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Francis J. Schweigert^a

^a College of Management, Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

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Strengthening Citizenship Through Deliberative Polling

FRANCIS J. SCHWEIGERT

College of Management, Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

This article describes the experience and results of a deliberative poll on transportation priorities and funding, with particular attention to the power of the process to foster citizenship learning and engagement. Evidence from pre-deliberation and post-deliberation surveys, as well as direct observation of the deliberation day event, indicated that the process could be instituted as a regular means to expand the voice of citizens in public policy debates and to strengthen the formation of citizens in the moral and political habits of democratic self-governance.

KEYWORDS *deliberative polling, deliberation, citizenship, transportation, democracy, common good*

Students of democracy from Plato to the present day have sought to identify the practices that can strengthen the on-going practice of effective

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Address correspondence to Francis J. Schweigert, Ph.D., College of Management, Metropolitan State University, 1501 Hennepin Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55403. E-mail: francis.schweigert@metrostate.edu

citizenship. Citizenship is both moral and political, in the duty to the public good and in a duty to navigate the divisions and imbalances of society to meet the practical demands of governing. These duties must be learned, but they cannot be learned through instruction alone. As John Dewey put it,

Lessons “about morals” signify as matter of course lessons in what other people think about virtues and duties. . . . [This] has no more influence on character than information about the mountains in Asia; with a servile regard, it increases dependence upon others, and throws upon those in authority the responsibility for conduct. (Dewey, 1916, p. 356, emphasis in original)

This is not to say that instruction is worthless, but that it must accompany institutionalized practices that require citizens to go beyond self-interest and combine moral and political perceptions with concrete responsibility to enact the public good.

A variety of practices with rich potential for strengthening citizenship have been studied, from the American jury system (Tocqueville, 1840/1945) to popular associations in Nicaragua (Anderson & Dodd, 2005), from civic associations in Italy (Putnam, 1993) to restorative justice in the United States (Schweigert, 1999). It is the purpose of this article to add support to the evidence, already existing, that Deliberative Polling can take a place among these practices as a formative process for engaging citizens in the substantive work of democracy, capable of reaching citizens of all rank and station and bringing them together to discuss the critical issues of their time and place, to register their judgment on what course public policy ought to take.

Professor James Fishkin of Stanford University originated the concept of Deliberative Polling in 1988. Although the component parts of Deliberative Polling are broadly familiar—public opinion surveys, briefing documents, structured small group discussions, panels of experts—the process and survey in Deliberative Polling follow a structure carefully developed and tested over the last twenty years. Deliberative Polling is a registered trademark and persons interested in using the process or name should contact the Center for Deliberative Democracy (n.d.) at Stanford University (<http://cdd.stanford.edu/>). Fees, if any, from the trademark go to the Center for Deliberative Democracy to support research.

The process of Deliberative Polling includes four stages: presurvey, inform, deliberate, and postsurvey. First, a random, representative sample of a distinct population is polled on some specific public interest issue. As part of this baseline poll, all respondents in the sample are asked to indicate if they are interested in gathering to discuss the issue. Second, those who express interest in the discussion are sent a set of briefing materials

carefully balanced to represent all sides of the issue. In the interest of transparency, these materials are also made available to the public. Third, this subsample of interested persons is brought together for the day of deliberation—although it is important to note that not all who expressed interest actually show up for the deliberation. Those who do come enter upon the heart of the process—engaging in dialogue with one another in small groups with trained moderators and composing questions that they pose to panels of technical and political experts and decision makers. These panels are carefully balanced to represent all sides of the issue. Fourth, at the end of the day of deliberation, the participants are again polled on the questions from the original random sample survey. The resulting changes in opinion are purported to represent the conclusions the public would be likely to reach if people had an opportunity to really discuss an issue, engage with alternative points of view, and become more informed.

LOCAL EXPERIMENT AND RESULTS: THE DELIBERATIVE POLL ON TRANSPORTATION

Inspired by the potential of Deliberative Polling for strengthening democracy and increasing participation of students in civic affairs, the American Democracy Project of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities selected 15 schools from across the United States as an initial cohort to engage their campuses in conducting Deliberative Polls in 2007–2008. Metropolitan State University was among those selected, and the project went forward with a twofold aim: to gather and make available broad and informed public input on an immediate policy question, and to seek to demonstrate a new way for the University and local leaders to cooperate in expanding and strengthening the role of citizens in local self-governance.

Project Overview

In light of the collapse of the Interstate 35W Bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota on August 1, 2007 and the contentious debate stalling action on statewide transportation policy, the University's project team chose transportation priorities and funding as the central issues to be addressed in the initiative. The team convened a broad-based advisory group of local transportation and policy experts to inform the survey construction and briefing materials, and employed an out-of-state polling firm to conduct the telephone survey. In February, 2008, the polling firm surveyed a random sample of 1,003 residents of the seven-county metropolitan area of Saint Paul and Minneapolis to discover their level of support for a variety of transportation

priorities and funding options and to document their values, priorities, and knowledge of transportation issues such as traffic congestion, mass transit, bridge safety, and highway maintenance or expansion. All those responding to the survey were invited to participate in an all-day deliberation on these topics, 242 of whom expressed interest and received a briefing document on the issues and options. Approximately 70 of the 242 participated in the deliberation on March 15, 2008, meeting in randomly-assigned small groups to discuss the issues and formulating questions to pose to panels of transportation experts and local policy-makers. At the end of the day, participants retook the initial survey, enabling pre- and postdeliberation comparisons to determine the effects of information and deliberation on the views of participants.

Changes in Knowledge and Opinion

Metropolitan State University's (2008) postdeliberation survey on transportation priorities and funding showed significant increases in respondents' knowledge of transportation spending and fund allocations (Table 1). The most dramatic increase was a gain of 51 percentage points in those knowing that property taxes pay for the greatest share of road and highway costs. Less dramatic, but still significant, were increases in the knowledge that only 30% of transit operating costs are covered by riders' fares (from 55% to 84%),

TABLE 1 Changes in Knowledge Items

Items	Percent correct		
	1st survey	2nd survey	Percentage point change
Property taxes pay for the greatest share of road and highway costs.	9	60	+51
About 30% of transit operating costs covered by riders' fares.	55	84	+29
Twin Cities rush-hour commuters lost about 45 hours per year stuck in traffic.	51	76	+25
Minnesota tax revenues devoted to transportation have remained the same over the past 5 years.	26	49	+23
About 60% of daily travel to work is from a home in the suburbs to a job in the suburbs.	19	42	+23
2007 poll of Minnesota's business leaders showed 75% supporting new transportation funding.	36	57	+21
About 15% of transportation spending is directed to transit.	38	46	+8
About 5% of all trips to work are by bus or train.	35	34	-1
Minnesota ranked among the bottom 10 states in total capital outlays for transportation.	24	17	-7

that Twin Cities rush-hour commuters lost about 45 hr stuck in traffic in 2005 (from 51–76%), that Minnesota tax revenues devoted to transportation have remained the same over the past 5 years (26–49%), and that about 60% of daily travel to work is from a home in the suburbs to a job in the suburbs (19–42%).

In contrast to the knowledge items, a comparison of the two surveys showed almost no significant change in respondents' *empirical premises* (Table 2), that is, what respondents believed about the consequences of particular policies or actions. The only significant shift was a decrease in those believing that raising taxes on fuel, vehicle registration, and auto sales to pay for transportation improvements would damage Minnesota's economy (down 17 percentage points). Indeed, strong majorities in both the preevent and postevent surveys agreed that solo driving was okay, investments in transit benefit the economy, traffic congestion is a serious problem, and drivers lack alternatives to travel by automobile.

Respondents' *value premises* and opinions moved toward greater agreement on sources of increased funding for transportation, with consistently

TABLE 2 Changes in Empirical Premises

Items	Percent agreeing and strongly agreeing		
	1st survey	2nd survey	Percentage point change
Raising taxes on fuel, vehicle registration, and auto sales to pay for transportation improvements would damage Minnesota's economy.	33	16	-17
It is okay that, currently, the great majority of traffic is solo drivers—one person per car.	33	22	-11
Investments in buses and trains are good for the local economy.	80	90	+10
Traffic congestion has very little negative impact on the Twin Cities quality of life.	22	13	-9
In making transportation choices, it is important to consider the amount of energy and natural resources to be used.	89	95	+6
Traffic congestion has very little negative impact on the Twin Cities economy.	13	19	+6
Roads are in good driving condition.	45	50	+5
I can drive wherever I want in the metro area, without delays caused by traffic congestion.	16	21	+5
Buses and trains are available and convenient for travel in the metro area.	34	27	-5
When making transportation choices, it is important to consider their impact on the environment.	92	89	-3
Bicycle routes are available and convenient for commuting to work in the metro area.	27	29	+2

high levels of support for the increases (Table 3). The most dramatic change occurred on an item that has received very little public discussion—an increase of 20 percentage points in supporting the addition of a sales tax to gasoline (to 67%). Support for additional funding increased 18 percentage points for adding 5–10 cents per gallon to the gasoline tax (to 76% support), 18 percentage points for an increase in vehicle registration fees (to 84% support), and 16 percentage points for adding optional free-flow pay lanes on busy highways (to 79% support). There was uniformly strong support—before and after the deliberation—for replacing deteriorating bridges, improving transit inside and outside the Interstate 494/694 Beltway, having truckers pay more for highway wear due to heavy loads, and providing incentives to employers to encourage carpooling. Similarly, opposition remained strong to charging tolls to pay for new bridges (including privately built and owned bridges) and to increasing property taxes or bonding to pay for transportation. The postdeliberation survey also showed support for the long-standing principle that those who use roads more should pay more for their construction and upkeep. These unchanged views apparently represented firmly held values and opinions on funding priorities.

TABLE 3 Changes in Value Premises and Opinions

Items	Percent supportive and very supportive		
	1st survey	2nd survey	Percentage point change
To deal with growing transportation maintenance and expansion demands, how supportive are you of putting a sales tax on gasoline? (Gasoline is currently exempted from the sales tax. This tax would be dedicated entirely to transportation.)	47	67	+20
To deal with growing transportation maintenance and expansion demands, how supportive are you of increasing the gasoline tax by 5–10 cents per gallon?	58	76	+18
To deal with growing transportation maintenance and expansion demands, how supportive are you of an increase in registration fees on new cars?	66	84	+18
How supportive are you of creating a free-flow lane for drivers who choose to pay, during rush hour on our busiest highways? (These tolls would be charged electronically; cars would not be stopped.)	63	79	+16
How supportive are you of increasing car pooling by providing incentives to drivers and employers?	94	81	–13

(Continued)

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Items	Percent supportive and very supportive		
	1st survey	2nd survey	Percentage point change
To deal with growing transportation maintenance and expansion demands, how supportive are you of increasing the general sales tax by ½ cent and dedicating this to transportation?	59	68	+9
How supportive are you of counties charging owners a tax for each vehicle registered in that county?	46	53	+7
How supportive are you of having those who use roads more, pay more for their construction and upkeep?	61	68	+7
How supportive are you of paying for bridge replacement by charging all drivers a toll at these new bridges?	31	24	-7
How important is improving bus and train service within the Interstate Highway 694-494 Beltway?	84	90	+6
How supportive are you of making it a high priority to add additional lanes to congested highways?	71	77	+6
How supportive are you of concentrating on maintaining current roads and bridges, rather than expanding them to carry more traffic?	75	70	-5
How supportive are you of increasing property taxes to pay for expanding or improving roads in the metro area?	16	20	+4
How supportive are you of selling certain freeways or bridges to private companies, which would then maintain them and charge drivers a toll?	19	16	-3
How important is it to replace deteriorating bridges?	98	100	+2
How important is increasing bus and train service from outside the Beltway into the core cities?	84	82	-2
To deal with growing transportation maintenance and expansion demands, how supportive are you of the State borrowing against future transportation taxes? This would be in the form of bonds to pay for current projects.	26	24	-2
How supportive are you of having heavy trucks pay additional fees for their greater wear and tear on the highways?	84	82	-2

CITIZENSHIP LEARNING: EFFECTS ON PARTICIPANTS

Effects on participants were captured through a set of civic engagement items in the surveys, a set of feedback items appended to the postdeliberation survey, and observations, interviews, and conversations throughout the deliberation day event.

Survey Results on Civic Engagement

Two items in the survey queried respondents on civic engagement. The first item was a measure of interest in public affairs: How important is it for one to stay on top of public affairs going on in one's community? Large majorities of respondents indicated that it was important or very important, both in the predeliberation (88%) and postdeliberation surveys (95%). This was not an unusual result: In an eight-state survey conducted by the Oregon Survey Research Laboratory, 80% of respondents gave the same self-assessment (Oregon Survey Research Laboratory, 2003).

The second civic engagement item was a measure of personal efficacy: How often do you feel that you can do something effective about your community's problems? Here the participants registered a lower than usual assessment. Whereas the 2003 regional survey reported 50% responding *always* or *most of the time* (Oregon Survey Research Laboratory, 2003), only 11% of the Deliberative Polling respondents gave either of these responses in the predeliberation survey, and only 17% in the postdeliberation survey. However, more significant changes appeared at the low end of the scale, where those responding *never* or *rarely* decreased from 47% to 30%. Apparently, the experience of deliberation gave some hope for personal efficacy to those who had little or none before.

Written Feedback of Participants on Deliberation Day

The ratings of deliberation day in the postdeliberation survey were uniformly positive, with 96% indicating that the small group discussions were *helpful* or *very helpful* in clarifying and informing their views, 96% indicating the same for the expert panels, 93% for the briefing document, and 87% for the policy maker panel at the end of the day. Two items queried participants on the helpfulness of information sources prior to the deliberation day: talking to others and hearing news media reports. Responses to both items were identical: 13% indicated these two sources were *very helpful* and 33% that they were *helpful*. These percentages are not negligible, but they are far below the ratings given to the deliberation day and briefing document. This is a significant finding, confirming that a carefully organized process such as Deliberative Polling is much more effective in informing citizens than informal discussion and the news media available in everyday life. Four questions in the postdeliberation survey directly queried participants on the readability, balance, and content selection of the briefing document. All items received positive ratings, but responses to the question asking if "the briefing document addressed the right issues" were significantly lower (Table 4). Clearly, the respondents retained a critical stance toward the briefing document and were not ready to merely affirm what was put in front of them.

An open-ended item in the second survey invited written comments from participants regarding being part of the Deliberative Polling process

TABLE 4 Participant Ratings of the Briefing Document

Items	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
How much of the briefing document did you read before coming to the deliberation day event?	All 68	Most 18	Some 11	None 2
To what extent did you think the information in the briefing document was fair and balanced?	Very fair 51	Mostly fair 44	Partly fair 5	Not fair 0
To what extent did you think the briefing document addressed the right issues—the things that really matter?	All 18	Most 72	Some 8	None 2
To what extent were the briefing documents readable and understandable?	Very easy to read 56	Mostly easy to read 39	Partly easy to read 5	Not easy to read 0

or any component of the process. Fifty-eight of the 61 survey respondents entered comments, with 88% of those explicitly stating that this was a good experience, something they would recommend to others or do again. These positive comments indicate that citizens, in general, have an appetite for public deliberation on public issues. Fifty-three percent of the comments were clear statements of how much was learned:

- “This was a very enlightening experience. I learned much but still have questions.”
- “I feel that I learned a lot and felt good being part of the process.”
- “I thoroughly enjoyed the day’s events. It was totally informative and has shed a new light on our problems with transportation.”
- “Very informative, I realize I need to seek more information to make a better balanced opinion.”
- “This was a very positive and informative process. The briefing document provided necessary background information. The panels provided expert facts and opinions.”

Nearly one in five of the comments (19%) highlighted the value of the small group discussions as a source of learning and a major contribution to the overall value of the process. This feedback correlated with studies conducted by the designers of the Deliberative Polling process, pointing to the small group discussions as the most important contributor to changes in views among participants (Fishkin, 2009). In the small groups, “participants are forced to consider alternative arguments and points of view and to discuss them with others very unlike themselves” (Fishkin & Luskin, 2005, p. 289). Participants in our Deliberative Poll echoed observed the same in their experience:

- “I really enjoyed and learned from the small group deliberative discussions—good group of people!”
- “Very helpful, long discussions with the thoughtful people in my group led to good questions for both panels and an improvement in my awareness and knowledge of the issues and the opinions of others.”
- “I enjoyed this form. My group many times pointed out it is nice to have a conservative in the group.”

An equal number of comments (19%) pointed explicitly to the diversity of views present as a valuable contributor to learning and a sense of public engagement:

- “I enjoyed taking the surveys[;] being part of something that gets a lot of different types of people going is very interesting and being able to get your opinion across is great and the fact that they are interested in your opinion on the whole rather than just going on without is really nice.”
- “This was a very positive experience and brought together an interesting cross-section of people from diverse work backgrounds . . . ”
- “It was very informative. I learned a lot by hearing other perspectives. It showed me a lot of the problems that are involved trying to solve a problem with a whole lot of different mind-sets.”
- “It was so nice to see we all care about our community and what is happening. The differences of experience and ideas for solution—we all seem to have a vision of worry [about] the systems in our community.”

Several of the comments reported a renewed sense of public responsibility and commitment to act, extending the value of the process beyond the present moment and issues. These comments seem to indicate moral learning—an increasing of sense of duty and understanding of the public good:

- “I learned much but still have questions. I plan to contact legislators with questions.”
- “This deliberative process was well conceived and helpful to the participants. The issues are important in a democracy.”
- “I’m encouraged to keep following this issue closely, including checking the city and MnDOT [Minnesota Department of Transportation] Web sites for ongoing developments.”
- “It will be of help in knowing more about the working of the highway and transit of this state. Now I need to become more informed on other works of our government.”
- “Enjoyed very much, will participate with government leaders. Call, e-mail all leaders in all government, state and US.”

- “The final panel showed how things need to be resolved to get to a solution and that no solution is arrived upon without a great deal for debate and research.”

Observations, Interviews, and Conversations During Deliberation

Observations, interviews, and conversations throughout the deliberation day indicated that participants were open to hearing one another and weighing views that differed from their own. Questions posed to the expert panel after the first small group showed that the discussions on transportation priorities had sharpened initial opinions, and participants were now testing out theories, probing into problems, or simply seeking more information (Milton, 2008).

- “How far along are we in long-term thinking about transportation?”
- “Regarding future expansion, what is the current strategy for expanding the highway system?”
- “How are we improving the current infrastructure to meet the needs for mass transit?”
- “How about employers’ role (social responsibility for) encouraging more flexible work hours?”
- “How do we get a commitment to use nonauto modes more?”
- “For planning purposes, should we be thinking of a metro area larger than the traditional seven counties—to include Western Wisconsin?”
- “How are policy questions getting resolved among policy-makers? It seems that a lot is based on geography—metro versus rural.”

Participants followed the expert panellists’ responses closely, some taking notes and all listening quietly. They owned these questions and enjoyed getting them answered.

Following the first large group session, participants returned to small groups to address questions of funding. This round of discussion reflected a growing level of comfort and sharpening of investigative interests (Milton, 2008). Participants returned to the second large group session with pointed questions for the expert panellists (Milton, 2008).

- “If people knew more about the true cost of driving their cars, would they change their pattern of usage?”
- “Who collects the funds for transportation in Minnesota?”
- “Which is best, taxing or bonding?”
- “Is there a ‘tipping point’ in the gas tax that would change behavior and lifestyle and create a market for transportation alternatives?”

- “How can we lessen the impact of gas tax increases on low income citizens?”

It was clear from these questions that deliberation and good information strengthened the ability of citizens to think through a complex problem. When participants returned from their third small group session to pose questions to the policy panel, the tone of the questions shifted from information-seeking to accountability-seeking (Milton, 2008).

- “What did we learn from the collapse of the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis?”
- “Why is it so difficult for the Legislature and the governor to work together?”
- “Can you give us examples of your making significant changes as the result of citizen input?”
- “Are transportation decisions made on the basis of political considerations or on sound planning?”
- “Are there common social values to inform you as you work on transportation policy?”

Although this shift in tone was sometimes uncomfortable for the panellists, it indicated a maturing of citizen perceptions of the problems and increased interest in decisions and action.

In sum, observations of the day and the survey results on civic engagement, deliberation day, and the briefing document provide rich evidence that citizens are up to the tasks of inquiry and policy evaluation. Given a respectful setting in which they can share views, raise questions, and test out ideas, a cross-section of citizens can listen, learn, and discern ways to address a complex set of issues. Most significantly, they raised their eyes from their own particular viewpoints to take a broader and longer view—approaching the moral ideal of objective societal concern (Habermas, 1983/1990, Nagel, 1986) without sacrificing pragmatic attention to working out the best solution available.

DISCUSSION: THE DELIBERATIVE POLL AND TAKING THE CITIZEN’S ROLE

Deliberative Polling has the potential to strengthen citizenship in two directions: increasing learning and responsibility among citizens, at the same time as it enhances citizen influence on public affairs. Both potentialities for growth have been studied and critiqued, and both defended by James Fiskin (2009). Although a systematic review of these debates lies outside the scope of this article, the terms of debate clarify two key issues at stake

in civic learning: representation and deliberation. Advocates of Deliberative Polling claim that the process is uniquely representative, providing a clearer indication of public will than opinion polls, call-in shows, referenda, focus groups, or citizen juries because its postsurvey results show what the public at large is likely to support if informed by balanced information and deliberation with citizens with different views (Fishkin, 2009). The greatest weight of this claim rests upon deliberation, “the process by which individuals sincerely weigh the merits of competing arguments in discussions together” (Fishkin, 2009, p. 33). The quality of these discussions must be emphasized, in which participants are “amenable to changing their judgements, preferences, and views during the course of their interactions, which involve persuasion, rather than coercion, manipulation, or deception” (Dryzek, 2000, cited in Jordan, 2007, p. 52). Questions about both claims are reviewed in this section.

For Whom Does the Poll Speak?

Critiques of the Deliberative Polling process follow two lines of inquiry: Are the participants in the deliberation truly representative of the larger population, and do the changes in views that appear in the second survey truly provide better guidance to public policy than one-shot opinion polls?

Fundamental to the Deliberative Polling design is the comparability of findings from the pre-deliberation and post-deliberation surveys. Because participants in the deliberation self-select, their responses cannot be assumed to be as representative as the views of the random sample in the first poll. However, even those who show up to deliberate consistently match the random sample demographically, attitudinally, and in knowledge of the issues (Fishkin, 2009). Even so, “such equivalence does not guarantee representativeness across all survey variables,” because those who agree to participate could be more “politically sophisticated and, therefore, more ideologically constrained” than members of the general public (Sturgis, Roberts, & Allum, 2005, p. 51). They may also, of course, have a higher than average interest in the issue under consideration in the poll, but this concern could also be raised for respondents to random sample surveys. To its credit, Deliberative Polling measures at least the key variables of attitude and knowledge, as well as standard demographic data.

Effects of Deliberation: Representing or Distorting?

Implicit in the question of representation is the bearing of deliberation on public policy as an expression of the will of the people: Does the process clarify what people truly value, or does it distort through hidden biases and the pressures of group interaction? One avenue of investigation on this

question has sought to determine if the opinions expressed after deliberation show greater consistency with participants' solid background beliefs (Jackman & Sniderman, 2006) or greater consistency with the expected consequences of policies (Sturgis et al., 2005). In their examination of five Deliberative Polls in the United Kingdom between 1994 and 1998, Sturgis et al. (2005) could not confirm increased internal consistency in the views of participants.

While some polls appeared to show a rather strong and consistent pattern that confirmed the expectation that statistical associations between items would increase after deliberation (the Europe poll), others showed no change at all (the election issues poll), and others still showed a downward movement (the NHS poll). . . . The deliberative poll would not appear capable of consistently reproducing the direction and magnitude of the effect over the relatively short period involved. (Sturgis et al., 2005, p. 51)

A second line of investigation has focused on the effects of group interaction. A change in views after deliberation could mean a correction in a person's views toward greater internal consistency, but it could also indicate a conversion to a different point of view or compliance with the views of others (Jackman & Sniderman, 2006, p. 51). One concern along this line would be hidden biases, such as a "bias of education, self-confidence, and rhetorical power" in the small group discussions that could leave less gifted participants humiliated and powerless (Jordan, 2007, p. 65). A second concern would be a shift in group thinking not related to the issues under deliberation but merely as an effect of group interaction. Ladd (1996) saw the process as "promising to be a classic illustration of the 'Hawthorne Effect'" (the treatment group performs better when it knows it is being watched), and each small deliberating group as a microcosm of "intensely interacting participants . . . made special and different through its interaction" (pp. 43–44). Both he and Tringali (1996) questioned Fishkin's claims that these participants functioned as something closer to an ideal, deliberating democracy, informed both by briefing materials and their conversations with one another. Neither was convinced that better informed citizens would make better decisions, but their larger concern was that a group of citizens convened to represent the larger population simply could not do so: Once they were convened, they were subject to influences the larger population was not, and thus they ceased to be representative.

Deliberative Polling addresses both concerns in its design. To counter hidden biases in interaction, small groups are moderated by trained facilitators. To counter pressures for compliance or group-think, discussions are explicitly not directed toward agreement on views: The effects of deliberation are measured in the individual postsurvey, and the small group needs

to agree on nothing but the questions it will pose to the expert panels. If something of the Hawthorne Effect is present, its effect need not be a distortion of representation. The aim of the Deliberative Poll is, in fact, to change the environment and quality of interaction, rather than to attempt to mimic the less engaged status quo. The results of the process are purported to be representative of the public's views after deliberation, not before or without it.

Deliberation and the Role of the Citizen: Athens or Rome?

By design, Deliberative Polls are conducted as part of the public policy-making process, rather than as sociological studies. As Klein pointed out in his review of *Deliberation Day* (Ackerman & Fishkin, 2004), the aim is “to make the world a better place” (Klein, 2005, p. 544) and construct a process for constructive dialogue that might truly get the attention of elected leaders and candidates. It is, therefore, reasonable to conclude that some part of the increase in political participation and public trust among participants arises from their belief that the results of their deliberation have significant “recommending force” for policy makers (Fishkin & Luskin, 2005, p. 287). It was evident that participants in the Deliberative Poll described in this article understood their participation as contributing to a public consultation on transportation policy and priorities. Even though they were aware that the Minnesota Legislature had acted on some of the issues under discussion, their interactions with public officials and experts showed that not all issues were resolved and that important policy decisions lay ahead. Two democratic ideals are in tension here: as Urbinati (2010) has noted, deliberation appeals to the Athenian assembly, whereas all modern democratic states have adopted Roman republicanism. Where Fishkin and Luskin saw benefits in the power of deliberation, others have seen a threat to representative democracy. Ladd (1996) saw the Deliberative Poll as merely the latest in a series of progressive experiments dangerous to “*properly constituted democratic institutions*”, which “posited a populace playing a role at once large and limited” (pp. 41–42, emphasis in original). Urbinati summarized these threats under four headings: (a) the danger of deliberating groups undermining the legitimacy and support of the main representative bodies and institutions; (b) a temptation to employ deliberating groups as an alternative form of representative body that more truly represents the will of the citizens; (c) a de facto by-passing of electoral politics, giving authority to groups that do not stand for election; and (d) an assertion of greater control by the elites who set the agenda for deliberative groups. Roberts (2004) mirrored these institutional threats with practical and psychological concerns: that deliberation was inefficient, tended to heighten political conflict and fragmentation, and could be turned in an antisocial direction, and that confidence in deliberation assumed citizens were more

active and thoughtful than they are, betraying a naïveté about human nature and large-scale involvement of citizens in public debate.

In contrast to these concerns, Goodin and Dryzek (2006) highlighted the positive contributions of deliberation, based on their examination of six deliberative *mini-publics*: citizens' juries, consensus conferences, Deliberative Polls, the 21st Century Town Meetings of AmericaSpeaks, national issues forums, and the UK's "GM Nation" (pp. 223–224). Overall, they saw the potential of deliberative bodies as an empowering supplement to electoral representation, citing eight ways in which the Athenian model could strengthen the democratic republic:

1. Actually making policy, as in the case of the Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform in British Columbia in 2004.
2. Recommending policy to the established elected representative bodies.
3. Extending and informing public debates on policy issues and alternatives.
4. Shaping policy by testing ideas or alternatives in a public forum.
5. Legitimizing public policy by involving deliberation as part of the process.
6. Building a constituency for policy enacted by the representative body.
7. Popular oversight of government policy and practices, not through juridical power but through visibility—calling upon public officials to speak to issues and answer questions from citizens, often with TV cameras running.
8. Resisting the cooption that can accompany public hearings organized by government agencies, where those agencies control the agenda, the process, and the record of proceedings.

Roberts (2004) echoed many of these potential contributions in her analysis of public deliberation, including additional benefits such as being therapeutic, integrative, realistic, and protective of freedom.

CONCLUSION: FROM EXPERIMENT TO PROGRAMMATIC ENGAGEMENT

The inherent tensions regarding representation and deliberation will persist, and more systematic critical assessment of deliberative processes is needed (Jordan, 2007; Nichol森, 2005). Even so, it is already clear that involvement in deliberation increases attention to public issues and involves citizens in public discussion and argument framed less by the transactional rhetoric of self-interest and more by constructive rhetoric of the common good (Andersen & Hansen, 2007, p. 542). It is a significant departure from the self-reinforcing rallies of like-minded individuals, toward a willingness

to sit down with those who may disagree, listen to their concerns and arguments, and speak in a way that can be heard by the other side regarding what might serve the public best.

That Deliberative Polling is a citizenship learning practice has been well documented (Fishkin, 2009; Fishkin & Luskin, 2005; Luskin & Fishkin, 2004): participants in Deliberative Polling report increased political interest, increased political participation, a greater sense of political efficacy (“Public officials care what people like me think.”), increased concern for the public interest (as distinct from private interest), increased trust of government, and more support for democracy. Comparison of results from several Deliberative Polls with those of control groups (see especially Luskin & Fishkin, 2005) points to the experience of deliberation as the primary contributor to these positive changes. We saw this in our Deliberative Poll on transportation priorities and funding as well, in the surveys and in direct observations and interviews. It is the power of Deliberative Polling to foster citizen engagement and strengthen a sense of citizenship responsibility that most recommends it as a regular means of expanding the voice of citizens in public policy debates and deepening the formation of citizens in the moral and political habits of democratic self-governance. Admittedly, the costs of the surveys and deliberations may seem prohibitive, but costs should be viewed in light the benefits to be gained.

Nearly 200 years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville (1840/1945) remarked upon the intense interest Americans gave to self-government and social welfare, both as individuals and through associations. He attributed this to their love of equality and the consequent weakness that each individual feels in attempting to influence events and maintain social order:

In aristocratic societies men do not need to combine in order to act, because they are strongly held together. Every wealthy and powerful citizen constitutes the head of a permanent and compulsory association, composed of all those who are dependent upon him or whom he makes subservient to the execution of his designs. Among democratic nations, on the contrary, all the citizens are independent and feeble; they can do hardly anything by themselves, and none of them can oblige his fellow men to lend him their assistance. They all, therefore, become powerless if they do not learn voluntarily to help one another. (Tocqueville, 1840/1945, p. 107)

Tocqueville made explicit the caveat implied here: If responsibilities of citizens are reduced in number or in importance, they would not only cease to engage in citizenship practices but would even lose the ability to do so:

When the members of a community are allowed and accustomed to combine for all purposes, they will combine as readily for the lesser

as for the more important ones; but if they are allowed to combine only for small affairs, they will be neither inclined nor able to effect it. (Tocqueville, 1840/1945, p. 117)

Citizens learned to associate for the public good because the public good depended upon them. The professionalization of public administration since Tocqueville's tour in the 1830s has reduced the need for citizens' direct management and engagement in public affairs. This distancing from direct involvement may extend to voting rates, as well. Frequent complaints that too few Americans choose to vote may reflect an appraisal that their votes matter little when services are provided through professional bureaucracies and policies are shaped as much by lobbyists, party leaders, and wealthy donors as by the ballot box.

Writing 25 years after Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill analyzed the degeneration of citizen responsibility in stark terms:

Wherever the sphere of action of human beings is artificially circumscribed, their sentiments are narrowed and dwarfed in the same proportion. The food of feeling is action: Even domestic affection lives upon voluntary good offices. Let a person have nothing to do for his country, and he will not care for it. It has been said of old, that in a despotism there is at most but one patriot, the despot himself. (Mill, 1861/1962, p. 51)

Mill (1861/1962) presented the loss of effective citizenship as a natural consequence for members of a society in which "all collective interests of the people are managed for them, all the thinking done for them, and in which their minds are formed by, and consenting to, this abdication of their own energies" (p. 52). He allowed that "a few studious men" would continue to "take an intellectual interest in speculation for its own sake," but warned that "the intelligence and sentiments" of the people in general would turn to their own material needs and enjoyment, since it was clearly not needed for governance of public affairs (p. 52).

Most at risk may be a working sense of the common good, that moral capacity to look beyond self-interest and seek the good of the whole. It is a capacity that must be learned and nurtured through the experience of bearing this responsibility: to think and act for the good of the whole (Schweigert, 1999). As Roberts (2004) pointed out, the common good arises from "direct, deliberative citizen participation—the ability of citizens to reason together and to come to public judgments with their peers in face-to-face meetings about issues of public concern" (p. 340). Where this kind of reasoning and perspective are not required, they wither.

Given this analysis, it is vain to press for more civics instruction in the schools, without also addressing the use of civic knowledge in the

public arena. Yet this poses a significant challenge. In a large nation with a host of administrative agencies to carry out the affairs of government, there is an inevitable distance between the individual citizen's action and his or her influence on the course of government or quality of governance. Opportunities for public input such as the hearings mandated for public projects are often dominated by advocates for or against the project, with little opportunity for deliberation and rarely any sense of joint responsibility for the ultimate decision. Public officials do what they can to manage the conflicting opinions, then return to the plans being generated by their engineers and professional administrators (Altshuler, 1965).

Deliberative Polling brings a unique combination of potentialities to this situation. In its first stage, it reaches out to an entire population through a random sample survey that is carefully prepared to present important policy choices under consideration by decision makers. The second and third stages go decisively beyond this to position citizens to embrace their responsibility to deliberate and give direction to public policy—an education in moderation and public reason, as well as public responsibility. In its final stage, the postsurvey offers participants in the deliberation an opportunity to assume a public responsibility to register their views for policy makers and fellow citizens as a credible indication of what an informed public would support.

In form, this postdeliberation survey is merely another opportunity for each participant to give his or her individual opinion, with all its biases and limitations. In fact, the participants are, at this point, keenly aware that they are acting on behalf of the larger public and that their views will be treated as a significant statement of the public good. They believe that their postdeliberation survey results will have *recommending force*. In short, these citizens have a unique opportunity to depart from expressing their particular will and self-interest to engage in exercising the general will (Rousseau, 1762/1967). The shift from particular will to general will does not happen by chance or by the whim of the individual citizen, but rather, it occurs when it is called upon; that is, it is the exercise of a duty rather than the expression of a particular interest.

Indeed, every individual may, as a man, have a particular will contrary to, or divergent from, the general will which he has as a citizen; his private interest may prompt him quite differently from the common interest; . . . [so that] he would be willing to enjoy the rights of a citizen without being willing to fulfil the duties of a subject (Rousseau, 1762/1967, p. 21).

The demand to act as citizen implies the ability to do so. It was precisely this sense of empowerment that filled the auditorium and pervaded the small groups on Deliberation Day in Minnesota, March 15, 2008. What long-term effects these experiences may have on participants' practice of

citizenship is not clear, but the ingredients were present to give citizens a paramount experience to act as citizens in a situation structured to influence public affairs, and thus to strengthen their sense of citizenship and public responsibility. This kind of learning and growth—what the students of democracy have long called *public virtue*—can be gained only through performance of the duty that requires it.

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