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Norms of Deliberation: An Inductive Study

Jane Mansbridge, Janette Hartz-Karp, Matthew Amengual, and John Gastil[1]

Writers on the practice of deliberation usually take their cues about what deliberation ought to be from the theoretical literature, sometimes adding elements from their own experience. Until recently, that theoretical literature deductively derived its ideal conception of deliberation from the abstract principles of rationality, liberty, and equality. Then critics of the early stream of theorizing drew from experience and past work on the position of minorities and oppressed groups to fault the early theorists for proposing ideals that, when put into practice, were likely to exclude or marginalize members of disadvantaged groups. More recently, in response to these critiques, contemporary deliberative theorists have broadened and reframed some of these principles. Deliberative theory, however, remains relatively unleavened by the direct experience of deliberation practitioners. To address this problem, we have adopted the explicitly inductive method of mining the observations of facilitators of small-group deliberation on public issues for explicit and implicit deliberative norms. The results differ in several ways from the results of theory derived from abstract principles or the generalized experiences of marginalized groups.

By professional habit, facilitators attend to the perspectives of the actual deliberators. They are also influenced by the professional norms they learned through training and their direct experience as facilitators. Our exploration of facilitators' observations suggest that two concepts familiar to small group researchers—participant satisfaction and group productivity—provide overarching standards by which participants and facilitators alike judge deliberative processes. For deliberation practitioners, maintaining a positive atmosphere and making progress are inextricably interconnected. In addition, practitioners value good emotional interaction alongside

[1] Moira Pulitzer Kennedy did the extensive work of coding the coders' comments into preliminary categories and discussing the introduction, free flow, and equality sections with Jane Mansbridge. Morgan Wells did the work, far more difficult than we had imagined, of arranging to get the tapes, copy them, send them to coders, and get both the tapes and the coding back. We thank them both for their intelligence and dedication. We also thank the Hewlett-Packard Foundation for a grant through the Deliberative Democracy Consortium that funded the collection and coding of these data.

good reason-giving, interpret the common good as "common ground," conceptualize freedom as the "free flow" of ideas in the discussion, and view inequality as a multi-faceted obstacle to deliberation.

These differences from most normative theorists flow in large part from differences in ultimate aims. The theorists seek criteria by which to judge a deliberation's legitimacy—that is, criteria that help citizens decide the depth of their obligation to obey the law resulting from such a deliberation. The facilitators we consulted, on the other hand, sought a kind of deliberation that best accomplished the tasks that groups had set themselves. From this perspective, the ideals of consensus, rationality, freedom, and equality that normative theorists use as criteria of legitimacy take on more instrumental purposes and concrete forms.

Before discussing the details of these findings and their theoretical implications, we begin with a review of the evolution of deliberative democratic theory and the methods by which we conducted our research.

The Evolution of the Deliberative Idea

In our view, deliberative democracy theory has passed through three stages: early theory, a period of criticism, and recent theoretical formulations. Writings in the earliest stage did not always refer to deliberation by that name but captured the core ideas that would deeply influence later deliberative theory. We focus our review of this stage on the early philosophical writings of Jürgen Habermas ([1962] 1991) and Joshua Cohen (1989). Both writers stressed rationality, consensus formation, and the search for a common good in ideal deliberation. They also stressed equality and freedom among the participants as necessary elements of the deliberative process. As their ideas initially defined deliberative theory, it is with their key writings that we begin.

Early Deliberative Theory

In 1962, Jürgen Habermas argued in his *habilitationsschrift* (post-doctoral dissertation, or "professor's thesis"), later translated into English as *The Structural*

Transformation of the Public Sphere ([1962]1991), that "the bourgeois public sphere" in the eighteenth century was characterized by the "people's public use of their reason" (26) in "rational-critical debate." This rational-critical debate he characterized as renouncing any "form of a claim to rule" and standing thus in opposition to "domination" (28). It rested only on "the standards of 'reason'" (28) and "the authority of the better argument" (36) on matters of "common concern" (37). "[T]he public process of critical debate," he wrote, "lay claim to being in accord with reason; intrinsic to the idea of a public opinion born of the power of the better argument was the claim to that morally pretentious rationality that strove to discover what was at once just and right" (54).

The structural transformation that Habermas lamented came about, he believed, in the move from common to conflicting interests. Before this transformation the model was "the convergence of public opinion with reason" (130). It was thus supposed to be "objectively possible (through…an organization of society strictly oriented to the general interest) to keep conflicts of interest…to a minimum" (131). Discussions of politics were "based on a justifiable trust that within the public — presupposing its shared class interest — friend-or-foe relations were in fact impossible" (Ibid.). Yet once "the public was expanded" by the press and presumably by an extended franchise,

> conflicts hitherto pushed aside into the private sphere now emerged in public. …The public sphere, which now had to deal with these demands, became an arena of competing interests…. Laws passed under 'the pressure of the street' could hardly be understood any longer as embodying [a] reasonable consensus….They corresponded more or less overtly to the compromise between competing private interests. (132-3)

After this transformation, political thinkers had to resign themselves to "the inability to resolve rationally the competition of interests in the public sphere" (144). Once "…the masses…succeeded in translating economic antagonisms into political conflicts" (146), "the foundation for a relatively homogeneous public composed of private citizens engaged in rational-critical debate was…shaken" (179). It was then no longer possible "within the political public sphere to resolve conflicts on the basis of relatively

homogeneous interests and by means of relatively reasonable forms of deliberation" (197-8).[2]

In addition to his focus on a consensus in a relatively homogeneous public, Habermas stressed in this early work the relative equality of participants in discussions within the public sphere, and introduced the theme, expanded in his later work, of the absence of power creating an ideal context for deliberation.[3]

Following the work of Habermas, Joshua Cohen was the first major theorist to specify criteria by which one might judge the democratic legitimacy of deliberation. He also made reason, consensus, and the common good central to his theory. Cohen began his list of criteria with the necessity for freedom, reason, and equality in deliberation, adding the aim of reaching rational consensus. These criteria follow:

1) Freedom. For Cohen, freedom meant that the participants must be unconstrained by the "authority of prior norms or requirements" and able to act from the results (1989, 22). *2) Reason*. According to Cohen, deliberative outcomes should be settled only by reference to the "reasons" participants offer. In this emphasis Cohen joins Joseph Bessette (who coined the term "deliberative democracy" Bessette 1979, 1982, 1994), John Rawls (1993, 1997), Habermas and many subsequent theorists. *3) Equality.* Because deliberation is never fully free of power, Cohen pointed out that participants in deliberation should be "substantively equal in that the existing distribution of power and resources does not shape their chances to contribute to the deliberation" (Cohen l989, 23). *4) Consensus*. Cohen stressed that deliberation should aim "to arrive at a rationally motivated *consensus*" (Cohen 1989, 23, emphasis in

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[2] For more on Habermas's early vision and its close relation to the thought of Carl Schmitt, Joseph Schumpeter, Hannah Arendt, and others in this tradition, see Mansbridge forthcoming.

[3] On the absence of power, see, e.g., Habermas [1981] 1984, 25 and 1982, 235, 255. Although Foucault is right that no situation can be "free" from power (or even from coercive power, defined as the threat of sanction or the use of force), some spaces for talking and acting are nevertheless more free than others. In practice, we seek out such spaces for deliberation. Democratic constitutions often try to insulate public deliberative forums from the worst effects of external power: thus the United States Constitution exempts congressional representatives from liability for their official acts and protects for citizens the specific liberties of speech, press and association. See Dahl l989, Knight and Johnson l994. See also Allen l970 and Evans and Boyte l986 on "free spaces," Mansbridge l996 and Mansbridge and Flaster forthcoming on deliberative enclaves, Fraser [l992] l997 on subaltern counterpublics, Scott l990 on sequestered spaces, and Johnson l997 for an interpretation of Foucault as searching for spaces of concrete freedom.

original). His criteria for an ideal deliberative procedure also stipulate that it should be "focused on the common good" (1989, 19), even if ultimately relying on a majority vote to resolve disagreement. Deliberation should shape the "identity and interests of citizens…in ways that contribute to the formation of a public conception of the common good" (Cohen 1989, 19). With respect to reason, consensus, and the common good, then, Cohen and Habermas have strong similarities.

Criticisms of Early Theory

Critics of these two early theorists and of others who followed the same general analytic path have pointed out how the demands for reason, consensus, and the common good may marginalize or exclude members of disadvantaged groups. Iris Young (l996) argued that the process of deliberation should be opened up to participants disadvantaged by traditional elite understandings of "reason-giving" by adding the elements of "greeting" (explicit mutual recognition and conciliatory caring), "rhetoric" (forms of speaking, such as humor, that reflexively attend to the audience), and "storytelling" (which can show outsiders what values mean to those who hold them).

In "Against Deliberation," Lynn Sanders (l997) argued in the same vein that the careful, sober weighing of reasons connoted by the word deliberation has historically made deliberation a tool for conservative politics, excluding those who did not have the sanctioned method of logical debate easily at their disposal. Sanders pointed out that more inclusive talk would add more accessible ways of communicating, including what she called "testimony," or stating one's own perspective in one's own words.

Requiring legitimate deliberation to be "reasoned" also implicitly or explicitly excludes the positive role of the emotions in deliberation. Amelie Rorty (1985), Martha Nussbaum (1995), and others have pointed out the flaws in dichotomizing "reason" and "emotion," because the emotions always include some form of appraisal and evaluation, and reason itself needs at least an emotional commitment to the process of reasoning. Nussbaum's positive account of the role of emotions in deliberation further singles out the emotion of compassion as an essential element of good

reasoning in matters of public concern. Other emotions, such as solidarity, play equally important roles.[4]

Several critics have also argued that Habermas's and Cohen's singular focus on the common good keeps us from seeing that deliberations may legitimately conclude that the interests of the participants fundamentally conflict (Mansbridge [1980] 1983, 1996; Knight and Johnson 1994, 1997; Young l996; Sanders 1997). In practice, the conscious or unconscious pressure to frame one's argument in terms of the common good can distort participants' understandings of the issue, making it far harder to resolve that issue through legitimate bargaining (e.g. by taking turns or equalizing outcomes with side payments). Deliberative forms of democratic participation, these critics argue, should enable citizens not only to discover or forge a common good but also to express self-interest and see conflict more clearly when that conflict has previously been masked by hegemonic definitions of the common good, by elite "non-decisions," and by other features of the social context.[5] The articulation of self-interest would then have a legitimate role in democratic deliberation, particularly in discussions of fair distribution (Mansbridge l990, forthcoming; Stoker l992).[6]

The goal of deliberation for Habermas, Cohen, and many theorists is ultimately to legitimate through democratic decision the necessary force with which the state enforces the laws. Laws are legitimate, at least in part, to the degree that the deliberation that has gone into them meets the criteria for good deliberation. Even the critics who see deliberation as aimed at helping citizens understand their interests better, whether or not these interests can be forged into a larger common good, count this dimension of understanding into the deliberative quality that legitimates the eventual laws. The deliberation that helps to legitimate a law includes not only the

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[4] For more on the emotions in deliberation see particularly Hall 2005 and sources cited therein, along with Barber 1984, 174; Knight and Johnson 1997, 284; Lindblom 1990, 32.

[5] See Bachrach and Baratz 1963, Bachrach 1974, and the criterion of "enlightened understanding" in Dahl 1989, 104-5. Women, for example, have often been socialized to put the interests of others ahead of their own in ways that interfere with understanding their own interests. See also Nussbaum 2001 on "adaptive preferences."

[6] Recently Cohen and Rogers have also concluded, "Deliberation does not preclude statements of self-interest (2003, 247).

direct discussions among citizens or representatives that lead relatively immediately to a law or policy (or to the decision not to establish a law or policy) but also mass-mediated deliberation (Page 1996) and other exchanges in the wider public sphere. These deliberations contribute to the public opinion from which both the public will and the public reasons that support a law derive.

Recent Deliberative Theory

Deliberative theory has evolved partly in reaction to critique, but it has also matured as a result of a rapidly-multiplying number of voices and perspectives.[7] Thus, when political theorist Simone Chambers (2003) took stock of the literature recently, she explained that she would "look beyond the question of what deliberative democratic theory is, to the question of what deliberative democratic theory is doing these days" (307). "Deliberative democratic theory," she concluded, "has moved beyond the 'theoretical statement' stage and into the 'working theory' stage" (Ibid.). Chambers' inventory of deliberative goings-on included an assessment of the impact of the diversity critiques of the early formulations of deliberative theory: "The intersection with diversity theory has moved deliberative democratic theory in significant new directions" (321). In particular, "Deliberative theory has moved away from a consensus-centered teleology—contestation and indeed the agonistic side of democracy now have their place—and it is more sensitive to pluralism" (Ibid.). More generally, she found that "the exchange between diversity theory and deliberative theory has helped to make the latter more concrete" (321).

Surveying the diverse conceptions of deliberation in existence, Chambers offers this concise definition:

> We can say that deliberation is debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants. Although consensus need not be the ultimate aim of deliberation, and participants are expected to pursue their interests, an overarching interest in the legitimacy of outcomes (understood as justification to all affected) ideally characterizes deliberation. (309)

[7] Cf. edited volumes such as Bohman and Rehg 1997, Elster 1998, Gastil & Levine 2005, and Besson and Marti 2006.

This definition suggests that many recent formulations of deliberation have moved beyond the more reason-centered, consensus-oriented strictures of early deliberative theory. Such a definition is not far from one advanced by one of the co-authors of this essay, who defined deliberation in 2000 as "discussion that involves judicious argument, critical listening, and earnest decision making" (Gastil 2000, 22). More precisely, "full deliberation 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" (Ibid.). These definitions do not exclude emotional appeals or the expression of strong feelings. With their references to "outcomes" and "decision-making," they imply, but do not specifically require, deliberation to a binding decision.

Burkhalter, Gastil, and Kelshaw (2002) go farther in their definition of deliberation by arguing that a deliberative process broadly speaking may even require a period of "dialogue," defined as an open-ended discussion in which participants do not try to solve a problem but instead simply try to understand each other's experiences, languages, and ways of thinking and arguing. Burkhalter et al. explain that in contrast to discussion aimed at a binding decision, an open-ended dialogue can tap into "previously unrealized or unacknowledged perspectives within the group" (411). Freed from the constraints of producing a binding decision, the process allows participants to bring "different epistemologies to bear on a common problem, and that can result in a more sophisticated analysis of any public issue. At the same time, dialogue promotes fairness and inclusion by opening up conversation about alternative ways of speaking and knowing" (Ibid).[8]

Ryfe (2005) offers a final glimpse into recent deliberative theory, revealing the growing influence of empirical research in communication, social psychology, and other disciplines on theories of deliberation. Ryfe specifically conceptualizes deliberation to include "a disturbance of everyday reasoning habits." "People prefer to rely on routine scripts to navigate through their social world," he explains. "Being jolted out of these scripts is, generally speaking, a disconcerting experience" (56). By

[8] See also Walsh forthcoming on the differences between "dialogue" and deliberation to a binding decision.

incorporating such disturbance into the definition of deliberation, Ryfe "directly implicates emotions in the process of deliberation" (Ibid.).

Ryfe points out that, as a consequence of the cognitive difficulty of deliberation defined to require disturbance, "Within any particular interaction, deliberation may ebb and flow as participants alternately resist and accept the challenge of deliberation" (2005, 59). He suggests that people will be more likely to engage in a probing, difficult deliberation if they are motivated by accountability, high stakes, and the diversity of the deliberators (57) and if their deliberations are buttressed by appropriate rules, the nurturing of storytelling, leadership, and apprenticeship (63-4). Because deliberation is always "shaped by culture and society," with varying linguistic patterns and social norms, individuals must "learn to deliberate by doing it in concert with others more skilled in the activity" (64). In sum, Ryfe sees deliberation as an evolving cultural practice that entails learning particular cultural norms. He advises theorists that "we must learn more about what deliberation actually looks like" (Ibid.).

This is the point of departure for our study. We hope to advance the project of modern deliberative theory by, to adapt Chambers' wording, looking more carefully at what deliberative democratic *practice* is doing these days.

Research Methods

To identify the norms implied in contemporary deliberative practice, we collected tapes of ten small group deliberations on public issues from six organizations in the United States (anonymous for reasons of privacy). The organizations provided the tapes on the basis that the tapes would be analyzed for an inductive study of deliberative norms. We asked more than one coder to code each tape.

Group Characteristics

The deliberations captured on tape differed from one another in a number of ways, including the method of participant selection, the diversity of participants, the goals of the groups, the discussion methods used, the size of the groups, whether the

groups stood alone or were part of a series, the extent of follow up, and the expectation of having influence.

The method of selection of participants varied. In three deliberations from three different sources, the participants were chosen randomly from a pool of registered voters. In other deliberations, participants were chosen to include informal stakeholders or descriptive representatives of different perspectives. In every group, the method of selection included an element of self-selection, as some individuals asked to participate declined or could not come. Groups varied in the degree of their ethnic, racial, age, religious, socio-economic, and other forms of diversity; some groups were relatively homogenous and others quite diverse as measured by these metrics. The goals of the groups differed, from acting as a measure of what a relatively random group of citizens would think about a topic if they had the opportunity to deliberate with others about it, to having a discussion that was expected to energize the participants and bring them together to produce some form of action, to more formally giving advice to a sitting government on a specific policy area. The methods of discussion differed: Some had relatively long introductions; some had informal expert presentations; some had breakout groups; and some sat at a table while others sat around a room. Some had consciously unique styles of deliberation. In one, each individual wrote and brought to the group something bearing on his or her own perspective; in that group, subgroups also produced written reports. Some made systematic lists of issues for discussion; some (often the same groups) used flip charts to record the suggestions and comments of the participants. In some, the participants had name tags and/or "tents" on which their name appeared; in others participants relied on their memories of the personal introductions at the beginning for their fellow participants' names. In some, the facilitator deliberately set time markers for each section of group discussion and kept the group to those markers; in others the management of time was more informal. Some had more formal ground rules than others, including at least one with written rules. In some, the facilitator was more active than in others in soliciting comments from those less inclined to speak spontaneously. Some groups took a formal vote at the end of the deliberation, although most did not. The size of the small groups varied from 7 to 25 participants, a variable that affected whether they could all see one another

easily when talking. Some of the small discussion groups were embedded in a larger process that included one hundred to several hundred people; others were the sole group of their kind. The groups also varied in the degree to which they expected to meet together after the deliberation to take action and the degree to which they expected the results of their deliberations to be adopted by official decision-makers.

The purpose of this study is not, however, to compare these styles and settings. Indeed, the researchers specifically assured the organizations providing the tapes that no such comparison would be performed.

Facilitator Coding

The coders of these tapes were chosen by sending a group email to several lists of professional facilitators in the United States and other English-speaking countries, asking if, in return for a reward of $1000, they might be interested in "watching four hours of tape from a deliberative session, and coding it for particularly good deliberative moments and more problematic ones. The coding will be based on your own experience of good and problematic interactions rather than on any pre-set coding scheme" (See Appendix A).[9] Of the resulting more than one hundred positive responses, ten were chosen on the basis of their professional experience. The facilitators were then sent one or more tapes and given instructions first to go through the tapes noting cursorily where they thought an interaction was "good," "very good," "problematic," or "very problematic." The coders were assured:

> We are giving no definitions of "good" and "problematic," not because we know what the definitions are but aren't telling, but because there is no literature on what <u>practitioners</u> are looking for in good and problematic interactions, and we want to build that literature from the ground up. So this is truly inductive. Just make the judgments by the seat of your pants, on the basis of whatever experience you have and just your own human reactions, and write the [judgment] down as you experience the situation.

They were then asked to go through the tape again, and this time:

> stop the tape each time you have made a notation and type up … <u>why</u> you made the decision that this was good, very good, problematic, or very

[9] We will thus use the terms "coders" and "facilitators" interchangeably throughout, except when the context makes it clear that we refer to the facilitators of the groups studied.

problematic. Use your own words and your own categories — just say what you saw and why you thought it was x or y.

Interpreting the Coding

When these codings were complete, a secondary coder, Moira Pulitzer Kennedy, went through them in three stages, consulting at each stage with one of the primary investigators. First, Kennedy read through the transcripts from the original coders to highlight what the coders thought were the good and problematic elements, in order to get an overall understanding of their perspectives. Second, she divided the elements that the original coders had selected into those coded good and problematic. Third (and most extensively), she organized these elements by theme. These themes provide the basis for much of this analysis. Following these methods, we do not necessarily expect the coders to be either internally consistent or consistent with one another, although in many respects they did reveal a considerable degree of consistency. In short, the methods were designed to probe the normative structure of the facilitators, not to measure the interactions in the deliberations themselves.

We divided the norms that this process revealed into two categories -- first describing the broad standards for evaluating deliberation, then turning to a range of specific insights into the deliberative process.

Standards for Evaluating Deliberation

Having given the instructions to identify "particularly good deliberative moments and more problematic ones," we assumed that our facilitator coders would reveal implicit standards for judging the deliberative merits of discussion. We were not disappointed. After reviewing the facilitators' comments, our secondary coder identified two general standards for evaluating deliberation: (1) maintaining a positive "group atmosphere" (cf. Jehn and Mannix 2001) and (2) making progress on the group's task.

These standards have a direct relation to the two most common goals of almost any group discussion—satisfaction and productivity. The literature on democratic group leadership, for example, consistently stresses these twin goals (e.g., Gastil, 1994), but they are also general aims for groups in a wide range of contexts. In

decision-making groups with clearly defined tasks, the two concepts are often intertwined, as satisfaction is "commonly perceived of as the affect experienced when expectation-type standards are fulfilled" (Hecht 1978, 357).

Maintaining a Productive Group Atmosphere

Facilitators repeatedly commented on the "atmosphere" of the groups they observed. One coder wrote positively of the deliberation he witnessed that "looseness and permissiveness seem to establish the right kind of comfortable foundation." He coded it as good that "Spirits are high. The group has gotten to know one another better," and "The group seems jovial, warm, connected." Such warmth and connection are valuable simply for participant satisfaction, but the coder hints at a more instrumental dimension by stressing the right kind of "foundation." Another coder made the connection between atmosphere and outcome more explicit, noting positively an atmosphere in which "people feel they could express themselves frankly and honestly." Normatively, in such an atmosphere the impediments to what each participant wants to say will usually be lowered; domination may also be reduced. Instrumentally, the group will often have access to more information and insights. Comfort and warmth are thus not only intrinsically enjoyable; they also facilitate an important form of freedom, to which we will return later —the *free flow* of frank speech, which is itself both intrinsically and instrumentally valuable.

Elements of a positive atmosphere described by coders included humor, lightness while maintaining a sense of importance, and admissions of fallibility. On the other hand, coders categorized as negative features that discouraged participants by making them feel uncomfortable, frustrated and embattled.

An atmosphere conducive to the free flow of ideas included not only warmth but also mirth. Many coders noted the positive role of humor in the discussions they observed. One mentioned that laughter promoted "loosening people up more." Another commented that humor created a "lightness" that made "people feel more at ease." Others found that when the atmosphere was tense, humor could help the group cope with the difficult matters. These remarks on humor underscore the instrumental role of atmosphere in generating the free flow of speech and furthering the task. To be clear,

the facilitators did not advocate unhinged joviality but rather the lightness that can relieve tension during serious work.

Although some coders praised a loose and permissive atmosphere, one coder found the introduction to the deliberation he coded "too casual…for a process whose civic seriousness and importance is emphasized so much." He thought the deliberative setting could have benefited from having "more gravitas and power." Again we see a mix of instrumental and affective goals: emphasizing the civic importance of a deliberation elevates it to significance beyond that of a casual afternoon talk, implicitly underscores the importance of the participants' actions, and gets them both to pay more attention to the proceedings and to get more satisfaction from it.

We also noticed that facilitators wanted a kind of seriousness quite different from the formal argumentative roles that can lead to rigid position-taking in purely agonistic discourse (Goi 2005). In particular, the coders valued participants' admissions of fallibility. When one participant gave an example of her own mother's intolerance, the coder noted positively that this revelation "shows the group that you are not being accusatory or judgmental." Another coder noted positively a moment when the facilitator admitted making a mistake, commenting that admitting wrongs creates an atmosphere in which it is easier to criticize without the criticisms being interpreted as an attack. The normative goal seems implicitly to be non-domination, while the instrumental goal is proximately the free flow of speech and more distantly progress on the task. The affective goal is simple satisfaction with the experience.

By contrast with these "good" deliberative moments, facilitators also found "problematic" moments in which a group created a negative atmosphere that discouraged some attendees from participating. In one deliberation, a coder noted that a woman younger than the others seemed "somewhat uncomfortable" and did not stay long, her discomfort and departure meaning that "the process of inclusion did not work." Another identified as problematic perceived conditions of "frustration" and engagement in "battles." For facilitators, participants who leave the group, either physically or by "internal migration" (remaining in the room but ceasing verbal and sometimes even emotional participation), usually represent failures in facilitation. Normatively, the free flow of speech has been curtailed. Leaving may also indicate a

perception of domination. Instrumentally, the leaving member can no longer give input to the task. Affectively, the unhappy departure of a participant throws a chill over the group. To summarize, facilitators identified "good" deliberation as promoting an atmosphere that maintains a degree of "gravitas" but is consistently comfortable, even friendly, so that participants feel safe enough to be humble, change their minds, and speak freely.

Making Progress on the Task

Reading the coders' comments makes it clear how much effort they themselves, as facilitators, expect to expend helping the group make progress on whatever task it has set itself. Every coder mentioned one or more aspects of the instrumental side of deliberation, aimed at making task progress. Indeed, the secondary coder placed at least a third of all of the coders' comments in a category that she labeled "instrumental," a category that accrued more comments than any other. Nearly every one of the coders noted the importance of giving clear instructions to the group, several mentioned methods to help the group use its time wisely and record the progress made, and some stressed the importance of proper preparation, among other points. When these methods did not work, in the words of one,

> energy and direction were lost… [there is a] digression from the track they were on, the forward momentum that's needed to generate group energy at this point. … [F]or the moment they have lost the "methodical," seriously-progressing aspect of their deliberative process.

The coders expected the facilitators to keep the group "focused on task" and keep it from "wandering around issues," judging interventions as good when they "move[] the process along."

Almost every coder made some reference to the group's needing clear instructions and focus at the beginning. As one coder made his way through the deliberation, he found it problematic that the "ground rules and expectations have not been clear." Another considered it good that the group he coded spent "significant time…on establishing the ground work, purpose, goals, what will be done afterwards." Several coders approved of the facilitator's referring to the group's mission at the beginning of a deliberation, with one adding that the mission should have been placed

in writing in front of the group. Another indicated that it was very important that the goals be clearly stated so that people knew why they are there. Yet another noted acerbically in a negative coding that "an agenda for the small group session would have been useful." The facilitators coding these deliberations found the ground-rule and goal-setting instrumental task worthy of almost universal comment.

Similarly, a majority of the coders noted the importance of using time wisely. Many focused on managing time so that the group could discuss all of the issues important to it. One scored as good a moment in which "the group becomes much more focused on the time left and what they can accomplish." Another stated more substantively that "the efficient timing helped maintain an atmosphere conducive to thoughtful discussion," while still another commented that "there needs to be space for individual reflection." As experienced facilitators themselves, these coders were well aware that one of their jobs was to keep the group moving toward its goal. The majority of coders also specifically noted the importance of posting and recording information during the deliberation. One coder even used the phrase "flip charting" as a verb, suggesting the ubiquity of the technique among facilitators. One noted that it was good for the facilitator to "write meeting goals on a flip chart," another scored as good the fact that the "questions [were] posted," and another simply deplored the "lack of information" given the group. Posting the instructions, recording questions, and writing down statements on which people agreed were all noted as essential tasks for good deliberation. In the same vein, many coders mentioned the importance of either the facilitator or the participants helping clarify others' comments for the group. One coder noted positively the "clarifying questions by facilitator" as well as, later, the "clarifying statements which furthered the dialogue and understanding," while another scored as good a moment in which "Sally tries to help Bruce clarify his thoughts."[10]

More broadly, the coders found productive any feature of the deliberation that enhanced the group's problem-solving ability. Staying on topic, being "realistic about…what it is possible to achieve," being "pragmatic," considering "what needs to

[10] A few coders even identified the importance of name tags or name "tents" as means for promoting closer interaction among members of the group. One pointed out that "tent cards" helped "make it easier to call someone by name [and] facilitate note taking," while another scored the lack of name tags as problematic, stating, "name tags or placards could have helped to promote more personalized group member interaction."

be done and how to achieve it," and doing "reality testing" all enhanced that ability, as did the frequent injunction, which we will explore in more detail later, to go "into the depths," dig "deeper," and face the complexity of the issues.

Theoretical Implications

With hindsight, the detail and extent of attention in our coders' comments to instrumental methods designed to help the group complete its task is unsurprising. Whether a group is a pure discussion group or expects to present its conclusions as advice to a decision-maker, the members of the group usually want to see something done as a result of the time and energy they have spent. They pay a facilitator in great part to help them in that task. When we asked professional facilitators to code the good and problematic moments in our deliberations, we should not have been surprised that their understanding of "good" focused heavily on these points.

A facilitator is almost always both a "task-facilitator" and a "process-facilitator" (Anderson & Robertson 1985), and facilitators have a further incentive to make the process satisfying so that they will be called back for another engagement. Referrals and recommendations implicitly depend on how satisfied their clients are with both the process and the group's progress on the task. The facilitators' sharpened observations thus provide a lens on the way one can expect participants in general to respond to deliberation: they will want both to have a good time and to "get somewhere."

One insight for deliberative theory is how *intrinsic* the connection is between "atmosphere" and task productivity. Many studies of small groups have found strong connections between a group's productivity and aspects of its atmosphere such as mutual trust, respect, and norms of open discussion (Jehn and Mannix 2001). Our facilitators' observations suggest that these larger findings apply to the subset of small groups organized for public deliberation.

The coders' comments on group atmosphere should not be interpreted to indicate that they, or the facilitators of the groups they coded, were avoiding the challenge of deliberation. Ryfe has argued that "Individuals tend to be hesitant deliberators, preferring to 'pass the buck' when they can and to rely on information

short cuts when they cannot" (2005, 56). Deliberation is taxing in part because of its disturbance of the habits of everyday reasoning and in part because it requires one to "weigh carefully both the consequences of various options for action and the views of others" (Mathews 1994, 110). In the terms of Burkhalter et al. (2002), deliberation involves everything from thorough problem analysis and solution generation to active consideration of divergent viewpoints and even dialogue across cultural divides. Creating a comfortable atmosphere can conduce to all of these ends. But a challenging deliberation can also pose a threat to a comfortable group atmosphere (see Mutz 2006). As the next section reveals, some coders explicitly demanded depth and rigor in deliberative discussions and were pleased when, in Ryfe's terms, people were "jolted out" of their scripts, although this requirement did not emerge as one of the primary themes in the coding.

The practical deliberative norms identified by our facilitators can inform normative deliberative theory, in part because deliberative theorists have focused on the rigor of the deliberative process lending legitimacy to the outcomes, paying little attention to the instrumental norms of getting a good job done. Theorists have asked of 'good deliberation' that the process sufficiently meet the ideal criteria for deliberation to warrant mandated action on the outcomes, regardless of their quality. By contrast, practitioners have asked of 'good deliberation' that it meet those ideal criteria at minimal cost while making progress toward a sound decision.

Specific Insights Advancing Deliberative Theory

Beyond the twin aims of maintaining a positive group atmosphere and making progress on the task, the facilitators' comments revealed several other themes relevant to deliberative theory. These include the balance of reason and emotion, the distinction between the common good and common ground, the importance of free flowing discussion, and a multi-faceted view of inequality. Each of these themes ties back into the two evaluative standards of atmosphere and productivity, but each also adds an

important, more nuanced insight of direct relevance to contemporary debates in deliberative theory.

Reason and Emotion

The coders in this study did not stress "reason" or "rationality" as much as Cohen and Habermas would have done. Only four of the ten facilitators who coded our deliberations specified an ideal of reason and rationality. One of these found that the group he observed was unable "to easily, consistently get into that 'more careful' deliberative mode (by which I mean, here, exchanging views and considering pros, cons, nuances on an issue narrow and clear enough to be a viable conversational focus)." All in all, he wanted "a thoughtful process." Another found it problematic that a participant would probably not "be able to rationally consider other points of view" and good that participants talked through difficult issues "rationally and without negative emotion." A third noted that at one point in the deliberation "interactions [are] increasing; reasons for alternatives [are] starting to come…facilitator might have encouraged specific directions in the discussion, such as 'issues,' 'reasons,' 'solutions.'" Although no coder emphasized rationality as much as other ideals, in every case references to reason and rationality were positive.

By contrast, the coders' judgment of the merits of emotional expression depended on whether the emotion furthered the group task.[11] One facilitator coded as "good" the way the "increasing passion" in the participants' comments led to a "deeper level of group discussion." Another found that "the injection of emotion into the discussion makes for greater introspection on the part of the other participants. This is evidence[d] by their body language and the tenor of their response to [the person talking]." Several other coders shared this positive assessment of emotion-laden expression leading to deeper deliberation.

One coder even considered it problematic that the presence of experts and "'more knowledgeable people'" can "drive out attention to personal stories, the 'feeling

[11] Although the coders made far more positive mentions of emotions than of reason, little weight should be placed on these frequencies, because they knew that in a second task they would be asked to code for emotions in the deliberations; that knowledge surely primed them to attend to emotional interactions.

of the problem' kind of thing." In this instance "the feeling of the problem" seems to outweigh bringing knowledge to bear on that problem. This coder may have had equality concerns, explored later, primarily in mind. But the coder may also have wanted the deliberation to elicit ideas derived from feeling as well as facts. Even the coder who had explicitly said it was good when participants talked through difficult issues "rationally and without negative emotion," specified *negative* emotion as the problem, implying that positive emotion might be a lesser problem or perhaps even a value.

One coder expressed ambivalence in regard to emotion that may have been more widely shared. Having first identified it as good when a participant reported "feelings of despair" over a political issue, he then also considered it good that the participant made the remark "in a restrained manner…and expressed little emotion." In short, he approved of bringing emotions into the deliberation, but only in a restrained way with little emotionality. Another made the point specifically that "emotion can be a double-edged sword, equally capable of shifting the group's focus from the discussion topic and task at hand as deepening the discussion and overall experience."

We may conclude that the facilitators coding these deliberations welcomed the expression of emotion—even "passion"—when it provided insight, engaged the participants, or even brought "focus" back to the proceedings. They found emotion unproductive when it made participants feel "defensive or angry" and when it kept them from "consider[ing] others' views" or explaining the reasons behind their position. The coders positively valued emotions that elicited new ideas and perspectives for consideration and negatively valued emotions that in various ways seemed to close down communication.

This view of emotion differs both from early deliberative theory, which privileged reason, and more recent deliberative theory, which tends to view emotion as generating information complementary to reasoned argument (e.g., Gastil 2000). Our facilitators' observations suggest that although emotional stories do add information to the discussion, emotion may be even more important as a means of motivating participants to work together on their task.

Common Good vs. Common Ground

Congruent with earlier deliberative theories, a majority of the facilitators coding these deliberations explicitly favored the goal of "consensus." One considered it problematic that a decision to focus on an issue had been made "without group polling/consensus" and expressed satisfaction when the group reached "an amiable, serious and authentic consensus." Another approved of the group's "working towards a consensus" and trying to "build a group consensus." Yet another noted that when some participants do not speak, the group cannot reach consensus, adding that the facilitator should have put the onus on the group to "gain agreement/consensus independently." Another mentioned "fair consensus" approvingly twice and "consensus" favorably once in coding one deliberation, and in coding a second deliberation suggested positively that the "facilitator indicated there 'seemed to be consensus'" and that there was a process of "consensus building in the end." Still another commented favorably when various participants tried to "lead [the] group to consensus," "interrupts to lead group toward consensus," and "tries to gain consensus."

Yet the search for a "common good" played a weaker role in the comments of the facilitators. Only two coders, both strong proponents of consensus decision making, used the phrase "the common good" or "the good of the whole" in a way that Habermas or Cohen might have done. Noticing that a participant in the deliberation "puts out the term 'general good,'" one concluded, in an implied criticism of the deliberation:

> A core concept like "general" or "common good" could provide the "center" for a launch of [the idea the group was working on] that could be the basis for a series of deliberations about what should be included in a breakdown of the general good—or in the components of a new process that would yield more general good.

He then speculated briefly on several reasons why the facilitator had not used such a core concept, including deliberate choice on the facilitator's part, lack of energy among the participants, and the possibility that the group's designated style did not lend itself to this direction. His remarks did not constitute a major criticism, however, as he coded this episode "good," rather than "problematic."

Both this coder and the other who used the term "good of the whole" explicitly contrasted the search for commonality with the expression of personal or group interest. The first coder found it problematic when people in the group entered an "overtly political mode" or took an "advocacy" stance. The second similarly found it problematic when some of the participants seemed to have a "vested interest" or were "pointing out their own concerns." As she put it, "[T]he best conditions for deliberation occur when everyone is seen to be acting for the good of the whole, i.e., no one is speaking out of self or corporate interest, or on behalf of a particular interest group." Evaluating a second deliberation that focused on ethnic differences, this coder also commented negatively on one participant "speaking as a Muslim," and later in the same deliberation found problematic a moment in which the group applauded after a woman's speech in a "show of support for her and against the male participant." She considered the applause problematic because it "establishes sides," perhaps a particularly worrying stance in questions of religion, ethnicity or race.[12]

These two coders raise a normative issue that has become a matter of controversy. Although Habermas, Cohen, and many other early theorists—particularly on the European continent—assumed that deliberation should have as a goal the search for a common good, other more recent theorists—particularly in the United States—have suggested that a strong focus on the common good suppresses the consideration of conflicting interests. The facilitators who coded our deliberations, almost all from the United States, seemed to try to accommodate both conflict and consensus by stressing "common ground" rather than the "common good." Similarly, in the United States many deliberative manuals advocate trying to find "common ground" and do not use the words "common good" (Walsh forthcoming).

While only two coders in our study referred to "the common good" or "the good of the whole," six of the ten spoke positively of "common ground," one using the phrase five times. In addition, one of these underscored the concern for pluralism involved in substituting common ground for common good by specifically warning of

[12] Another coder also reported as problematic a moment in which a "proponent emphatically advocated for four minutes," but in the absence of any other negative comments on advocacy it might have been the length at which the participant talked rather than the advocacy itself that provoked this negative comment.

the dangers of suppressing underlying conflict. Although he praised the attempt to "identify common ground," he considered it problematic when the facilitator began "to seem to push too far for common ground."

The practical search for "common ground" is consistent with the spirit of Cohen's (1989, 28) acknowledgement that "institutionalizing a deliberative procedure requires a decision rule short of consensus." Common ground is a place where people can find broad agreement—usually a super-majoritarian agreement—that nonetheless falls short of both unanimity and the more demanding requirement of a "reasoned consensus." It is a kind of compromise, but far more than a crude aggregation or averaging of participants' private interests.

In the search for a common good, or even common ground, deliberative theorists have hoped that deliberation might provoke transformations in which individuals who had previously seen a situation from the perspective of "I" come to think as "we" (see e.g. Barber 1984, 200; also Warren 1992). In the course of the ten deliberations in this sample, the coders did not report any such moments, although they could not have been expected to see changes internal to the participants. One did code a deliberation positively as "leading to [the participants'] commitment, concern for the topic and its outcomes." Moreover, the coders generally seemed to expect that the participants would have some sort of change during the deliberation, leading one coder to score as problematic a moment when "Jim, angry farmer, hasn't changed his ideas." By and large, however, in these small public deliberations the coders did not pick up and report moments that seemed explicitly to "transform conflict into cooperation" (Barber 1984, 135, also 119).

Free Flow

Cohen (1989) identified freedom as his first criterion for good democratic deliberation. Since that time, no deliberative theorist, to our knowledge, has dissented from this position, although some have chosen to focus on different aspects of freedom, such as Fishkin's (1991, 34-35) emphasis on "non-tyranny" in relation to minority rights. Given the broad commitment to unfettered discussion in deliberative theory, it should come as no surprise that this value also emerged in our facilitators' coding.

Nonetheless, our coders chose to emphasize an aspect of freedom that differs slightly from the definitions that theorists have traditionally adopted. As we suggested in our earlier discussion of group atmosphere, the coders' most salient version of freedom involved what we call the "free flow" of discussion.

All of the coders, without exception, explicitly ascribed value to the free flow of ideas. One concluded, "It is the free-flowing discussion between a group of participants that I would call true deliberation." "In fact," she later added, "I might go so far as to suggest that a pre-requisite for really good deliberation is a group small enough to allow free-flowing discussion." This free flow required lowering the barriers to frank speech through a level of comfort with the situation that encouraged openness, a sense of safety, and the capacity for mutual challenge. The result was what the coders praised as the "expansion and exchange of ideas" or the "open and direct exchange" of ideas. In this process, the relative absence of coercive power promoted honesty. But by itself the absence of power could simply produce boredom and withdrawal; the generation of ideas also required engagement. The free flow of ideas undoubtedly had the purely normative dimensions of not impeding desired action and expressing non-domination. It also had the affective dimension of pure enjoyment in lively, engaged, back-and-forth discussion. But our coders primarily valued free flow because it helped the group produce good ideas and thus make progress on their task.

Producing good ideas first of all requires engagement. Consider the group that one coder described:

> …drift and digression. Other group members get involved, but interjections tend to get subsumed in a Q&A interaction with [one participant]. Some of the group…seem distracted, turned off — folded arms, etc. I think it's possible that the group flow never fully recovers….

Everyone recognizes these symptoms. An unengaged participant is an unengaged brain. So when in one group "participants [were] silent for an extended period," the coder did not judge this silence as productive, giving participants time to think about a difficult or unexpected issue, allowing them perhaps to gather the courage to speak or assess the situation emotionally and intellectually. In this context, the silence was not charged but dead, a symptom of the participants' failure to engage with the ideas or one another. "Isolated conversations," "multiple subgroup conversations," and "sidebar

conversations," in which two or possibly three participants talked together on the side while someone else addressed the group, also violated the implicit rules of the game and kept the group from using all of its brains collectively. No engagement, no flow, no progress.

Producing good ideas also requires safety and therefore a relatively high level of mutual respect. Coders repeatedly stressed the importance of making the group safe enough for free, open and direct interchange. The coder who had condemned isolated conversations did so in part because such conversations expressed disrespect for the rest of the group. Several coders linked respect, trust, and safety. One identified as good moments in which people were "humble" and "considered" others, a stance that in the view of that coder helped create "trust." Another found that in "very respectful discussion" individuals felt "safe enough to speak boldly and with some passion on their issues." This coder also noted that when the mood of the deliberation became "tense," the previously established mutual respect allowed the group to handle the tense situation constructively. A third praised participants for being "non-judgmental" and not getting "personal," remarking that this restraint showed respect for the others' ideas. Mutual respect, often perceived as primarily an egalitarian value, here also promoted trust and safety, which gave participants the courage to speak openly, facilitating the free flow of ideas.

One coder took a step farther in exploring the productive value of safety in the group, explicitly associating free flow with voicing conflict or at least "challenge." Praising an interaction where "[t]wo participants challenge another," she coded the challenge as good "because it brings up and out many questions and the need for clarity. This encourages people to speak their mind as they begin to feel that they have a safe space to do it." She concluded about this scene of challenge, "*This is the place that I see the best deliberation* [emphasis in original]." This coder wrote more explicitly than any other about the quality of thought in the deliberation. She found an earlier interaction problematic because there was "no extended discussion," no "getting to think deeper — thought provoking," "no heavy discussion…only light surface bantering." At another point, noting "no difference of opinion," she speculated: "Not enough data to show if this is due to individuals not feeling safe enough to disagree

with another or is the group too homogeneous to have diverse opinions?" At other points she coded the deliberation good "because it is challenging a belief that is generally accepted," "because it creates a space that allows dissension and therefore challenge," and even once "because it creates chaos and wakes the others up to get them to speak their truths." She coded as very good the "disagreement and questioning of participant's point of view [because]…it creates a conversation about why and how." Although several coders pursued consensus as a goal, this coder saw challenge and dissension in a place of safety as the heart of deliberation.

Indeed, disruption as a deliberative ideal (Ryfe 2005) is not intrinsically at odds with free flow, for the freedom in free flow does not imply absence of turbulence. One coder praised a particular structure and process as "challenging because it is intentionally and explicitly designed to avoid linearity and to enable emergence." None of the groups studied, however, encompassed conflicts in opinion and interest so great that their forceful expression prevented, rather than encouraging, the free flow of ideas.

The theoretical value of the "free flow" concept may be to connect previously disconnected emphases in deliberative theory. Previous theorists have emphasized freedom (Cohen 1989), dissent (Barber 1984; Gastil 1983), mutual respect (Benhabib 1992; Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Mansbridge [1980] 1983), and dialogue (Burkhalter et al. 2002; Pearce and Littlejohn 1997), but "free flow" brings those together in a way that is efficient and understandable. Consider how free flow amends each of these concepts in turn. For freedom, the point is not so much the individual's right to speak but rather the group's productive needs for free-flowing frank discussion. Dissent becomes valuable not only for the protections it affords to individual autonomy but also as a means to better thought for all (cf. Mill [1859] 1947). In the context of the free flow of ideas, respect gains value not only as an end in itself but also as a critical part of a framework for maintaining honest, frank and free discussion. The spirit of dialogue similarly comes to characterize the degree of openness in a discussion rather than a particular way of organizing or framing that discussion. In these ways, "free flow" may add economy and clarity to our formulations of elements at the core of deliberative discussions.

Three Facets of "Equality"

If the concept of free flow brings together many different ideas in deliberative theory, our facilitators' codings do the opposite for "equality". Equality emerges not as an explicit value in itself but as a feature of three related goals: extensive and inclusive participation in discussion, self-facilitation and group control, and fair representation of views without bias. Rarely using the term "equality," the coders never seemed concerned with furthering precise equality in coercive power. Rather, they stressed the ways that in general greater equality tends to generate more ideas through participation, keep the group itself in control of the process, and maintain procedural fairness.

1. Extensive and inclusive participation in discussion.

The deliberative ideal that emerges from the facilitators' codings is less strictly egalitarian than it is, emphatically, plural, influenced heavily by the goal of the free flow of ideas. "*Many* group members are responding to each other's comments" [emphasis added]. Or: "Other participants ask several good questions to understand the process. This gets a few more involved to think about and question the process." In the best moments, the group's ideas are "building on each other," each individual helping the others "to go the little bit further," producing on occasion "good out-of-the-box ideas," which then provide an "opening for others to also think out-of-the-box."

Inclusion was a major value among the coders, who nearly universally commented on the extent to which all participants were included in the deliberation. As one put it, positively, "Each person is given a chance to speak. Each is being heard." Another found it problematic when the "axis of conversation seemed to go back and forth between a few players." To achieve inclusion, one suggested that "facilitators [should] solicit the quieter ones more often" and others agreed that the facilitator's "attention [should be] devoted to bringing out the views and ideas of each individual in periodic, systematic ways." The coders seemed to believe that all people have something useful to say and it is up to the facilitator to ensure that people use their voice to say it. This targeted intervention should include the facilitator asking "every one of the…participants individually if they want to make any additional comments."

Moreover, timing was important. Several coders stated that the facilitator should encourage "everyone to contribute as early as possible." The coders had sharp criticism for facilitators who failed to ensure broad participation. One coder found it very problematic when "after one and a half hours of discussion, five of sixteen participants have not even been *asked* to weigh in! [emphasis in original]."[13]

The coders strongly approved when facilitators intervened to make the power of the participants more equal, partly from a commitment to free flow and partly from a commitment to fairness. In the matter of free flow, coders wanted to avoid situations in which "one individual has been able to command the floor for a substantial period of time" or "discussion has clearly become focused on the views of one individual." For this reason, the coder who approved of many responding to each others' comments congruently disapproved of "one person doing the majority of talking." Another noted that "speeches" from the participants "go nowhere" and sometimes "shut down communication." Others agreed that when people just make a series of small speeches it is not good deliberation. In their view, the talk was best when freely interactive, involving two or, even better, many participants taking off from one another's comments.

When the goal is the instrumental one of bringing out the best ideas, however, the coders' comments raise thorny questions about the conflict between inclusiveness and expertise. Some coders identified it as problematic when some participants "have more 'knowledge' than the others" or "one of the panelists takes on the role of the expert." Unequal expertise, they pointed out, has the potential effect of "excluding those without specialist knowledge." Moreover, although these experts may contribute good ideas or well articulated solutions, their ideas may be premature, thereby "tempting" the "group to not think about specifics." The expertise of some could curtail the broad and deep consideration that deliberation should produce. Commenting on one participant's "prolonged stay…at the front of the room, dealing with [issues]

[13] At times, however, the coders considered limits to the breadth of engagement not the fault of the facilitator. In one overcrowded deliberation, when some had to "sit on the fringes as observers" and could not easily participate, the coder concluded that the organization of the deliberation was at fault.

that he's obviously very knowledgeable about," one coder identified two potential problems:

> This is very problematic for two reasons, in my view. First, the leadership of the group has essentially been changed without consent of the group.… Second, an outspoken "man with a plan" has placed his voice and his advocacy at the center of the process. This is far more problematic than the first, in my view."

The coder worried that this inequality changed "the dynamic—from one of 'reasoning together' to one of 'listening and reacting to this person's ideas and propositions.'" The free flow of ideas was reduced through the domination of one participant.

Yet greater equality, valued for its contribution to free flow, can conflict with instrumental task-orientation. Thus the coders did not uniformly perceive experts as bad. A coder who strongly favored equality in the group also identified as positive the "effective use of expert witnesses." Another found it good that some of the participants in the group he coded had been "selected for their expertise in a certain area." The problems with inequality seemed to lie less with some participants simply having more knowledge than others than with the ways the more knowledgeable *interacted* with the group, cutting off the free flow of ideas.

The norm of free flow does not always require equality. One coder praised a relatively unequal interaction that she described as going "back and forth between the one participant and the rest of the group," in which this participant's greater participation caused the group to "think more deeply about the issue." She coded this unequal interchange as good both because it contributed to the quality of the ideas and because it went "back and forth," seeming to engage the participants freely. At the same time, however, she warned that the conversation should not become focused on the views of one individual, finding such a single focus "very problematic." The difference between this interaction, which one coder coded as good, and the seemingly parallel interaction of one "man with a plan" dominating the group, which another coder coded as problematic, may have derived not from the difference between coders but from the difference between a relatively short interchange to generate knowledge and a more sustained focus on a single individual that interrupted free flow, challenged group control, and introduced potential bias.

One motivation for the coders' stress on inclusion was undoubtedly the intrinsic value of equality, particularly equal respect. Another, discussed below, was certainly the question of fairness. Yet a major motivation, revealed through these comments, seemed to be the more instrumental one of bringing into the discussion as many as possible of the relevant ideas and perspectives.

2. Self-facilitation and group control.

Ironically, given the many goals that the coders wanted the facilitators to accomplish, most also explicitly promoted the limited exercise of facilitator power and a low facilitator profile. The primary goal seemed to be non-domination. In criticizing one facilitator, a coder pointed out that the participants themselves had no opportunity to shape or even explicitly endorse the ground rules. Being able to criticize the rules, change them, and change the agenda created participant "buy-in," while facilitator control of these matters made the participants passive. Another coder noted that a failure to post ground rules allowed the facilitator to have better information about those rules than the participants. Another thought that by failing to write questions on the board, the facilitator did not allow the participants "to track their questions or easily to complete an end-of-session review and prioritizing." This failure, the coder pointed out, did not "maintain the power of the group." Another considered problematic the "facilitator's focus on the group creating statements," because the facilitator needed to intervene in the free flow to direct the group to this task. (This despite the high value universally placed on task orientation.) Another coder considered a facilitator "overly directive," while yet another noted that a facilitator "shut the participant down."

Indeed, in the view of these coders, free flow seemed to work best when the facilitator took no visible part. In the best situation, participants needed "no prompting." Thus for one coder, a deliberation improved when it began to include "exchanges between group members (as opposed to everything going back and forth with the front of the room)." The more free and equal exchanges among members of the group created "positive energy" in the deliberation and connected "with other individual processes and with the group's process." Another coder considered it problematic that the "process more resembles a series of interviews" in a continuing

dyadic interaction between facilitator and each individual participant, not an interchange among the participants. That coder praised instead the virtue of "direct exchange between participants," and "open and direct exchange," in which the participants "speak to the group, rather than to the facilitator."

Along the same lines, one coder noted negatively that at one point in a deliberation a participant felt it "necessary to ask permission to respond" and at another the "moderator cuts off panelist exchange too quickly." Another coder commented that in spite of its efficiencies,

> the practice of putting up hands can be counter-productive. It stifles genuine dialogue and the natural progression of ideas within the group. It also means that participants need to keep referring back to the chair in order to find out whether it is their turn to speak. All of this discourages good deliberation.

Similarly, when one participant suggested adding a word to a question that the group was writing, then looked to the facilitator rather than the group for approval, that look, a coder noted, gave ownership of the process to the facilitator, not the members of the group.

The logical conclusion of the normative goal of group control would be to replace the facilitator entirely with self-facilitation. Implying this goal, one coder, using conventional facilitator language, noted that "panelists need to take ownership and structure the process." Another applauded a participant's description of the facilitator as the "designated driver," because that phrase positioned the group as the active initiator of that designation. Another approved the sharing of power when one participant "steps in occasionally to help with facilitation." Still another praised a moment in which the roles of the facilitator and a member of the group were reversed, even mentioning that the facilitator should have extended that moment by stepping aside and let the participant lead the group.

Indeed, any indication of the voluntary character of the exercise denoted participant control and so became a good in itself, an example of freedom. When the facilitator of one group gave participants the option of voting to go home or continuing to deliberate, the coder saw this as a very positive step, empowering the group to control its own participation and showing the participants that they were there

voluntarily. Another considered it good that the group was empowered to change its facilitator, but regretted that the group was never given the choice of self-facilitating. [14]

In general, the coders appeared to code self-facilitation as good whenever it occurred and described it as a goal to strive for when it did not occur. Self-facilitation shares with "free flow" a pattern of the participants being sufficiently engaged to take charge and dispense with any direction from the facilitator. The coders' assessments combined the goals of equality among participants and freedom as non-domination, valued as intrinsic normative goods. They also, in large part, valued non-domination as an instrumental means to the engaged production of ideas.

3. Fair representation of views.

The coders valued equality not only as a means through inclusiveness to the free flow of ideas but also, quite strongly, as a matter of fundamental fairness. Concern for fairness led them to object whenever either greater facilitator power or the significantly greater power of one participant potentially biased the outcome.

On the issue of greater facilitator power, for example, one coder criticized the facilitator "for editorializing," that is, for offering an opinion before the conversation had fully developed, and for "interjecting comments and demonstrating a bias." Another complained when the facilitator "seemed to put himself in the proponent's role." A third said the facilitator should not let his "ego get in the way." In general the coders mandated that facilitators state the issues "neutrally to avoid any chance for bias," "maintain[] neutrality," "view [the issue] in a truly neutral manner," and "let go of biases." The facilitator should "talk a lot less," avoid the "teacher-pupil model," not offer his own opinion too early, "step back," and "state up front that he is not part of

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[14] On all these matters, the facilitator had a delicate role. The facilitator had the responsibility for maintaining a modicum of equality and inclusion within the group, but at the same time could not intervene too much in the discussion to enforce that equality or inclusion. Many coders indicated that it was important for the members of the group to be in control of their mission, but at the same time almost unanimously held the *facilitator* responsible for keeping the mission of the group well focused. Giving the group control can mean taking the risks that the mission will become ill defined or even that the task of deciding the mission will dominate the deliberation. The facilitator has to bring out representative viewpoints while not imposing his or her own view as to what fair representation would be. The facilitator had constantly to walk a fine line, helping the group toward clarity and group progress while maintaining its ownership.

the discussion [emphasis in original].” In short, given the power asymmetry between the facilitators and the participants, the coders concluded almost unanimously that from the perspective of fairness it was good to have “minimal intervention from the facilitator.”

Similarly, the coders criticized unequal participation among group participants not only for stemming the free flow of ideas but also for being unfair and potentially biasing outcomes. As one put it, “The first proponent emphatically advocated for four minutes. This strikes me as undue influence.” In this concern for bias the coders did not differ from any normative theorist who has written on deliberation.

Several coders wanted different perspectives to be, in their view, well balanced. Although many promoted consensus, some also scored as problematic moments in which they saw “no difference in opinion,” an “essential voice [was] absent from the conversation,” and there were “no opponents providing alternative positions.” They also coded negatively moments when “deliberation seems to be one sided” and identified as positive moments when “both sides were presented” and when the participants “consider all sides of an argument with…little bias.”

The coders seemed to have had in mind pre-existing “sides” that for fairness should be balanced in any deliberation on a particular subject, presumably sides set by prior instances of deliberation on that subject. Several coders commented on the demographic representativeness of the participants in the deliberation. They scored it as problematic when the “[g]roup is too homogeneous” and there is a “[lack of] racial diversity.” They scored it as positive when groups “are carefully selected for representative diversity.” If a group was not demographically representative, it was good when participants “express the need for more representative participation.”

No coder suggested that the participants in their deliberations actually represented non-participants. One coder did, however, comment favorably on a participant who raised the question, “Are participants here as individuals or representing certain expertise or interest groups?” She noted that “the issue of who the participants in this discussion are representing” is “an important part of good deliberation,” and “something that often comes up in public consultation, especially when respondents have been selected to be representative. It is something that needs to

be clarified and handled very carefully." This is the same coder who, commenting on another deliberation whose participants had been chosen "very carefully to be representative of [a city] in terms of age, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion and social class," found it problematic when a participant spoke "as a Muslim — using the pronoun 'we.'" This coder explained her reaction, stating:

> I would argue that deliberation works best when participants are speaking as individuals and not viewing themselves as representatives of particular groups. (However, this is not to say that participants should not be aware of and make reference to, various aspects of their identity. This can be very productive and helpful.)

For the few groups whose formal task was to reflect considered public opinion, proportional demographic representation was a central legitimating feature. In the others, no coder explicitly suggested that representativeness was required for the task or suggested any criteria for representation. For the most part, when the coders stressed representativeness, they seemed in doing so to reflect the value of a larger understanding of inclusion. If a group deliberates about matters that affect a larger population, representatives of those affected should be part of the deliberating group, even if the results of the deliberation are not binding and the "representatives" are descriptive, rather than elected. We cannot speak with conviction on why the coders who praised representativeness did so, as only one elaborated on the subject, the others taking the value of representativeness as a given. The underlying goal may be, again, eliciting the greatest variety of relevant ideas.

Conclusion

We did not expect the ten facilitators who coded our ten tapes, writing in their own historical moment and specific cultural space, to produce universal truths. We did expect them, however, to give us a set of perceptions that would move the normative theory of deliberation toward a greater connection with the realities of deliberation without losing its normative thrust. This final section summarizes the insights our

facilitators provided, then acknowledges the limitations of our research and suggests directions for future investigation.

Findings and Implications

The first unexpected finding is that the facilitators who judged these deliberations were, as a rule, greatly concerned with making sure that the deliberators maintained a nurturing, open "group atmosphere." One of the purposes of this group climate was facilitating the hard work of deliberation, but facilitators also stressed the importance of participants being satisfied with the process, whatever the outcome. This finding is in retrospect unsurprising. After all, in addition to having an independent interest in deliberation, facilitators are often responsible to (and being paid by) the group they are facilitating (or a sponsor sensitive to the reactions of the group they are facilitating). The facilitators want to serve their "clients" by giving them a satisfying experience.

In this respect, the facilitators probably represented fairly faithfully the desires of the participants in these deliberations as well as the goals of public deliberation more broadly. In most deliberative settings, particularly when decisions are not binding, inducing people to participate in a deliberation at all is a major task. Because the participants in a deliberation usually want to go home satisfied with their experience, unpleasant deliberations are likely to produce a significantly lower response to the next invitation, ultimately leading to the cancellation of future deliberative events.

The second finding, linked closely to the first, is that the facilitators coding the deliberations believed that good deliberation requires making progress on the group's task—either in the form of conceptual clarifications that facilitate an eventual decision or in the form of a decision (or implicit decision) that can lead to action. When a discussion seemed not to be getting anywhere, participants often became bored, irritated, and occasionally combative. Most frequently, they simply stopped participating actively in the group. The instrumental goal of making progress on the task linked to the participants' enjoyment of the group in a self-reinforcing cycle:

progress toward the goal produced satisfaction; satisfaction made it easier to progress. The reverse cycle was also self-reinforcing – and dreaded.

This interlocking relationship between group atmosphere and task productivity suggests that deliberative theory should be concerned not only with process but with outcome. In this practical conception of deliberation, progress and group atmosphere are interdependent, mingling argument with respect and decision making with dialogue.

For example, consider what may be the most innovative contribution to the theoretical literature derived from the coders' work: the criterion of *getting as many relevant and useful ideas as possible out of the group*. The deliberation in the movie "Twelve Angry Men," for example, scores high on this dimension. This criterion expresses the essence of the coders' concerns for group progress. It also sums up many of their other concerns, particularly their pervasive concern for the free and frank flow of ideas.

Normatively, the ratio of the number of good ideas that emerge to the possible number of such ideas might be a criterion for good deliberative process, both because more ideas usually make a decision better and because laws derived from processes that elicit the relevant facts and insights should generate a stronger civic and political obligation than those derived from processes that fail to bring out those ideas (e.g., Burkhalter et al. 2002). For practitioners, however, the most applicable criterion is the number of good ideas in relation to the costs (including time and unpleasantness) of producing them. Actual participants will think a deliberation good only if that ratio is acceptable. Thus, in practice, groups must simultaneously attend to the needs for maintaining a positive group atmosphere and making noticeable progress, often through rigorous discussion, toward achieving the group's decision-making task.

Beyond the twin criteria of atmosphere and task progress, many qualities of deliberation that the facilitators valued suggest fruitful revisions of the conceptions of the common good, reason, freedom, and equality that deliberative theorists have articulated. Although only two coders mentioned versions of the "common good," several mentioned attempts to identify "common ground"—a distinctly more limited goal than trying to achieve the "common good," and a goal more compatible with

accepting basically conflicting interests. Several coders paid explicit attention to the key feature of reason that the early theorists of democratic deliberation have made central to their analyses, but many also seemed to value emotional input.

Freedom as a deliberative norm emerged in innovative form in what we have called the "free flow" of ideas, with many of the features of deliberation that the facilitators coded as good contributing to this end and many they considered problematic impeding it. This concept is not the same as "free speech," defined as a legal right against the state. It maps more closely onto the ancient Greek and contemporary African concept of "frank speech," meaning honest speech, not damped or restricted for fear of social retaliation. It is related to the "free and easy" speech of people who both know one another well and need not fear the sanctions that the others can levy. It also, however, in a dynamic not explored by our coders, probably assumes sufficient homogeneity in the group that participants do not need to explain in detail the basic assumptions from which they speak (see Mutz 2006). The coders seemed rarely, if ever, to value freedom as simple absence of constraint. They expected the facilitators to "gently cut off" some participants and encourage others, to summarize at appropriate points, and to keep the group on track in many subtle and unsubtle ways. Rather, the value of free flow seemed to involve, at least in part, freedom as non-domination (Pettit 2001).[15]

As for equality, far more important than equal power (Pateman 1970), equal opportunity to exercise power (Dahl 1989), or even the equal opportunity for access to influence (Knight and Johnson 1997) were the values of extensive and inclusive participation in discussion, self-facilitation and group control, and the fair representation of views. The coders were deeply committed to establishing or maintaining a modicum of equality among the deliberators, as significantly unequal power or airtime in the group impeded each of these goals.

Looking at the coders' own emphases rather than at the traditional categories from philosophical analysis, we find strong emphases on the instrumental side of helping the group do its task, through the free flow of discussion and participants

[15] In Pettit's analysis, non-domination is the absence of inequalities great enough to create a motive in the weaker party "to keep the stronger sweet," that is, favorably disposed to the weaker party (2001, 141).

having their own control of the process. The value that most makes sense of the large part of these coders' comments is simply the value of bringing out ideas — new ideas, good ideas, but particularly the participants' own ideas — and testing those ideas against the questioning and challenge of others.

Limitations and Future Research

Although these findings have value for deliberative theory, the present study has its limitations. In the tapes that our coders viewed, deliberation was sometimes a matter of giving fairly direct advice to policy-makers and sometimes a matter only of helping create the reflective public opinion that policy-makers should in theory take into account. Our coders had no tapes of deliberation among policy-makers themselves, whether elected, appointed, or members of a direct assembly democracy. They therefore never viewed the process of deliberation to a binding decision. The criteria that they implicitly evolved, therefore, may differ from the criteria they would have used if they were judging an assembly of citizens or representatives engaged in making a decision that would directly affect their future lives.

More generally, inductively uncovering norms is neither a timeless nor a universal process. Some of the norms we uncovered may be timeless, but even those ideals will inevitably be interpreted through the lens of particular individuals in particular social situations and historical contexts. Our study used ten White middle-class facilitators, nine from the United States and one from Britain, as our eyes on ten cases of small-group deliberation, all from the United States. A group of bankers, poor people, African Americans, Europeans, or Latin Americans would almost certainly have given different weights to the norms or seen different moments as positive and negative. The deliberations themselves would undoubtedly have taken different forms in different cultural settings. The point of deriving norms by induction from particular situations is not to establish those norms as correct, offered in their purity for others to adopt, but instead to provoke a process of contest and contemplation, by suggesting these norms to practitioners as candidates for adoption in practice and to theorists as subjects for serious analysis.

This study, then, is but one step toward richer deliberative theory, and future research can build on this project. In particular, we recommend that researchers explore the norms implicit in the deliberations of groups that have a measure of decision-making authority, be they legislatures, sworn criminal or civil juries, or uniquely empowered groups of citizens, such as the Citizens Assembly in British Columbia.[16] It would also be fruitful to probe participants' own understandings of their deliberation. This method of self-reflection on discussion has proven useful in the past (see Mansbridge [1980] 1983; Gastil 1993) and would probably reveal perspectives somewhat distinct from those of the facilitators. Participants might have a less well-developed conception of deliberation, but their lay understandings would be valuable in their own right as representations of the prevailing cultural norms among the larger public. In addition, research should look at how deliberative norms manifest themselves across the globe.[17] We expect that such research will both reveal common understandings of deliberation that transcend cultural differences and nuanced meanings and procedures that fit within each culture's unique deliberative niche.

[16] On the British Columbia Citizens Assembly, see Ratner (2004a, 2004b) and the official website for the assembly at http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public. The province of Ontario is holding a second Citizens Assembly this year; see http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca.

[17] The Kettering Foundation has already begun a large-scale study along these lines.

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Appendix A: Solicitation Letter

Dear practitioner:

The Deliberative Democracy Consortium, based in D.C., has initiated a project on the inductive study of deliberative norms. Janette Hartz-Karp, from Australia, and I, from the United States, are the co-Principal Investigators.

I am writing to see if you might be interested in watching four hours of tape from a deliberative session, and coding it for particularly good deliberative moments and more problematic ones. The coding will be based on your own experience of good and problematic interactions rather than on any pre-set coding scheme.

The reward will be $1000 for ten hours of work plus the satisfaction (we hope) of being part of a project designed to start from the ground up measuring what practitioners themselves think are good and problematic features of real-life deliberations.

If you are interested in participating in the project, please contact me by email (jane_mansbridge@harvard.edu) by July 15. The work must be complete by August 15.

We would like to restrict the participants in this project to experienced facilitators. If you would like to participate, please send me a paragraph or brief resume of the work you have done facilitating deliberations of any sort, including dialogues, mediations and negotiations. If you know personally of anyone else who would fit the requirements and would be interested, please forward this message to them. (We would appreciate your not forwarding the message to any email lists that are not lists of experienced practitioners.)

For further information about the project, please see the three attachments (proposal, follow-up memo with instructions, and tape list).

I look forward very much to hearing from you.

Yours,

Jane Mansbridge

Adams Professor
John F. Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University

Appendix B: Instructions for coding [edited]:

Thank you very much for offering to do this coding. The whole procedure is intended to be "inductive," that is, built from the ground up rather than the top down, so the instructions, at least at first, are simple and open-ended.

You should receive in this package a copy of a tape of a particular citizen deliberation. The citizens have been picked in a somewhat representative way, which differs from deliberation to deliberation, and the style of facilitation also differs from deliberation to deliberation. The purpose of this coding is not to compare styles of facilitation etc. but instead to get a sense of what an experienced facilitator (you) thinks is "good" deliberation and what he or she thinks is "problematic" deliberation.
…
[Please] play four hours of the tape through in relatively real time (you can stop whenever you want, of course, to make notations), and just note: "G," "VG," "P," "VP," for good, very good, problematic, very problematic, on the interactions that you observe. We are giving no definitions of "good" and "problematic," not because we know what the definitions are but aren't telling, but because there is no literature on what practitioners are looking for in good and problematic interactions, and we want to build that literature from the ground up. So this is truly inductive. Just make the judgments by the seat of your pants, on the basis of whatever experience you have and just your own human reactions, and write the letters down as you experience the situation.

The main problem we may have is that there will not be many "problematic" interactions. If that's the case, so be it. Don't strain to create ones. Ditto "good" interactions. If you don't see any, okay, that's your conclusion. Different people will differ on what they consider "good" and "problematic."

[Then] go through the tape again, with your original notation, and this time stop the tape each time you have made a notation and type up on a computer (Microsoft Word would be nice, but we can translate any other software) why you made the decision that this was good, very good, problematic, or very problematic. Use your own words and your own categories — just say what you saw and why you thought it was x or y. A paragraph on each notation would be good, but use as many words as you need. Please note when on the tape this moment appeared and describe it briefly so that someone else can go back and look at it. This is the key section on which we will rely.
…

As this endeavor is being conducted in a rather experimental vein, and all sorts of things may go wrong, I would very much appreciate it if you wanted to make substantive and procedural suggestions en route.

These tapes are on CONFIDENTIAL loan from the various organizations that created them. By accepting this job, you promise that you will not discuss the interactions you

see with anyone or identify the organization to anyone. The organizations have trusted us with their tapes for research that we all hope will help the field (not charging anything, as all of this is being done on a shoestring), and we must respect their trust. We will not be identifying the organizations in the final research product, and we have assured the organizations that they will not be identified. For the same reason, of course, by accepting this job you promise that you will not duplicate the tape. Please return the tape to us when you return your coding comments.