of an ideal demos. The ideal is unattainable, but it is something that a group can strive toward. A group will never become fully democratic, but one can describe it in terms of its distance from the ideal.

Table 2.1 outlines the definition of small group democracy that I propose. Democratic groups exhibit certain forms of power, inclusiveness, commitment, relationships, and deliberation. A group is democratic to the degree it shows these characteristics. In what follows, I clarify the meaning of each of these features.
Table 2.1: A Definition of Small Group Democracy

I. Group power
   A. Group sovereignty
   B. Equal distribution of ultimate authority

II. Inclusiveness
III. Commitment to the democratic process

IV. Relationships
   A. Acknowledgment of individuality
   B. Affirmation of competence
   C. Recognition of mutuality
   D. Congeniality

V. Deliberation
   A. Speaking rights and responsibilities
      1. agenda setting
      2. reformulation
      3. informing
      4. articulation
      5. persuasion
      6. voting
      7. dissent
   B. Listening rights and responsibilities
      1. comprehension
      2. consideration

Group Power

In his most recent work, Democracy and Its Critics, Robert Dahl insists that in a democracy, “the people must have the final say.” Democratic groups must have jurisdiction over the items that appear on their agendas. After all, the fundamental meaning of democracy is self-government, and meaningful governance requires power. If a group has no power, its meetings can never be democratic. If a factory work team can make suggestions but not policy, it would be misleading to say that the team’s deliberations are democratic. If the team had control over work schedules but not product design, it could deliberate democratically about times but not products. Merely discussing products is insufficient: “Democracy involves debate and discussion, but these are not enough if they remain inconclusive and ineffective in determining actual policies.”

Given the primary importance of power in defining small group democracy, it is necessary to specify the meaning of this elusive word. I broadly construe power as the capacity to influence the future behavior of objects or the behavior, beliefs, and emotions of living beings, including oneself. One can use power to do something, or to prevent or delay something from being done. When one’s power is directed inward, it is the power to do something by and for oneself (e.g., the willpower to quit smoking). When one’s power is directed outward, power is exerted against, over, or with someone or something else. Power resides both in individuals and in groups. Individuals have the power to accomplish things by themselves, but sometimes an individual’s power is inconsequential unless combined with the power of others. Imagine yourself trying to carry a grand piano up a staircase single-handedly. The feat is impossible for one person, but a dozen people—none of whom has the individual power to move a piano—can do it by combining their strength.

It is important to emphasize that power includes influence over one’s own behavior. The ultimate aim of consciousness-raising groups is often social change, but the immediate goal is making individuals aware of the behavioral choices before them—the previously unacknowledged power they have in their own lives. Catharine A. MacKinnon explains that women’s participation in consciousness-raising groups reveals to them that patriarchy depends upon traditional daily social behaviors. Women have the power to change the structure of male supremacy, because it has always depended upon their compliance. “Although it is one thing to act to preserve power relations and quite another to act to challenge them,” MacKinnon explains, “once it is seen that these relations require daily acquiescence, acting on different principles, even in small ways, seems not quite so impossible.”

When power is thought of in this way, it loses many of its usual connotations. Power does not have to imply domination and subordination, nor does the use of power necessarily entail coercion, violence, or corruption. Power can signify an individual or collective capacity that does not rob others of their abilities. Any egalitarian, peaceful social movement will have a great deal of power, derived neither from a superior status in an institutionalized hierarchy nor threat and intimidation. Power lies in the collective will of the movement, and the decisions and actions made with this force can be nonviolent and noncoercive.

In any case, it is not enough for a democratic group to have power. A demos distributes its power among the group members. Everyone in a small democratic group must have some form of influence or control, and all members must ultimately have equal power with regard to group
policies. Some members may be more influential than others, and they may make more decisions by themselves or in committees. But final group authority must be divided evenly among group members, through a procedure like consensus or majority rule. Following this principle, a teachers' union could give day-to-day authority over dues collection to a treasurer or finance committee, while still retaining final authority over the budget and every other union policy. The union always has the power to overrule any decision made by the single member or committee.

Inclusiveness

The teachers' union example leads to another issue. Assume, for the moment, that the union members have equal final authority. If untenured teachers are excluded, is the group democratic? If the union makes decisions that do not affect the untenured faculty, it might be democratic. On the other hand, if untenured teachers must pay whatever dues the union decrees, were the union's dues set democratically?

Dahl calls this a question of inclusiveness. People who are significantly affected by the decisions of a demos ought to have full and equal decision-making power within it. Unfortunately this seemingly straightforward requirement presents a paradox: which comes first, the scope of the demo's power or its membership? If a group agrees to make decisions that affect only its members, it avoids this problem; however most groups, like the teachers' union, make decisions that directly and indirectly affect many nonmembers.

For the vast majority of groups, there is no easy solution to this problem. Groups can meet the criterion only by degree. In light of this difficulty, I suggest a clarification of the principle of inclusiveness: a democratic group strives to include those people who are profoundly affected by its decisions, invite those significantly affected, and at least consider the views of those marginally affected.

A cooperative running a bookstore, for example, might decide that all of its managerial decisions have a profound effect upon the members of the collective (a.k.a. the employees), so every staff member has equal decision-making power at the store's biweekly planning meetings. The staff discovers that its decisions also significantly affect both volunteers and customers, so the staff informs volunteers and customers of upcoming meetings and welcomes their attendance. Since the store's policies marginally affect the larger community and local authors, the staff decides to hold an annual community meeting (disguised as a festival to encourage attendance) and posts a sign inviting authors to speak at any time with the staff.

This example shows an attempt to bring people into direct, face-to-face contact with the group, but inclusion can also mean considering the views and concerns of people not physically present. With this in mind, the cooperative could establish a general rule of never making crucial decisions when a staff member was unable either to attend a meeting or to vote by proxy. The staff could also keep in touch with volunteer and customer feelings and opinions on a day-to-day basis, then raise these concerns during biweekly planning meetings. The staff could also keep the larger community in mind when making its decisions.

This broad definition of inclusiveness must be qualified in two respects. As John Burnheim argues, "Nobody should have any input into decision-making where they have no legitimate material interest." By "material," Burnheim aims to exclude "intrusive desires about how others should fare." Thus the book co-op pays no heed to the religious zealots who are offended by the store's books on bisexuality. By "legitimate," Burnheim rejects interests that are not "based on entitlements that are morally sound." Thus the co-op's donations committee refuses to consider requests for financial assistance from an organization that engages in unethical activities. In both cases, the zealots and the organization are "affected" by the group's decisions, yet the groups are excluded on the grounds that their affected interests are either intrusive or illegitimate.

In addition Dahl argues that a demos "must include all adult members of the association except transients and persons proved to be mentally defective." Under exceptional circumstances a demos can exclude people even if their legitimate material interests are profoundly and directly affected by group decisions. These exceptions include infants and (in some cases) young children, persons who are just passing through the group's jurisdiction, and people, such as those with severe mental disabilities, who are utterly incapable of making sound decisions on their own behalf or as members of a group.

Commitment

Small democratic groups have goals other than democracy, but all of these are secondary to the goal to reach decisions through a democratic process. As Joshua Cohen argues, the members of a demos must share "a commitment to coordinating their activities within institutions that make deliberation possible and according to norms that they arrive at through their deliberation." Group members must internalize democratic values and respect group decisions that are both reached democratically and consistent with democratic principles.

A democratic group develops a set of bylaws or unwritten group norms that protect it against undemocratic maneuvers, and both new and old
members need to learn and appreciate the letter and spirit of these procedures. When new members are included in the group, it is important that they develop a strong commitment to the democratic features of the group’s decision-making process.\textsuperscript{18}

If a group member does not like a democratic decision and refuses to follow it, the member can voluntarily withdraw from the group or accept some penalty for refusing to follow the decision. This requirement guards against those group members who adhere to democratic principles only when they like the group’s decisions.\textsuperscript{19}

It is important to stress that fully democratic decisions must be arrived at democratically and have no effects inconsistent with democracy. The decision-making process cannot involve undemocratic actions—such as letting a group facilitator or chair make autocratic decisions, or scheduling a meeting at a time meant to exclude a member who holds a dissenting opinion. Also, the group decision must not contradict the principles of small group democracy. For instance, a group decision is undemocratic if it institutes an exclusionary membership policy or places all ultimate authority in the hands of one group member. More generally, political philosopher James Fishkin requires democratic groups to adhere to the principle of nontyranny: they must not allow the majority to rob the minority of its democratic rights. The moment a group makes such a decision, it becomes less democratic.\textsuperscript{20}

This highlights the need for a firm commitment to the democratic process. Groups can establish their own set of democratic principles in an oral tradition or in written bylaws, but no matter how precise, these principles always have to be interpreted. If members do not make the effort to reflect upon, practice, and internalize their democratic group norms, their interpretations may be well intended but undemocratic.

For example, a parliamentary group might not challenge or override an autocratic decision of the chair. A community development organization might interpret inclusiveness in increasingly narrow terms, excluding all but an inner circle of members. In both cases, the groups might think their processes and decisions are consistent with democratic principles, but they are not. A firm commitment to the democratic process might prevent such misinterpretations.

Relationships

Besides sharing a commitment to democracy, the members of a small democratic group enjoy a special kind of relationship with one another—a way of relating that is consistent with and conducive to the democratic process.\textsuperscript{21} Relationships form through shared experiences and the exchange of words carrying relational meanings for group members. Formalized salutations and polite forms of address are some of the most obvious ways our words convey relational messages. Even when a group reviews a treasurer’s report, members are often subtly discussing how they think and feel about the treasurer, other group members, and the group as a whole. The utterance “That was an excellent report” does more than reassure the treasurer of her fiscal acumen.\textsuperscript{22}

According to John Dewey, a fully democratic group respects both the individuality and competence of every member of the demos. The words and deeds of group members create a friendly atmosphere that recognizes the bonds that hold the group together.\textsuperscript{23} Jane Mansbridge adds that when there is a relative conflict of interest among the members of the demos, mutuality and congeniality ought to play a lesser role. Groups with contradictory interests might de-emphasize these forms of relationship, because in such groups there is a greater potential for using appeals to cohesiveness and friendliness as means for manipulating the membership.\textsuperscript{24}

A neighborhood improvement group consisting of like-minded neighbors might place greater emphasis on member relationships, because all members of this voluntary association share the common goal of improving neighborhood parks and assisting members of the community. In this group, cementing friendships and emphasizing common identities only strengthens the group. In a city council, though, there might be sharp conflicts of interest, say, between developers and those favoring an end to urban development, and between suburbanites and inner-city residents. Although the council needs a minimum of shared identity and fellowship to proceed democratically, appeals to commonality can disguise real conflicts of interest. It is possible for such a group to move toward common interests over time, but an honest adversarial relationship is better than a false unity.

Having established these general criteria, we can consider the four forms of relationship in more detail. For the most part each manifests itself in the form of verbal and nonverbal communication, so I discuss each as a form of talk.\textsuperscript{25}

Acknowledging Individuality

Recognizing a person’s individuality begins with differentiating a member from the group as a whole. When one acknowledges the individuality of a group member, one addresses the person as an individual and explicitly affirms the person’s individual identity and interests in relation to those of the group. Similarly, one can acknowledge one’s own individuality: “That’s all I can give right now while I’m a student, and that’s the choice I’ve made.”
The opposite is the denial of a member's individuality—the assertion that a member's identity and interests are or should be subordinate to those of the group as a whole. For instance, at one group meeting I observed, a member insisted that her personal needs were paramount at the moment—that she had chosen to act according to her own interests. To this another member responded, “A collective is not where everybody can do what they want and get their needs met, and struggle for their needs, but rather what a collective needs to be is a unit that works for the collective.”

In *Rethinking Democracy*, Carol Gould explains why it is important that democratic group members acknowledge one another's individuality. Democracy, she writes, can be "fully effective only if ... people generally relate to each other as equals and with respect for each other's individual differences and interests. For the very process of participatory democratic decision making entails such reciprocal recognition." To this, one can add that as a member of a demos, one assumes that no one else is a more competent judge of what is in one's own interests. More important, one generalizes this assumption to others, so that individual group members are seen as their own best judges. "You know yourself better than I do" is a clear affirmation, whereas "Maybe I should decide for you" questions this form of competence.

This idea derives from Dahl's "strong principle of equality." In accordance with this principle, the members of a demos assume that all other members are qualified to participate in making the group's collective decisions. At the very least, members assume that no members "are so definitely better qualified than the others that they should be entrusted with making the ... decisions." 28

It seems reasonable to go a step further. Democratic groups assume that all members are capable of judging what is best for the group. Members will sometimes misjudge what is in the group's best interest, but no member is thought so superior at such judgment that other members are deemed incompetent. As Chai Ling, a student leader of the Chinese prodemocracy movement, explains, "Each must have simple faith in other people's intelligence and ability to choose." 29 A group member could affirm the competence of others by simply saying, "I think we should hear from everyone on this, because we all have different visions of the future of this organization."

**Recognizing Mutuality**

Mutuality is "the willingness to be connected, to take on another's well being, to recognize oneself in the other," so affirming mutuality consists of highlighting the interconnection and common identity of group members. Referring to others as "the group" and "the team"—or even simply "us" or "we"—can constitute a recognition of mutuality. More explicitly, the speaker can ask members to think and act as a group: "We need as a group, as a collective, to figure out a way to get beyond the resentment that taints future negotiations about those same things." 32

Just as Carol Gould identifies the importance of individuality, she also stresses the need for recognizing how our individual identity is connected to our social relations. In her view, a member of a demos is an individual, yet the individual's identity as a group member comes from social relations—from membership in a social group. Thus people require "reciprocal recognition" to establish their individuality. The members of the demos all reciprocally recognize one another's membership so that they may identify themselves as a part of the demos. Any one member's identity as a part of the whole is contingent upon the identities of the others. 33

**Congeniality**

As defined herein, congeniality is the development and preservation of positive emotional relationships and a neighborly or friendly group atmosphere. It includes expressions of kindness, empathy, sympathy, and praise. *Congeniality* may be the best word, because it covers a wide range of positive communication—from formal cordiality and acquaintance to more intimate and informal friendliness and companionship.

Congeniality can be expressed with humor, such as when a member of a group I observed once joked about the cleanliness of the cellar: "I still think we should just give everybody a shovel and start digging out the basement." It can also take a more direct form, such as when another group member remarked, "I'm just ever so grateful that Steve and Amy and Ray put in the time that they did to get us to this point." 34

The opposite of congenial talk is rude, hostile, or belittling communication. It can appear in subtle forms, such as a condescending or threatening tone of voice, or in a more blatant manner: "I have to ask you all and beg and plead if I want to even take off a weekend." Sometimes this negative speech is a combination of word choice and tone, as in the following quip, which the speaker delivered rapidly and loudly: "Sometimes I get kinda frustrated with us, because we just want to do everything for the political pureness of it."

Congeniality aids small group democracy the way a lubricant greases gears, soothing irreconcilable conflicts of interest or moving individual group members toward a common vision. Mansbridge points out that Aristotle and other theorists have conceived of democracy as nothing less than the political extension of friendship. 35 In less unified groups, Barber
suggests that congeniality can serve as a substitute for friendship: "A neighbor is a stranger transformed by empathy and shared interests into a friend—an artificial friend, however, whose kinship is a contrivance of politics rather than natural or personal and private." If a discussion of congeniality seems too far afield from more traditional conceptions of the democratic process, one need only turn to the stodgy classic Robert's Rules of Order, whose innumerable conventions are partly aimed at maintaining decorum. This emphasis on civility, if not friendship, parallels the commonplace expectation that citizens should show tolerance toward one another in a large-scale political system. 

**Deliberation**

Healthy relationships provide an appropriate setting for open and constructive deliberation: discussion that involves judicious argument, critical listening, and earnest decision making. A deliberative process includes a careful examination of a problem or issue, the identification of possible solutions, the establishment or reaffirmation of evaluative criteria, and the use of these criteria in identifying an optimal solution.

Some modern democratic theorists have tried to revitalize conventional understandings of democracy by emphasizing the role of deliberation in the democratic process. In Deliberation and Democracy, Fishkin argues that democracy means more than political equality. Advocates of democracy, he writes, have focused their energy on building "a system which grants equal consideration to everyone's preferences and which grants everyone appropriately equal opportunities to formulate preferences on the issues under consideration." Such equality is essential, but it does not encompass the full meaning of democracy. In Fishkin's view, equating democracy with political equality "neglects the deliberation needed to make democratic choices meaningful." Our preferences are not always well developed: if they are "unreflective or ignorant," they "lose their claim to political authority over us." Since it is through collective discussion and judgment that our preferences become reflective and informed, deliberation is necessary "if the claims of democracy are not to be de-legitimated."

Joshua Cohen is another modern theorist who emphasizes the importance of deliberation. Cohen argues that a fully democratic group uses an "ideal deliberative procedure" that has four main features. First, participants view themselves as bound only by decisions arrived at through legitimate deliberation. Second, the members of the demos put forward their reasons for advancing, supporting, or criticizing proposals. Third, the process is designed to treat participants equally, and there are no power or resource differences that "shape their chances to contribute to deliberation" or "play an authoritative role in ... deliberation." Finally, "ideal deliberation aims to arrive at a rationally motivated consensus." There is no promise that reasoned argument will lead to a consensus, and a democratic process may end in a majority vote. But regardless of the demos's method of decision making, a full consensus can be viewed as the ideal outcome.

When one imagines democratic groups, one might think that the members of such groups speak for roughly equal periods of time. But is it important that all ten members of a collective speak the same amount? Or is it essential that all members have equal opportunities to speak? If one person speaks far more than any other, there may be a problem. The problem, though, is that this speaker is taking away others' opportunities—not that the speaker is simply talking the most. Similarly, if a group member hardly ever speaks, this member may lack adequate speaking opportunities. Again, it is the presence or absence of opportunities—not the silence—that is at issue. Inevitably some members will speak more than others, and the members of small democratic groups have a right to remain silent.

Thus, equality of opportunity is important in democratic groups. As Dahl argues, members of the demos "ought to have an adequate opportunity, and an equal opportunity, for expressing their preferences as to the final outcome," as well as "for placing questions on the agenda and for expressing reasons for endorsing one outcome rather than another."

These opportunities need to be readily apparent to each member of the demos. They should be "manifest" or "displayed," such that all members of the demos recognize the existence of their opportunities. For instance, a group might formally give opportunities to all, yet never remind shy members that they are welcome to speak. A group might have a system for taking speaking turns, yet never fully explain the system to new members.

For opportunities to be meaningful, members must also have at least minimal communication skills. If some members cannot speak the group's language, dialect, or jargon, their opportunities to speak are meaningless. If the group encourages conversational spontaneity (e.g., interruptions and digressions), members who cannot hold the floor under such conditions may be unable to use their opportunities to speak. If a group member can speak the language and take the floor but is inarticulate, the chance to speak may amount to nothing more than the chance to become frustrated with one's own inability to speak clearly and forcefully.

Like anything else, this notion of equal opportunities can be taken too far. It is not necessary for every group member to be able to speak at every moment. Timely interjections are sometimes productive, and groups
sometimes need to interrupt long-winded speakers. Similarly, time pressure often makes it necessary for democratic groups to limit each member's speaking turns. The point is that over time and across different topics, speaking opportunities should be equal.

But what if no member has the opportunity to say even a few sentences? In this scenario, opportunities are equal but inadequate. If there are insufficient opportunities to communicate with one another, deliberation—careful and thorough discussion—is impossible. Under such conditions a small group might choose to vote in a democratic manner, but the constraints on deliberation move it far from the democratic ideal. 47

With the rights to equal and adequate opportunities come certain responsibilities. Members of the demos always have the chance to speak, but there are times when they also have a responsibility to speak. A fully democratic decision is impossible if a member of the demos has withheld information that would cause the group to take a different course of action. A group is equally impaired if a member irresponsibly manipulates other group members into accepting a decision they would otherwise oppose.

Having outlined these general principles, we may distinguish the different forms of speaking that characterize democratic deliberation: agenda setting, reformulating, informing, articulating, persuading, voting, and dissenting. In turn, each of these forms of talk is defined and related to other aspects of the democratic process. 48

Agenda Setting

Broadly defined, the agenda consists of the issues a group discusses during a meeting. Members can set the agenda by placing, removing, or altering the priority of items on the agenda. For instance, a member might ask that the group postpone an issue until a future meeting. More subtly, one can influence the pace at which the group moves through one or more agenda items. Suggesting that the group devote an hour to a given item might lead the group to consider that issue carefully and, as a consequence, give little or no attention to items at the end of the agenda. In a democracy, Dahl explains, "The demos must have the exclusive opportunity to decide how matters are to be placed on the agenda." 49

Agenda setting is a vital form of talk, for there can be no debate until an issue is placed on the agenda. 50 Agenda setting is the means by which the demos decides what issues are of immediate concern. If the full membership of the group is not involved in setting the agenda, the concerns of some members will be ignored in any subsequent (undemocratic) discussion.

Consequently, Barber explains, the agenda of a demos is never permanently set:

Strong democratic talk places its agenda at the center rather than at the beginning of its politics. It subjects every pressing issue to continuous examination and possible reformulation. Its agenda is, before anything else, its agenda. It thus scrutinizes what remains unspoken, looking into the crevices of silence for signs of an unarticulated problem, a speechless victim, or a mute protestor. 51

Reformulation

Reformulation is the redefinition or reframing of an issue that is already on the agenda and under discussion. Reformulation includes both semantic alterations (e.g., rephrasing a problem) and changes in the content of a proposal (e.g., integrating two solutions into one). As an example, two workers at a paper mill might have two different ideas for spending a windfall profit. One might want to invest in technology that reduces the mill's waste, and the other might prefer an investment that reduces production costs. A third worker might then reformulate the issue by joining the two seemingly competing ideas into a single money-saving pulp recycling plan. 52

Reformulation, as Barber defines the term, amounts to "language"—the metaphors and terms that define the experiences of the past, the realities of the present, and the possibilities of the future. Barber goes so far as to insist, "We may redistribute goods and make power accountable, but if we reserve talk and its evolution to specialists [or any elite few]... then no amount of equality will yield democracy." 53

Informing

One of the most common forms of speech during deliberation is the exchange of information among group members. Here informing means providing information relevant to an agenda item under discussion without attempting to express one's views or persuade the group to reach a particular decision. 54

If group members fail to present the pertinent information they possess, they may jeopardize democratic deliberation. Their silence could distort other members' perspectives and result in uninformed deliberation and judgment. Withholding information could also cause the group to make decisions with unforeseen results that are either undemocratic or unproductive. 55

These dangers make it apparent that informing is sometimes more of a responsibility than a right. In a fully democratic group, members always volunteer whatever information they believe the group needs to make an informed decision. Small democratic groups have tacit Freedom of Information Acts that grant members access to pertinent information, but...
they also expect members to share such knowledge long before anyone would have to search for it.\textsuperscript{56}

This requirement must not be exaggerated and misunderstood. There always exists useful information that is unknown to all of the group's members, and it is not incumbent upon the group to seek out every last bit of information. Group members are responsible only for providing relevant information that they know or have at hand.

Articulation

Articulation involves expressing one's perspective with regard to an issue on the agenda, without clear persuasive purpose and before a decision has been reached on the issue. When articulating, speakers are presenting their opinions, interests, and ideas. For example, in a community group's strategy session, a speaker might tell the other group members that she dislikes censorship. The speaker's aim, in this case, might be for other group members to understand her point of view—not to embrace it.\textsuperscript{57}

The ability to articulate cannot be taken for granted, because people do not always have a clear perspective and the ability to express their point of view. Learning how to recognize and distinguish between self-interest and the interests of the group is an important skill, as is learning how to transform unreflective and disparate opinions into sound group judgments. In general, articulation serves democracy by bringing forward the minority and majority views of the group and filling the well of ideas from which the demos draws.

This form of speech is particularly important when "the perspectives of some citizens are systematically suppressed" during deliberation. Whether such suppression is due to social or psychological pressures, the demos should aim to "insure the expression of ... excluded perspectives." Although groups might ideally seek a consensus based upon common ground, the more fundamental goal might be "to try to insure that those who are usually left out of ... discussions learn to speak whether their perspectives are common or not."\textsuperscript{58}

However, articulation can amount to more than the expression of one's opinion. Mansbridge explains that democratic deliberation includes a form of articulation analogous to "thinking out loud":

Preferences themselves, let alone interests, are not given. They must be tentatively voiced, tested, examined against the causes that produced them, explored, and finally made one's own. Good deliberation must rest on institutions that foster dissent and on images of appropriate behavior that allow for fumbling and changing one's mind, that respect the tentativeness of this process. Only such safeguards can help participants find where they want themselves to go.\textsuperscript{59}

Thus articulation presents a speaker's point of view, but it can also play a vital role in the formation of a viewpoint.

Persuasion

Agenda setting, reformulation, and the other forms of speech set the stage for debate, and the centerpiece of this debate is persuasion. As defined herein, persuasive speech is intended to influence the views of other members of the demos with regard to an agenda item. Persuasion aims to create, reinforce, or change other members' feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about an issue.\textsuperscript{60}

Michael Walzer, a lifelong advocate of democracy, explains why persuasion plays such an important role in democratic deliberation:

Democracy puts a premium on speech, persuasion, rhetorical skill. Ideally, the citizen who makes the most persuasive argument—that is, the argument that actually persuades the largest number of citizens—gets his [sic] way. But he can't use force, or pull rank, or distribute money... And all the other citizens must talk, too, or at least have a chance to talk.... Citizens come into the forum with nothing but their arguments. All non-political goods have to be deposited outside: weapons and wallets, titles and degrees.\textsuperscript{61}

But democracy needs more than mere persuasion. If no restraint is put upon attempts to persuade, there is no guard against deceptive or manipulative discourse. With this purpose in mind, Cohen insists that in a deliberative democracy, members of the demos "are required to state their reasons" when presenting their views on proposals.\textsuperscript{62} Bruce Ackerman adds a "consistency requirement": the reasons a person gives at one time must remain consistent with the reasons given to justify other claims.\textsuperscript{63} More fundamentally, Dahl insists that arguments should be backed by systematic research and self-reflection.\textsuperscript{64} This requirement of reflection is particularly relevant to arguments that include emotional appeals. Groups reach decisions through both thought and feeling, and just as reasoning can be superficial and uninformed, so can emotions arise from mood and circumstance more than heartfelt convictions.

There are many linguistic devices and strategies that members of a democratic group are wary of using. Euphemisms, loaded words, and jargon often conflict with the need for clarity and precision. Using clever grammar to disguise arguments or dodge questions also undermines the need for explicit debate. In addition simplistic, ritualistic, metaphorical, and mythic discourse can forge genuine consensus and unity, but these rhetorical strategies are often used to intoxicate or mystify. They can oversimplify situations and obscure real and important differences in members' perspectives and interests. Concealed and distorted messages
make it more difficult for participants to deliberate in an informed, reflective manner. When oratory slips into sophistry, the respectful exchange of perspectives and ideas becomes nothing more than a winner-take-all competition among manipulators.

One might object to these restrictions, arguing that they need to be balanced with a recognition of the speaker's present situation and goals. In this view, democratic ends can justify undemocratic methods of persuasion. However, as rhetoric scholar Robert A. Kraig argues, it is dangerous to permit speakers to weigh seemingly just ends against unjust means unless the ends-means distinction is brought under scrutiny:

If we take a longer-term perspective, one that looks beyond particular rhetorical situations, then the ends and means of rhetoric are not as distinct.... The character of a community, a movement, an institution, or a nation, is in many respects the product of the rhetorical transactions by which it is constituted and maintained. In this sense, dehumanizing rhetoric leads to dehumanized institutions....Rhetorical means are not merely the neutral instruments of the rhetor’s immediate political ends but are the building blocks of the future.

Since every attempt at persuasion affects both listener and speaker, members of the demos restrain themselves from using manipulative discourse, both because of its unethical character and its long-term damage to the character of the demos.

Voting
Although rarely described as a form of communication, voting is simply the formal means of expressing preferences with regard to a set of alternative positions on an issue. This includes preliminary tallies, such as straw polls, and decisive balloting or voice votes, anonymous (secret ballot) and public (raised hand or voice vote) forms of expression, and consensual and majoritarian methods of decision making. Voting is required only at the decisive stage of deliberation, and a demos can choose among a wide variety of democratic voting methods (see chapter 3).

Voting is the only form of democratic talk that democratic theorists universally recognize as essential, because without the vote, all other forms of deliberation become virtually meaningless. As Dahl writes,

At the decisive stage of collective decisions, each citizen must be ensured an equal opportunity to express a choice that will be counted as equal in weight to the choice expressed by any other citizen. In determining outcomes at the decisive stage, these choices, and only these choices, must be taken into account.

Dissent

Even after a proposal has passed, some members might choose to present a dissenting opinion, reminding the others of the minority viewpoint. This amounts to articulating a preference for a position that lost in a decisive vote. Like voting, dissent is an essential feature of any theory of democracy. After a group reaches a decision, there must be an opportunity for disagreement, whether it consists of lingering doubts or steadfast opposition.

This form of democratic speech allows those who opposed a group decision to put their formal dissent on record for future reference. It has been underappreciated by those who hold that articulation is significant only prior to the decisive stage of voting. This is unfortunate because, as Barber explains, “it is in the aftermath of a vote that dissenters may feel the greatest need to speak their pain.” The dissenter says, “I am part of the community, I participated in the talk and deliberation leading to the decision, and so I regard myself as bound; but let it be known that I do not think we have made the right decision.” This does not change the decision, but it does “bear witness to another point of view” and thereby keeps the issue, at least informally, on the agenda.

Listening

Speaking is only one half of the deliberative process. As Frances Moore Lappé and Paul Martin DuBois insist, “The first art of democracy is active listening.” Unless group members are listening, there is little point in talking, because deliberation is not taking place. Imagine a planning group in which the treasurer talks over everyone's head. The other members are missing out on information that they may need to make a fully informed decision. Alternately, if one group member refuses to listen to the treasurer's arguments, the group may have difficulty arriving at anything close to a consensus. Therefore it is important to understand the role of both comprehension and consideration in small group democracy.

Comprehension

Comprehension is the successful understanding of another person's speech. In a demos the listener must be able to understand the speaker's words, the ideas the speaker is presenting, and the gist of the speaker's message. Comprehension is essential for the democratic process, because it is the means whereby one comes to understand others' (and one's own) views.

This form of listening is essentially a right. The members of a demos have equal and adequate opportunities to comprehend what others say. If unable to comprehend the words or ideas of other speakers, group
members are doubly deprived. It becomes more difficult for them to see an issue from the perspective of the group as a whole. They are also denied access to information and insight that could help them develop their own individual perspectives. Therefore the group needs to exercise a right to understand the language of the demos—a right to be spoken to in intelligible terms.71

Fishkin gives a glimpse of what full comprehension might look like, drawing upon David Braybrooke's conception of "logically complete debate." In such a debate, "the participants, turn by turn, raise proposals and invoke arguments for them," and they take the time necessary to address these proposals and arguments. "As the issue moves toward resolution," writes Braybrooke,

every participant is aware at every stage of every ingredient still current in the debate—every proposal outstanding; the arguments still pressed on its behalf; the distribution among the participants of favor for the various proposals and of opposition to them, and as well the distribution of conviction respecting the various arguments and of doubt.72

Consideration

It is more common, and equally important, to think of listening as a responsibility. If group members did not listen, they would undermine the very idea of discussion and dialogue. Consideration can amount to passive listening, such as sitting and attending to what another member says. When members carefully weigh one another's statements, brief silences often fall after a person speaks "to give time for what has been said to make its own appeal."73 Consideration can also take a more active form, such as a verbal request for more information or a series of probing questions to clarify a speaker's statements. These active forms of consideration are particularly valuable when the listener is unsure of what the speaker is trying to say.

Robert Bellah and the coauthors of The Good Society focus their conclusion on the importance of paying attention to one another and our surroundings: "When we are giving our full attention to something, when we are really attending, we are calling on all our resources of intelligence, feeling, and moral sensitivity."74 Barber also places great value on this form of listening. "Without it," he writes, "there is only the babble of raucous interests and insistent rights vying for the deaf ears of impatient adversaries."75

It is important to distinguish active consideration from passive capitulation. Consideration must be reciprocal, and it need not result in agreement with the speaker. Group members need to be willing to consider arguments, listening with an openness to consider the reasons given, but whether or not they reach full agreement is uncertain.76

In fact, sometimes respectful consideration can change the mind of the speaker rather than that of the listener. This has been one of the results of the Learning Project, a national program for community organizing and outreach. Organizers working in the program have found that careful listening and probing questions can cause speakers to reconsider their views on issues as polarized as the sources of poverty and crime.77

Conclusion

To summarize, small group democracy involves a somewhat powerful and inclusive group, with a membership committed to the democratic process. A demos maintains healthy, democratic relationships and practices a democratic form of deliberation. Once again, this definition amounts to an unattainable ideal, and one might question the usefulness of such a utopian vision. Dahl answers this question after presenting his own criteria for an ideal democratic procedure:

One might ... wonder whether any system can hope to meet the criteria fully. And, if not, of what relevance are the criteria?... In the real world, no system will fully meet the criteria for a democratic process.... However, the criteria serve as standards against which one may compare alternative processes and institutions in order to judge their relative merits. The criteria do not completely define what we mean by a good polity or good society. But to the extent that the democratic process is worthwhile, then the criteria will help us to arrive at judgments that bear directly on the relative worth or goodness of political arrangements.78

Notes


2. I have discussed the writings underlying this definition in greater detail in "A Definition of Small Group Democracy”; "Democratic Deliberation: A Redefinition of the Democratic Process and a Study of Staff Meetings at a Co-Operative Workplace," Masters Abstracts 30-04M (1992), 1114 (University Microfilms No. 1348177); "Undemocratic Discourse: A Review of Theory and Research on Political Discourse," Discourse & Society 3 (1992): 469–500. These previous definitions differ from the present one: I have clarified the nature of power, inclusiveness, commitment, and deliberation and highlighted the importance of obtaining adequate information during group discussions.
In previous writings ("Democratic Deliberation" and "Undemocratic Discourse") I discussed democratic deliberation with reference to all social scales. My primary purpose in presenting this model is to fill the void of theories of small group democracy. To the best of my knowledge, no published work has attempted to provide a detailed definition of democracy in small-scale systems. Many democratic theorists ignore small group democracy altogether by defining democracy in a way that limits it to large-scale representative political systems; for example, see Larry Diamond, ed., The Democratic Revolution: Struggles for Freedom and Pluralism in the Developing World (New York: Freedom House, 1992); 26; Milton Fisk, The State and Justice: An Essay in Political Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 166; John A. Wiseman, Democracy in Black Africa: Survival and Renewal (New York: Paragon House, 1990), chap. 1.

Sidney Verba's Small Groups and Political Behavior (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961) is one of the only modern works focusing on democracy and the small group, but his purpose was to understand the small group's role in large-scale democracy—not the small group as a democracy in and of itself. The most theoretical work to date on the subject may be Jane Mansbridge's Beyond Adversary Democracy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), which elaborates and illustrates the unitary model of democracy through case studies of small democratic groups. One might argue that Jean Jacques Rousseau, in The Social Contract and Discourses (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1950), presents a theory of small-scale democracy, but he discusses medium social scales (i.e., a thousand to ten thousand people) and fails to address in detail the features of face-to-face deliberation. Moreover, Rousseau's theory of deliberation is seriously flawed: see Bernard Manin, "On Legitimacy and Political Deliberation," trans. Elly Stein and Jane Mansbridge, Political Theory 15 (1987): 338-68.

3. For example, see Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," in Alan Hamlin and Philip Pettit, eds., The Good Polity (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 22. Quentin Skinner identified one of the most important reasons for defining democracy as an ideal. Calling a political system a democracy "serves to commend the recently prevailing values and practices of a political system like that of the United States, and it constitutes a form of argument against those who have sought to question the democratic charactere of those values and practices": "The Empirical Theorists of Democracy and Their Critics: A Plague on Both Their Houses," Political Theory 1 (1973): 303-4.

Alternatively, the use of the term democracy to describe existing institutions can cause the term to lose legitimacy in step with the institutions. Thus critic Manning Marable can proclaim that "American democracy has failed," simultaneously rejecting the system and the term. Fortunately Marable and other critics often reject one form of democracy and suggest another as an alternative; see Marable's The Crisis of Color and Democracy: Essays on Race, Class, and Power (Monroeville, Maine: Common Courage Press, 1992). This form of criticism preserves the value of the word but complicates its meaning. Once again, the problem stems from using the term to refer to an existing institution rather than an ideal. For criticism of the idealist approach I embrace, see Samuel Huntington's contribution to the movement "to make democracy less of a 'hurrah' word and more of a commonsense word"; The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991): 7.


5. Anthony Arblaster, Democracy (Open University Press: Milton Keynes, 1987), 98. Arblaster adds, "Accessibility and a readiness to listen are not . . . incompatible with a fundamentally authoritarian structure of power and government. Nor is making a show of consultation and participation, when what is being looked for is essentially a ratification of decisions already taken" (ibid.). For an example of groups with the trappings of democracy but no real power, see William Graebner, "The Small Group in Democratic Social Engineering, 1900-1950," Journal of Social Issues 42 (1986): 137-54.

6. This definition borrows from an insightful discussion of power by Douglas W. Rae. In further agreement with Rae, I would add that power is the knowing capacity to influence; one must be aware of one's causal role to say that one's influence constitutes power. "Knowing Power: A Working Paper," in Ian Shapiro and Grant Reher, eds., Power, Inequality, and Democratic Politics (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988), 17-49.

Note that if power includes forms of influence over emotions and beliefs, the term has wide applicability. Therapy and consciousness-raising groups, for instance, are powerful even if they focus on changing how people think and feel more than how they behave. This distinction may be largely academic, however, since people who change their emotional and cognitive perception of the world are likely to behave differently as a consequence.

7. I thank Gail Pietrzyk for permitting me to use an adaptation of her piano metaphor. A more mathematical definition of group power is provided by Andrew King in Power and Communication (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1987); he argues that group power can be defined as the product of a group's mass (number of people and amount of resources) and its unity or cohesion.


9. Numerous writings in the past ten years have distinguished among different forms of power: threat, exchange, and integrative power (Kenneth Boulding, Three Faces of Power [Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1990]; actualization and domination power (Riane Eisler, The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future [San
On the importance of equal power, see Peter Bachrach, The Theory of Democratic Elitism: A Critique (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), chaps. 6 and 7. Any provisional inequalities in power that the group creates must be subject to justification. If a group member questions an inequality, the group or the individual with greater power must be able to justify its existence; see Bruce Ackerman, Social Justice and the Liberal State (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1980), 4-8. On the difficulties surrounding the establishment of fully equal power, see Andrea Baker, "The Problem of Authority in Radical Movement Groups: A Case Study of a Lesbian-Feminist Organization," The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science 18 (1982): 323-41; Mansbridge, Beyond Adversary Democracy, chap. 17.

11. Dahl, Democracy and Its Critics, 126-30. The problem of inclusiveness is faced not only by small groups and communities but also by nations. For this reason, it becomes necessary to explore models of international democratic decision making: see David Held, "Democracy: From City-states to a Cosmopolitan Order," Political Studies 40, Special Issue (1992), 10-39.

12. C. George Selenlo (From the Ground Up [Boston: South End Press, 1992], 51) recognizes the necessary interplay between inclusiveness and the distribution of power. All those affected by group decisions "must have a say in the decision-making process.... The trick is to create a system with sufficient delegation of authority and internal differentiation so that not everyone is involved in all decisions all the time."

13. Michael Walzer, in Radical Principles: Reflections of an Unreconstructed Democrat (New York: Basic Books, 1980), chap. 7, insists that there will always be people falling within the boundaries of inclusiveness who will not attend meetings. In particular, he asks militant activists to respect those who choose to attend few (if any) meetings. Their absence does not justify their exclusion, it only complicates the representation of their interests.


15. Dahl, Democracy and Its Critics, 129. When people are deemed incompetent to participate in group deliberation, the group must—to the best of its ability—still take their interests into account. In this vein, some environmental activists have argued that fully democratic groups should take the interests of other species and all forms of life into account. See Van Andrus, et al., eds., Home! A Bioregional Reader (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990), 70, 95-99.

16. Teresa Labov provides an example of a co-op that sacrificed its principle of openness to the community (inclusiveness) in order to satisfy its other three principles—cooperativeness, commitment to the group, and harmony.

21. Those who wish a simpler definition of democracy might argue that these relational features should be viewed as conducive to (rather than part of) small group democracy. On the contrary, many democratic theorists have stressed the relational component of a fully democratic process (e.g., Benjamin Barber, Strong Democracy [Berkley: University of California Press, 1984]; Carol Gould, Rethinking Democracy [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988]). The different forms of relationship presented herein draw heavily upon Barber's discussion of "strong democratic talk" in Strong Democracy, 173-198. For a clarification with regard to mutuality see Benjamin Barber, "Reply," Dissent 32 (1985): 385. For a brief synopsis see Benjamin Barber, "Political Talk—and Strong Democracy," Dissent 31 (1984): 215-22.


22. One of the earliest and most provocative works on relational communication is Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin, and Don Jackson, Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes (New York: Norton, 1967). Therein the authors coined the now infamous phrase, "One cannot not communicate" (p. 51). The argument was that interaction always has a meaning and an impact on the relationship. Moreover, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, in Democracy and Capitalism: Property, Community, and the Contradictions of Modern Social Thought (New York: Basic Books, 1986), especially chapters 5 and 6, argue that people's actions and interactions constitute them as persons. Thus one's sense of individuality, competence, or group identity can come into existence through proclaiming and interactively affirming its existence.


25. Some of the examples of relational talk are excerpts from staff meetings at Mifflin Street Community Co-op, which I discuss in chapters 4 and 5.


Critics have viewed the participatory theory of democracy as dangerous (e.g., Samuel Huntington, "The American Democratic," Public Interest 41 [1975]: 9-38), unrealistic (e.g., Daniel C. Kramer, Participatory Democracy: Developing Ideals of the Political Left [Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman Publishing, 1972]), and antagonistic to a more deliberative conception of political decision making (Claus Offe and Ulrich K. Preuss, "Democratic Institutions and Moral Resources," in David Held, ed., Political Theory Today [Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991]: 143-71).

28. Like the other forms of democratic relationship, the affirmation of competence manifests itself in the form of communication among group members. Thus the character of a group's talk can indicate the degree to which members' competence is collectively affirmed. This view parallels Ackerman's neutrality principle, which forbids speakers from asserting that they are morally superior to other members of the collective. Social Justice and the Liberal State, 10-12, 15-17.
29. Dahl, Democracy and Its Critics, 98. The assumption of competence relates to the question in Figure 1.1 about the capability of group members to represent their own interests and participate in democratic deliberation.

30. Quoted in Robin Morgan, "Chai Ling Talks with Robin Morgan," Ms. (September/October 1990): 14. In addition to believing others are competent, one must also assume that oneself is competent at representing one's self-interest and the interests of the group. This belief in oneself is closely related to self-esteem, which plays a vital role in democracy. As Gloria Steinem explains, self-esteem allows a person to trust her own beliefs and conscience. In this way, "Self-esteem is the basis of any real democracy" (Revolution from Within [Boston: Little, Brown, 1992], 9–10). For a mixture of views on the recent emphasis on self-esteem, see the series of articles in the Utne Reader (January/February 1992), 89–99. Political philosophers have also paid a great deal of attention to self-esteem in recent decades. See John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971): 440–46; Michael Walzer, Spheres of Justice (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 272–80.


Some may argue that whatever its virtues, mutuality has its drawbacks. For instance, Irving Janis has suggested that group cohesion can contribute to the practice of groupthink or faulty collective decision making and judgment (Irving L. Janis, Groupthink [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982]). However, the most comprehensive review of the research on groupthink has found no association between group cohesion and the existence of groupthink; Won Woo Park, "A Review of Research on Groupthink," Journal of Behavioral Decision Making 3 (1990): 229–45. In fact a recent meta-analysis has found that, on average, social scientific experiments show a positive relationship between cohesiveness and group productivity. Charles R. Evans and Kenneth L. Dion, "Group Cohesion and Performance: A Meta-analysis," Small Group Research 22 (1991): 175–186.

34. Just as some have argued that cohesive groups are unproductive groups, some have argued that happy people tend to be lousy decision makers because they fail to reason systematically. Fortunately this dim view of the human condition has not received strong empirical support; see Diane M. Mackie and Leila T. Worth, "Processing Deficits and the Mediation of Positive Affect in Persuasion," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 57 (1989): 27–40.

35. Mansbridge, Beyond Adversary Democracy, 9.


37. Michael Walzer argues that democratic citizens are expected to "be tolerant of one another. This is probably as close as we can come to that 'friendship' which Aristotle thought should characterize relations among members of the same political community"; Radical Principles, 62. At the very least, democratic citizens avoid bursts of rudeness toward their fellow citizens. As an example of the rending effects of such incivility, note the insightful comments of a parking lot attendant, lamenting the behavior of some drivers: "The rudeness, especially as it is so often directed at me, rankles. There is ... an evolutionary process at work in this distinctly urban rudeness: a perhaps natural shyness or insecurity aggravated by big-city emotional distance; this becomes reserve, becomes suspicion, becomes indifference, becomes finally incivility, and, at its extremes, inhumanity"; Mark Heissenberg, "A View from the Booth," Utne Reader (January/February 1993): 134.


Not surprisingly, the satisfaction of Hirokawa's functions generally correlates with sound decision making; see Hirokawa, "Group Communication and Decision-Making Performance." More generally, interactive methods of group decision making (as opposed to the noninteractive techniques some practitioners have employed) tend to result in higher-quality group decisions, better average
individual decisions, and an "assembly effect" (a group decision better than any one individual's decision or combination thereof); Brant R. Burleson, Barbara J. Levine, and Wendy Samter, "Decision-Making Procedure and Decision Quality," Human Communication Research 10 (1984): 557–74.


The body of literature on the public sphere parallels the deliberative view in many respects. The work that has received the most attention in this literature is Jurgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society, trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989). For a review of this work, as well as criticisms and extensions, see Craig Calhoun, ed., Habermas and the Public Sphere (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992). For an attempt to build a theory of democracy centered on discourse and the public sphere, see Dryzek, Discursive Democracy.


42. One reason people value their silence is that it allows contemplation. As Robert Scott writes, "Orwell's 1984 depicts a society in which the freedom of thought is even controlled, because one cannot contemplate, one is constantly inundated with party slogans and government Newspeak words....Winston Smith, although he was nearly continually quiet, had no right to silence" ("Rhetoric and Silence," Western Speech 36 [1972]: 154).

43. Dahl, Democracy and Its Critics, 109. Alice Sturges, in her elaboration of the principles underlying parliamentary procedure, calls this the "right of discussion." She writes, "Each member of the assembly has the right to speak freely without interruption or interference provided the rules are observed. The right of members to 'have their say,' or to 'have their day in court,' is as important as their right to vote"; Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure, 3d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988), 9.


45. This notion of meaningful opportunities is analogous to Rawls's discussion of the worth of liberty, which depends upon one's ability to take advantage of one's rights and liberties; A Theory of Justice, 204–5.


47. Dahl, Democracy and Its Critics, 109, stresses the combination of equal with adequate opportunities.

48. The distinctions among the different forms of speech draw heavily upon Barber, Strong Democracy, 176–97.

49. Dahl, Democracy and Its Critics, 113. The large-scale analogy is the relatively amorphous national "agenda." The media plays a crucial role in setting the nation's agenda; for a discussion see David Protess and Maxwell McCombs, eds., Agenda Setting: Readings on Media, Public Opinion, and Policymaking (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1992); Marc Raboy and Peter A. Bruck, eds., Communication for and against Democracy (New York: Black Rose Books, 1989);

50. I use the term debate almost interchangeably with discussion and deliberation. Some writers choose to draw a stark contrast between debate and other words, such as dialogue. Shelley Berman does this, painting a rather dim portrait of debate; see “Comparison of Dialogue and Debate,” Focus on Study Circles: The Newsletter of the Study Circle Resource Center (Winter 1993): 9; for similar contrasts, see Bruno Lasker’s Democracy through Discussion (New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1949): 16–18. Passim; Pollard et al., Democracy and the Quaker Method, 26–27. I recognize that group debates can become disruptive, divisive, or downright dangerous, but they can also be respectful and productive. By using debate as a synonym for deliberation, discussion, and dialogue, I wish to emphasize that fully democratic group meetings may commonly involve the constructive disagreements and arguments that can make debate a worthwhile activity.

51. Barber, Strong Democracy, 182.

52. Lappé and DuBois (“Power in a Living Democracy”) use the term political imagination in a sense that is similar to reformulation, as I have defined it. It also corresponds to what media scholars call “issue framing.” As an example of the importance of issue frames, Shanto Iyengar has studied the effects of different thematic frames on one’s view of poverty. Iyengar explains that “how people think about poverty depends on how the issue is framed. When news media presentations frame poverty as a general outcome, responsibility for poverty is assigned to society-at-large; when news presentations frame poverty as a particular instance of a poor person, responsibility is assigned to the individual. Similar framing effects are documented in the 1986 General Social Survey where the amount of public assistance deemed appropriate for a poor family varies with the description of the family.” “Framing Responsibility for Political Issues: The Case of Poverty,” Political Behavior 12 (1990): 19.


54. This parallels the “right of information” that underlies democratic parliamentary procedures: “Every member has the right to know the meaning of the question before the assembly and what its effect will be”; Sturgis, Standard Cate, 9; see also Manin, “On Legitimacy and Political Deliberation,” 351–3. A similar principle underlies some laws in large-scale political systems, such as the Freedom of Information Act in the United States. Along these lines James F. Love recently discussed the progress of a plan to create a computer service providing citizens with access to government information; see “Democratizing the Data Banks: Getting Government Online,” The American Prospect, no. 9 (1992): 48–50. For an even more ambitious proposal to “provide equal opportunity for every citizen to gather information” on questions of interest, see Michael Margolis, Viable Democracy (London: MacMillan Press, 1979), 161–9.

55. The failure to establish and draw upon an adequate information base can prove quite costly. Moreover, if a group member possesses faulty information, communicating it to the rest of the group can be counterproductive. See Randy Y. Hirokawa and Dirk R. Scheerhorn, “Communication in Faulty Group Decision-Making,” in Randy Y. Hirokawa and Marshall Scott Poole, eds., Communication and Group Decision-Making (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1986), 63–80; Dennis S. Gouran and Randy Y. Hirokawa, “Counteractive Functions of Communication in Group Decision-Making,” in Communication and Group Decision-Making, 81–90.

56. The responsibility to make important information public is a clearly recognized principle among advocates of large-scale democratic government. As communication scholar Jay Blumer writes, democratic theory holds that “ordinary citizens should be sufficiently equipped, informationally, to hold decision-makers effectively to account”; “Communication and Democracy: The Crisis Beyond the Ferment Within,” Journal of Communication 33 (1983): 169. See also Gandy, “The Political Economy of Communication Competence”; Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent (New York: Pantheon, 1988); Raboy and Bruck, Communication for and against Democracy.

57. Even if a speaker adds no new information or argument to the discussion, there is intrinsic value in the simple act of articulating one’s own perspective on an issue. This process can connect the individual with both the group and the content of the group discussion; it can help people understand one another as well as the subject at hand. For this reason, Follett suggested holding public “experience meetings” that would connect detailed policy information with people’s daily lives; Creative Experience, chap. 12.

58. Sanders, “Against Deliberation”, 23–24. The meaning of articulation used herein parallels Sanders’s notion of testimony, which she views as a corrective for the excessive emphasis on deliberation.

59. Mansbridge, “Feminism and Democracy,” 136. Similarly Pollard et al. (Democracy and Quaker Method, 23) insist that “the very attempt to state an idea clearly may clarify it in the mind of the person who holds it.”


61. Walzer, Spheres of Justice, 304. See also Ackerman, Social Justice and the Liberal State; Manin, “On Legitimacy and Deliberation.”


63. See Ackerman, Social Justice and the Liberal State, 4, 7, 11.

64. Dahl has tried to show a connection between the deliberative view and his “criterion of enlightened understanding.” This criterion asks that one be able to provide reasons for one’s view, but it also requires that to the extent possible, citizens in a demos must undertake (1) systematic research and (2) self-reflection. “My reasons,” Dahl writes, “might meet all the public tests of acceptability and yet not be good reasons—not in my interests—because they are based on an


For some, the potential for manipulation makes democracy altogether undesirable. Thus Thomas Hobbes described democracy as "no more than an aristocracy of orators, interrupted sometimes with the temporary monarchy of one orator." Reflecting on this quote, Walzer agrees that "democratic politics is a monopoly of politicians." By contrast I take the view that appropriate norms and group procedures might preclude outright dominance by the most verbally gifted members of the demos. At the very least, such dominance is far from inevitable even in less than fully democratic groups. Quotes from Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, 304.

66. Robert A. Kraig, "The Hitler Problem in Rhetorical Theory: A Speculative Inquiry" (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1992, manuscript), 42–43. Kraig argues for striking a balance between ends and means, stressing the long-term effects of one's present means. In this view, "The practical application of rhetorical ethics ... can be understood as a perpetually unresolved di-etic. A rhetor would be ethical when he/she struggled to discover good and effective means of persuasion in any given case" (p. 42). For a similar view of ends and means, see Peter Bachrach and Aryeh Botwinick, *Power and Empowerment: A Radical Theory of Participatory Democracy* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 118–119.


69. Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 192. The importance of dissent is shown by the ingenuity and determination of subordinate political discourse. Members of subordinate groups frequently attempt to express their opposition even at the risk of severe punishment by authorities. See James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990), especially chapter 6. In cases of inescapable oppression, people have no threat of "exit"—only the power of "voice" (what I call dissent). In democratic groups the commitment to the democratic process implies a willingness to rely upon voice rather than exit so long as the group remains democratic. See Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).


73. Pollard et al., *Democracy and the Quaker Method*, 45.


75. Barber, *Strong Democracy*, 175.

76. See Mansbridge, "Feminism and Democracy."
