DELIBERATION AND THE DISEMPOWERED: ATTENDANCE, EXPERIENCE AND

INFLUENCE

Weiyu Zhang

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Vincent Price
Supervisor of Dissertation

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Joseph Turow
Graduate Group Chairperson

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ABSTRACT

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Weiyu Zhang

Vincent Price, Supervisor

Deliberative democracy emphasizes the process of deliberation, i.e., an open, fair and reason-centered procedure during which various preferences are rationally exchanged and reflectively re-shaped. However, whether procedural rationality alone can grant the disempowered an equal status in deliberative democracy remains critical, especially considering that the power structure deliberation practices have to operate in is essentially unjust. Without an adequate and fair representation of citizens and their opinions, the claimed legitimacy of deliberation remains under question. This dissertation aims to empirically examine the disempowered and their attendance, experience and influence in two large-scale online deliberation exercises, namely, *Electronic Dialogue 2000* (ED2K) and *Healthcare Dialogue* (HCD). Both involved the recruitment of individuals from a nationally representative random sample into multi-wave small group discussions, which happened in synchronous and moderated online settings. This dissertation demonstrates that the disempowered perform differently from others in online deliberation. The data generally support the hypothesis that the disempowered are less likely than others to

attend online deliberation and to influence through talking and arguing. The data, however, generally reject the hypothesis that the disempowered have less favorable experience with online deliberation than do others. Unequal attendance and influence bear significant political consequences at a collective level. Imputations of pre-discussion opinion distributions support the conclusion that descriptive under-representation of the disempowered leads to opinion under-representation in about half of the opinion measures examined. Simulations of an ideal deliberation show that a significant minority (19%) of observed opinion distributions examined would have been different if our deliberation practices fulfilled complete inclusion and absolute equalization. This dissertation offers two main messages. First, deliberation practices are subject to structural inequalities as much as, if not more than, the other modes of political practices. Future deliberation practices have to recognize these inequalities and try to address them through structural arrangements. Secondly, deliberative democracy has to be evaluated along with other ideas of democracy such as participatory democracy.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Deliberative democracy emphasizes the process of deliberation, i.e., an open, fair and reason-centered procedure during which various preferences are rationally exchanged and reflectively re-shaped (Habermas, 1989; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). Deliberative theories argue for the superiority of deliberation to other existing political institutions, such as voting and bargaining, in terms of the legitimacy of governance (Habermas, 1996; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). However, deliberative democracy is often challenged as not fully articulating the problem of justice (Fraser, 1992; Young, 1999). In other words, whether procedural rationality alone can grant the disempowered an equal status in deliberative democracy remains critical, especially considering that the power structure deliberation practices have to operate in is essentially unjust. Without an adequate and fair representation of citizens and their opinions, the claimed legitimacy of deliberation remains under question.

Although historians have demonstrated that various attempts to establish a sphere for deliberation have all been limited by their inclusiveness (Eley, 1992; Landes, 1993; Negt & Kluge, 1993; Ryan, 1992), current practitioners are continuing their efforts to design new institutional arrangements for deliberation in order to handle realistic disagreements and conflicts. In fact, the emergence of deliberation practices has become so widespread that we can observe them in both democratic and non-democratic countries, at international, national, local and community levels, and on political, economic and other fronts. However, in spite of the creativity of deliberation practices, most, except for the ones conducted by researchers (Fishkin, 1995; Gastil & Keith, 2005; Price &

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Cappella, 2000), are not informed by academic thinking and thus lack the ability of self-evaluation and self-improvement. Without a systematic examination of the reasons that lead to the successes and failures of certain practices, lessons could not be learned or taught.

Different from both deliberative democracy researchers who stay at the level of theoretical arguments and deliberative practitioners who have yet to be fully aware of the theoretical perspectives, scholars of participatory democracy provide both empirical observations and theoretical explanations that can help to understand deliberation in light of studying political behaviors. Similar to the justice concern in deliberative democracy, political participation is found to be far from equal among American citizens. The disempowered (namely, less-educated people, younger citizens, the poorer, females, and racial minorities) are recorded as less active in most types of political participation than more-educated people, older citizens, the richer, males, and whites (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001; Leighley, 2001; Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996; Scholzman, 2006; Zukin et al., 2006). The explanation for this unequal participation in politics include resources (Verba & Nie, 1972), political psychology (Verba, Burns, & Scholzman, 1997), mobilization (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993), social connectedness (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995), media exposure (Putnam, 2000), group-related characteristics (Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2004), and political representation (Mansbridge, 1999). Whether the disempowered are still under-represented in deliberation and whether the explanations hold valid in explicating deliberative participation are questions that are yet to be

answered. Moreover, such tests can inform the debate on the differences between deliberative and participatory democracy (Mutz, 2006).

While political participation literatures emphasize certain political behaviors, they often do not pay enough attention to the experience associated with these behaviors and the influence that is generated from these behaviors. Operationally speaking, frequencies of political activities (such as how often one votes) function as the main measures of political participation in previous studies. Focusing on the quantity of political activities ignores the fact that people experience each activity differently and such experience is going to affect one's future behaviors (Fishbein et al, 1991). For example, a voter whose favored candidate lost the election would not evaluate their experience the same as a voter whose candidate won. The evaluation of the election experience affects the tendency to participate in future elections. In addition, the frequency measures cannot catch the varied influence participants have during political activities. A highly engaged voter who constantly persuades others to vote for his/her favored candidate would have a stronger influence than a passive voter who seldom talks to others about his/her voting decisions. In order to have a comprehensive examination of the disempowered and deliberation, group communication literatures are cited as guidelines to construct a full analytical framework (Haslett & Ruebush, 1999; Meyers & Brashers, 1999). Unequal experience and influence at the individual level are thus recorded as complements to the frequency measures that are often used in political participation literatures.

The degree of involvement in deliberation, including attendance, experience and influence, tells us whether the disempowered are discriminated against in various aspects

and what the sources of the inequalities are. But political participation literatures rarely go up to the collective level to examine the political consequences of such inequalities. It is obvious that the under-representation of some Americans is a serious threat to the legitimacy of political decisions. However, under-representation is not necessarily equal to misrepresentation, which means that political decisions might remain the same even if every American is included in the decision-making processes. Recent studies on the representation of the electoral body (Leighley, 1995), the influence of political knowledge (Althaus, 2003), and the examination of opinion expressions (Berinsky, 2004) all propel the research on political behaviors forward by examining collective-level changes given individual level differences. Specifically, which kinds of changes in terms of general support vs. objection toward certain policies would be observed when individual level changes happen? The political consequences of the unequal involvement in deliberation are demonstrated through such collective-level analyses.

This dissertation aims to empirically examine the disempowered and their attendance, experience and influence in two large-scale online deliberation exercises. Not only are theoretical controversies clarified through empirical evidence, but also practical efforts are informed by the findings of this work. Consistent with previous studies on political participation and theoretical critiques of deliberative democracy, this dissertation generally hypothesizes that disenfranchised groups remain disempowered in deliberation. Although the disempowered have opportunities to attend the deliberation, structural constraints unequally exclude them due to their lack of necessary resources. Even when they are able to access the deliberation, they are less likely to influence other participants

due to their lack of persuasive abilities. Moreover, failing to get their opinions recognized and accepted might lead to unfavorable experiences among the disempowered, which hinder the chances of future involvement. Finally, unequal access, experience, and influence result in negative consequences for not only the disempowered but also the entire democracy. Specifically, the collective opinion distribution is not representative of the full picture due to the unequal attendance across different sections of the public and is going to be further imbalanced due to the unequal ability of deliberation participants to influence through discursive participation and rational arguments.

Overview of the dissertation

The two datasets used in this project include *Electronic Dialogue 2000* (ED2K) and *Healthcare Dialogue* (HCD). Both involved the recruitment of individuals from a nationally representative random sample into multi-wave small group discussions, which happened in synchronous and moderated online settings. This dissertation checks whether structural inequality persisted in deliberation by comparing relative attendance rates, levels of influence, and evaluations of the experience among the disempowered and other groups. The political consequences of unequal attendance and influence are examined by collective-level analyses.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review of the theoretical foundations, based on which hypotheses and research questions are advanced. The first section of Chapter 2 reviews political participation literatures, demonstrating that participatory inequality is a central concern for this area of research. Based on both theoretical arguments and

empirical findings, five disempowered groups are identified: less-educated people, younger citizens, the poorer, females, and racial minorities. Models used to explicate participatory inequality are detailed following the description of participatory inequalities. In each of the steps of emphasizing, defining, describing, and explaining political participation, implications for deliberation are suggested. Although such a review provides a theoretical framework based on which attending deliberation can be systematically analyzed, political participation literatures have a limited ability to describe and explain the experience and influence of disempowered group members in deliberation. Theories of behavior change and group communication provide additional insights regarding "experiencing" and "influencing" political activities.

The second section of Chapter 2 discusses disempowered groups' possible experience and influence in deliberation at both the theoretical and practical levels. Critiques of deliberative democracy theories focus on the lack of dealing with justice, pointing out that the unequal power structure can be carried into the deliberation process. Specifically, the requirement for rational discourse further disadvantages the disempowered, limiting their ability to gain a favorable experience or exert influence on final decisions. Studies on deliberation practices, including everyday political discussions and small group deliberations, provide some preliminary empirical evidence that demonstrates this unequal pattern and its implications for disempowered groups. Meanwhile, many important areas remain unexplored. Based on previous studies in both political participation and deliberative democracy, the third section of Chapter 2 proposes

an analytical framework that examines the disempowered groups' attendance, experience and influence in online deliberation.

The theory chapter develops a full framework to analyze the role of disempowered groups in deliberation on the Internet, separating the analysis into three major parts: attendance, experience, and influence. Chapter 3 introduces the available datasets and their features that are used to answer these hypotheses and research questions. Operational definitions of the disempowered (i.e., less-educated people, younger citizens, the poorer, females, and racial minorities) are provided in the later section of this chapter.

Chapter 4 to 6 each address one of the major questions: attendance, experience, and influence. Chapter 4 demonstrates that attendance is a step-by-step self-selection procedure, including the very first stage of enrolling in the online deliberations, the second stage of actually showing up, and the third stage of continuous attendance. The disempowered are found to be less likely to engage in any of the three stages. A follow-up content analysis of responses to the open-ended question of why non-attendees did not participate in the discussions shows that the reasons for non-attendance are generally consistent with previous findings. In other words, lack of necessary resources such as time and technological competence contributes to unequal access to the online deliberations. This chapter ends with a comparison between the online deliberations and other modes of political participation, aimed at clarifying the differences between participatory and deliberative democracy. This analysis also tests whether factors, such as political interest and knowledge, can predict attendance in the online deliberations.

Chapter 5 focuses on participants' experience of the deliberations and the possible implications this may bring. This chapter first demonstrates that experience matters because the variables successfully predict both an intention measure and a behavioral measure of attending deliberation. Ratings of enjoyment, perceived disagreement, and opinion expression are compared for the disempowered as well as other groups. The disempowered, contrary to the hypotheses, are not always associated with negative experience. On the contrary, all disempowered groups showed positive reactions to online deliberation often more so than other attendees. A follow-up content analysis of responses to the open-ended questions of what participants liked and disliked about the discussions shows that in some of the instances, the disempowered enjoyed online deliberation for reasons that are different from other groups.

Chapter 6 continues to deal with the question of influence, which is broken down into the amount of talking during deliberation and the number of arguments a participant makes. If disempowered group members actively voice and argue for their opinions in the online deliberations, their perspectives will not necessarily be ignored, even though their participant numbers may be inadequate. In addition, if they can provide substantive reasons to support their perspectives, their opinions may influence final decisions. However, the analyses basically show that the disempowered, especially the less educated, non-Whites, and females, consistently voice their opinions less than others and support them with fewer reasons. This chapter provides the empirical foundation based on which collective-level political consequences might be hypothesized. In other words, due to the fact that the disempowered hold different opinions and their opinions are not

fully expressed and argued for, the opinion distributions measured after deliberation might present public opinion in a way that is far from that produced by an ideal deliberation.

Chapter 7 examines whether the under-representation of disempowered group members necessarily means that their opinions are also being under-represented. The first analysis in this chapter identifies whether the disempowered do have different opinions from those of other groups; in other words, whether demographics can predict opinion placements. A series of policy preferences are examined to show these differences. The existence of unique opinions held by the disempowered indicates that the descriptive under-representation of these members might be leading to an opinion under-representation. Imputation based on demographics and other variables is used to impute missing opinions, which are compared to those held by attendees and active talkers. The different opinion distributions suggest that disempowered groups' policy preferences are indeed under-represented in some, though not most, instances.

Chapter 8 builds on previous findings: (1) the disempowered are under-represented in deliberation (Chapter 4); (2) their opinions are different from other groups' (Chapter 7); and (3) their opinions are not much articulated and argued for during deliberation (Chapter 6). This chapter examines whether the imperfect deliberations can exacerbate the misrepresentation of opinions of the disempowered and uses simulation modeling as a method to demonstrate the possible political consequences of unequal deliberations. Simulation findings indicate that simulated opinions using the ideal criteria of deliberation — namely, full attendance, equal participation, and maximum rationality

— are rarely the same as opinions observed after the online deliberations ended. Maximization of reasons contributes the most to the discrepancy followed by full inclusion. Political consequences of equalizing participation are few. Simulations based on talk vs. reasons generate different consequences in some cases.

The final chapter, Chapter 9, has three goals. First, it summarizes arguments, evidence, and conclusions regarding deliberation and the disempowered. Empirical evidence may challenge theoretical models, suggesting the noticeable connection between deliberative democracy and the existing power structure. Meanwhile, results of this study also show some beneficial aspects that the disempowered would have by attending the deliberation. Secondly, it looks ahead to the implications of research findings. Superiority of deliberation, in terms of the legitimacy of governance, is contested and the normative status of deliberation within the political institution is re-evaluated. Finally, suggestions for improving deliberation practices, such as over-sampling of the disempowered, are suggested.

CHAPTER 2: DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY, POLITICAL PARTICIAPTION, AND THE DISEMPOWERED

The vitality of democracy is determined by the degree and scope of citizens' participation. American democracy flourished on the rich ground of the free civic associations and the active engagement of citizens. However, a trend of declining participation has been observed and the unequal participation in politics has been empirically established. Both findings reflect a weakened foundation of political legitimacy.

Deliberative democracy, as the democracy which emphasizes procedural rationality and is claimed to be different from participatory democracy, lives on participation as well. The difference between deliberative and participatory democracy lies in the norm of deliberative democracy that participation must be deliberate. Deliberate participation requires that democracy is open to all citizens and as long as their participation is marked by reason, the decision-making mechanism treats their opinions equally. Deliberate participation is subject to the threats of inactive participation and participatory inequalities as much as, if not more than, other forms of political participation. Critiques of deliberative democracy argue that deliberate participation faces a serious challenge of its legitimacy precisely because of its emphasis on rationality, which is a product of the unequal power structure. The disempowered are known to lack resources supporting their involvement in political participation. They are even less well equipped by capabilities that are necessary to function in a political system that runs on rational arguments.

The literatures of political participation meet those of deliberative democracy at the point that the disempowered and their unequal status in democracy should be addressed and need to be examined against empirical evidence. This literature review starts with political participation and then moves to the theoretical and practical aspects of deliberation, putting the disempowered at the center of inquiry. Hypotheses and research questions regarding the disempowered in deliberation are proposed at the end of this chapter.

Deliberation as Political Participation: Participatory Inequality and Its Explanations

Political participation is often treated as one crucial component in the political system, and deliberative democracy embraces this political system with deliberative principles. Our understanding of political participation could be deepened, on the one hand, when incorporating the idea of deliberative participation. On the other hand, our knowledge concerning deliberation could also be broadened if we build our studies on the legacy of previous political participation literatures. Treating deliberation as political participation leads us to think how different or similar deliberation is compared to conventional political activities. Do the constraints that limit equal participation in traditional forms of political activities also have an influence on deliberation? The inequality among Americans in terms of political participation is well documented, and five groups—less-educated people, younger citizens, the poorer, females, and racial minorities—have been identified as the disempowered. Explaining political participation helps us to understand why certain social groups are underrepresented. Reasons forten

include resources, psychological orientations, mobilization, social networks, mass media usage, group-related characteristics, and political representation. The expectation is that members of disempowered groups will be less likely to participate in deliberation, and factors that restrain their participation include those related to resources, ability, and motivation. Limitations of the political participation framework are discussed using theories of behavior change and group communication and the concepts of experience and influence are proposed as complements to the current framework.

The significance of political participation

Political participation, or civic engagement, is "at the heart of democracy" (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995: 1), and distinguishes democracy from other political systems. It is claimed that only democracy can "offer citizens opportunities to participate in their own governance" (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993: 1), providing the mechanism by which citizens can seek to satisfy their interests, preferences, and needs. "Free and autonomous participation establishes the democratic character of a regime, while staged mobilization of citizens marks authoritarian societies" (Brady, 1999: 737). The transformation of American politics has witnessed an extension of citizenship by granting more people the right to participate in politics.

Through the medium of political participation, Schlozman (2002: 436-438) argued that people can work together to create communities in which democratic orientations and skills are fostered. In addition to the community gain, citizens themselves grow and learn through political participation. Lastly, citizens communicate

information about their preferences and needs for government action and generate pressure on public officials to heed what they hear. Thus, political participation helps to achieve the protection of private interests in public life. However, academic opinion does not always support a beneficial point of view of political participation. According to Macedo's summary (2005: 10-16), political participation is by no means a favorite activity of citizens. Lack of political involvement may signal either widespread satisfaction with the status quo or feelings of powerlessness and frustration experienced during political activities (For the later point, see Hibbing & Thesis-Morse, 2002). In addition, from an elitist point of view, popular engagement might undermine good governance because ordinary citizens are simply incapable of making the right decisions (see Lippmann, 1925). Still worse, highly engaged majorities may repress minorities and produce other injustices. For instance, large voluntary associations could foster racism rather than tolerance, insularity rather than bridges across particular identities, or sectarianism rather than a commitment to a larger public good (Levi, 1996; Tarrow, 1996).

The controversy regarding the significance of political participation reflects the limited understanding of participation in politics. Both sides of controversy assume that political participation is a process during which citizens attempt to maximize their interests in governmental decisions. Therefore, people either participate to pursue their interests or do not participate due to their satisfaction with the protection of their interests. The interests are considered as fixed and necessarily narrow. Participation guarantees that these various but limited interests are equally represented in governmental actions. The

balance is achieved by aggregation and bargaining mechanisms. However, people should not, and actually do not, engage in politics simply for the sake of their private self-interests. As Bennett, Flicknger, and Rhine (2000) pointed out, the Athenian notion of political participation stresses the importance of citizens communicating with one another, through which private interests are redefined in order to protect a common public life. The significance of political participation, lies not only in its role of facilitating interaction between the government and the people, but also its function of encouraging communication and cooperation among citizens. Therefore, the shortcomings of conventional political participation are the ones which should be treated through deliberative political participation since deliberative democracy embraces more advanced principles. The theory of deliberative democracy treats individual interests as transformable when they are reflected on with other citizens who hold different interests in a public setting. It is claimed that such an open, just and reason-centered procedure would have benefits that aggregative and bargaining mechanisms do not have: the legitimacy of decisions would be improved through exchanging preferences rationally; citizens would be empowered by reaching decisions among themselves rather than having decisions imposed by government officials, despite the fact that these officials are elected by the citizens; and minority opinions would be taken into consideration after the majority listens to a reasonable defense of their interests. However, we need to note that any deliberation practices involve costs and whether the claimed benefits of deliberative political participation can be achieved needs more empirical verification.

Defining political participation

In order to clarify the gains and costs of different political activities, political participation needs to be defined. Based on a review of various definitions of political participation, Brady (1999: 737) concluded that political participation "requires *action* by *ordinary citizens* directed toward *influencing* some *political outcomes.*" First, the focus is on activity, not just thoughts or tendencies. Thus, the definition does not extend to issues of political psychology such as interest, efficacy, and strength of partisanship. Secondly, actions should be taken by ordinary citizens, indicating that what the political elite and public officials do cannot be counted as political participation. Thirdly, these actions must involve attempts to influence outcomes. Following political events in the news, watching public affairs programs on TV, and being contacted by a person, party, or organization soliciting involvement are not considered political participation. Fourth, the outcomes that are targeted must be political. By "political," scholars refer to activity that has the intent or effect of influencing governmental actions—either directly by affecting the making or implementation of public policy, or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies. However, scholars disagree on which specific activities can be called political. For instance, Brady (1999: 738) thought daily actions by citizens, such as joining a church or the homeowners' association, are all nonpolitical actions. In contrast, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995: 544) included informal community work as part of their voluntary political activity scale. Finally, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995: 38-39) claimed that political participation involves the

voluntary aspect. By "voluntary," they mean participation that is not obligatory and for which no pay or only token financial compensation is received.

Another important concept, civic engagement, could be considered as a broadened version of political participation. Macedo (2005: 6-8) defined it as follows: civic engagement includes any activity, individual or collective, devoted to influencing the collective life of the polity. As we can see, civic engagement has some similarities with political participation—they both emphasize actions, in contrast to political psychology such as interest and efficacy; they both focus on ordinary citizens; and they are both voluntary. The differences lie in the categorization of the "political." In particular, no sharp distinction is drawn between "civic" and "political." Thus, in addition to activities influencing governmental actions, involvement in voluntary and community groups of all sorts, learning about the political system and issues of the day (e.g., reading the newspaper, talking to friends, etc) are all considered to be avenues of civic engagement. When using the definitive criteria to examine deliberation, we can see that deliberation fits the concept of civic engagement better. Deliberation is an action, although a discursive one, voluntarily done by ordinary citizens, and oriented toward some outcomes that could be linked to both governmental and non-governmental decisions.

However, as Schlozman (2002: 436) points out, no matter how sophisticated the conceptualization of this terrain is, what really matters are the actual measures. Measures of political participation often include the following activities: voting, campaign work, campaign contribution, contacting an official, protest, informal community work, membership on a local board, and affiliation with a political organization. Some scholars

(e.g., Uhlaner, Cain, & Kiewiet, 1989; Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993) proposed to include contacting media as another activity. Studies on political participation rarely go beyond this list. However, as mentioned previously, these conventional forms of political participation often ignore the horizontal interaction among citizens themselves, especially among citizens who do not share a common interest and often conflict on policy preferences. Measures of civic engagement are thus extended to include political discussions, both formal and informal. Delli Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs (2004) used the term "discursive participation," to explicitly indicate that political discussions, no matter whether they are interpersonal communication, communication in small groups, or communication on the level of mass media, are a type of political participation. While some scholars paid attention to informal political talk among family members, friends and acquaintances (e.g., Bennett, Flicknger, & Rhine, 2000; Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2002; Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Pan, et al., 2006), others studied the more or less institutionalized opportunities of deliberation, such as town hall meetings (e.g., Mansbridge, 1983; Sanders, 1997), meetings of voluntary associations (e.g., Eliasoph, 1998) and juries (e.g., Bowers, Steiner, & Sandys, 2001; Devine, et al., 2001; Hastie, Penrod, & Pennington, 1983; Ridgeway, 1981). Research has also been conducted on the emerging phenomenon of so-called deliberative forums (e.g., Briand, 1999; Gastil, 2000; Podziba, 1998; Sirianni & Friedland, 2001). Others are concerned with formal deliberations that embrace more diverse opinions and more innovative technologies (e.g., Iyenga, Luskin, & Fishkin, 2003; Price, Cappella, & Nir, 2002). In addition to political discussions, some scholars suggest that certain media

activities such as call-in talk shows (Pan & Kosicki, 1997) and blogging (Kerbel & Bloom, 2005) should be considered as political participation instead of as traditional media exposure because of their participatory and interactive features.

Treating deliberation as a form of political participation does not mean that deliberative democracy is only another entry on the list. Deliberative principles could be applied in various contexts, including courtrooms and the Congress (see Gastil, forthcoming), but deliberation as political participation focuses on those activities involving rational discussions among disagreeing citizens. Deliberative theory proposes that deliberation is superior to other forms of political actions since procedural rationality precludes any domination from money or power. Critiques of deliberative theory argue that an open, fair, and reason-centered procedure does not necessarily eliminate the inequalities existing in the sociopolitical structure and deliberation is subject to injustice as well. By comparing deliberation with other political activities, we can learn lessons from political participation research. Particularly, such a comparison may help answer the question of how deliberation can address the problems associated with political participation, such as participatory inequality. Before answering this question, a description of political participation among Americans helps to identify the inequalities involved in participating in politics.

Participatory inequality among Americans

When tracing the historical transformation of political participation among Americans, Putnam (2000) claimed that there is a trend of clear decline. Despite the

lowered barrier to voting including relaxed registration requirements and the extended right to vote to disenfranchised groups, participation in presidential elections has decreased significantly. Nevertheless, as explained below, turnout rates seem to manifest a reversed mode recently. Regarding political activities outside the context of national elections, Putnam (2000: 41) showed that "(t)he frequency of virtually every form of community involvement measured in the Roper polls declined significantly, from the most common—petition signing—to the least common—running for office." Since involvement in non-political institutions not only fosters the development of civic skills but also acts as a source of requests for political activity, it is important to look at organizational membership as well. Putnam (2000: 64) found that Americans have not merely dropped out from political life, but from organized community life more generally. Factors that have contributed to the decline include pressures of time and money, suburbanization, electronic entertainment, and generational change (Putnam, 2000: 284). Other attempts at trying to explain the decline draw from a different set of evidence, namely the institutional change of American politics. Fiorina (1999) argued that as the government becomes more open to citizens, small and unrepresentative slices of the population disproportionately avail themselves of those opportunities. Ordinary people who hold moderate views opt out of these activities and polarized opinion-holders become the active actors. Skocpol (1999) attributed the decline to advocacy groups, those professionally-run organizations that do not rely on popular engagement and often pursue partial interests. No matter what the reasons, whether these social and political changes lead to wider or narrower gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged in terms of

political participation is the focus of this dissertation. Participatory inequality is a consistent attribute of civic life in spite of minor fluctuations along time (Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 1999: 457). The following paragraphs will provide a sketch of issues in political participation, especially participatory inequality among Americans

Surprisingly, the latest comprehensive investigation of political participation among Americans is still the series of works by Henry E. Brady, Nancy Burns, Sidney Verba, and Kay L. Schlozman, which are based on the 1990 Citizen Participation Study. But the voting data are frequently updated and the 2004 presidential election provides us the most recent turnout rates. Over 122 million Americans, in other words, 61 percent of the eligible voters, voted in 2004 election—a jump compared to 54 percent in 2000 (Abramowitz & Stone, 2006). It was not only that the voting rate increased in 2004, but also that far more Americans engaged in campaign activities. Twenty-one percent of Americans displayed a button, bumper sticker, or yard sign during the campaign and 48 percent of Americans reported that they talked to someone during the 2004 campaign to try to influence their vote. Scholars attributed the increased turnout rate to the intense polarization of the American electorate over George W. Bush. Whether such an increase manifests an overall enhancement of political participation among citizens remains unknown due to the uniqueness of the voting behavior. According to Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995), voting has low volume (i.e., happens occasionally); requires time, but seldom involves money and skills; and is less capable of conveying information, such as policy preference, to the government. These characteristics of voting limit its significance

in the everyday practices of political participation, suggesting that we should not ignore other forms of participation no matter how the turnout rate looks.

The 1990 Citizen Participation Study is a two-wave survey that included 15,053 respondents in the first wave and interviewed 2,517 of these same respondents in the second wave (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995: 535). The study shows that participation in American politics is anything but universal and that those who do take part are, in important ways, not representative of the public at large (Schlozman, et al., 2005). Almost half of the respondents (48 percent) reported being affiliated with an organization that takes stands in politics. Thirty-four percent of the sample reported having initiated contact with a government official. In addition, about a sixth (17 percent) reported having worked informally with others in the neighborhood or community to try to deal with some community issue or problem. Fourteen percent of respondents attended local board meeting. Finally, much smaller proportions have served in a voluntary capacity on a local governmental board or council, such as a school or zoning board (3 percent), or attended a protest, march, or demonstration on some national or local issue (6 percent; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995: 50-52). Regarding political discussions, Delli Carpini, Cook and Jacobs (2004) showed that talking about public issues is fairly widespread among the American public although not universal (e.g., 19% of adults had not engaged in any discursive political activities in the past year).

The fact that only a sub-proportion of Americans participate in political activities might not be problematic if the political activists represent the whole population in terms of interests, opinions, and policy preferences. The argument is that election results and

policy outcomes would not be different even if all citizens equally participate in politics. The most cited evidence is the small differences between voters and nonvoters on presidential preferences and policy attitudes (See Leighley, 1995 for a summary). Recently, Bennett (2006) pointed out that the 2000 and 2004 ANES reveal no statistically significant differences between voters' and nonvoters' attitudes about gun control, the death penalty, protecting homosexuals against job discrimination, government assistance to Blacks, and government spending for defense. Although small differences were found in the cases of abortion and the welfare state, any other policy skew would be slight.

Counter-arguments regarding the lack of political consequences of unequal civic engagement are multi-faceted. First, as mentioned before, the significance of political participation is not limited to policy outcomes. Those who do not participate in politics not only risk having their interests under-represented in governmental decisions, but also miss the opportunity to learn and practice citizenship. A democracy without thorough and efficient mutual action among citizens is only a "thin democracy" (Barber, 1984) no matter how fair the central mechanism is (which is often not the case). Secondly, since a majority of citizens participates in voting, differences between voters and nonvoters are not huge. However, the active and the inactive in election-irrelevant activities might show a bigger discrepancy. Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence supporting or rejecting this hypothesis. Thirdly, since survey researchers choose the issues for their respondents, we might find distinctive participatory agendas among the inactive and the active if we ask respondents to name their concerns. The argument is indirectly supported by Scholzman (2006) as showing that those who have limited income and education are

much more inactive and when they participate, they are considerably more likely to discuss issues of basic human need.

Finally, it might be because those nonvoters and other politically inactive people are less likely to express their opinions at all. In other words, nonvoters have a higher proportion of "don't know" responses, and these "don't know" nonvoters, if given enough knowledge to form opinions, would hold different policy preferences from voters. What if all the politically inactive have their voices heard and do so based on the possibly highest political knowledge? Althaus (2003) statistically simulated fully informed preferences and compared those preferences across social groups to see the differences that were caused by non-response and lack of political knowledge. He found that in the surveyed responses, men and women equally supported/opposed abortion (46.1% of men who agreed that abortion should be always permitted and 46.4% of women did so). In contrast, the simulated opinions showed a much larger difference: while nearly the same percent (48.7%) of men supported abortion, a majority (61.9%) of women did so. The simulated opinions suggested that if women completely express their opinions under the condition that they are fully informed, the collective opinion landscape could be dramatically changed (46.2% of surveyed answers supported abortion while 55.7% of simulated responses did so). These sorts of findings were observed for many other issues including health care, education, and immigration policies. Since Althaus' data are also from ANES, his findings strongly supported the idea that unequal civic engagement might lead to the under-representation of certain opinions. The discussions here suggest that non-participation is not, on its own, a significant problem. We should check the

consequences of non-participation in terms of both collective policy outcomes and individual political engagement.

Given the political consequence of non-participation, it is necessary to ask who the politically inactive are. Study after study shows that SES (i.e., Social Economic Status)-disadvantaged groups are often underrepresented (See Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001 for females; see Leighley, 2001 for racial minorities; see Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996 for people with low education; see Scholzman, 2006 for people with low income; see Zukin et al., 2006 for younger people). **Education** is a key determinant of civic participation (Hauser, 2000). The 2000 presidential election data show that among people who have eight years or less education, the voting turnout is around 26.8 percent; for people who have a college degree or more, the rate is as high as 72.0 percent (Scholzman, 2006). Education has a strong and positive influence on political knowledge, political participation, attentiveness to politics, and tolerance (Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996: 37). Even for political discussions, which are supposed to happen more frequently, education is consistently a discriminating variable, with a higher education leading to more discussions (Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2002; Pan, et al., 2006; Wyatt, Kim, & Katz, 2000). However, with continued growth in educational attainment, there is not an overall increase in political engagement. Nie, Junn, and Stehlik-Barry (1996: 191) found that the correlations between education and various sorted social outcomes have either remained constant or are slowly rising. In contrast to an absolute education model, which argues that more education means more political engagement because more education produces more social and political resources, they offered a relative education model—so

long as the number of seats in the political theater remains fixed and education continues to play a strong role in determining social position, the amount of inequality in the participatory hierarchy should be constant regardless of the degree of increase in absolute educational attainment over time. At the same time that Americans are becoming more educationally homogeneous, Americans are also sorting more intensively on these smaller and smaller educational differences, such as where the education was received. Therefore, as long as there is competition for scarce political resources, education will continue to function as a powerful discriminating tool.

Age is second only to education as a predictor of virtually all forms of civic engagement. Scholzman (2006) showed that only 28.4% of youngest eligible citizens (18 to 20 years old) voted in 2000 whereas 67.6% of those 65 years and older turned out. Middle-aged and older people are more active in more organizations than younger people, attend church more often, vote more regularly, work on more community projects, volunteer more, both read and watch the news more frequently, are more interested in politics (Putnam, 2000: 247), and have higher interpersonal trust (Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001). However, Zukin et al. (2006) demonstrated that youth are more likely to engage in more civic or economic-based forms of participation, such as one-on-one voluntary activities and boycotting. Political discussions showed a similar pattern: older people tend to opt out of conversations regarding public issues (Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2002; Pan, et al., 2006; Wyatt, Kim, & Katz, 2000).

The question is whether the low participatory rate among youth, at least in "traditional politics," is a temporary phenomenon since young people suffer from life-

cycle related start-up problems in relation to politics. Putnam (2000: 276) suggested that such an age difference is actually a generational effect, which means young people are politically distinct from previous generations. It might be because that younger generation experienced a different political socialization process, during which civic virtues were not as deeply inculcated as before. This developmental concern triggered a body of research on civic education (See *PS: Political Science and Politics*, April 2004; *Journal of Social Issues*, 54(3), 1998), investigating ways through which political values, civic identity, and social responsibility could be nurtured. Meanwhile, other scholars oppose the view that young people such as Generation X are more apathetic to politics. Instead, they argued that when young people do show signs of disengagement from traditional politics, they do not lag behind in community activism and economic-based participation (Zukin, et al., 2006). The difference reflects youths' perceptions of how politics is organized rather than a lack of interest (Henn, Weinstein, & Wring, 2002). One of the key problems is that they might be marginalized or excluded from political decision-making (O'Toole, Marsh, & Jones, 2003). A generational shift may represent the disillusionment with a political process that is dated and unresponsive to the needs of modern citizens who are coming to conceptualize politics within a broader framework of social and civic issues (Phelps, 2004). No matter whether the political system failed young people or the young people failed the political system, understanding how age groups differ in terms of engaging in politics is highly meaningful for the future of the democracy.

The enlarged distance between the rich and the poor in the U.S. had made another determinant of civic engagement, **income**, more problematic. When comparing those having family incomes below $15,000 and those at the top of the income ladder with family incomes over $75,000, Scholzman (2006) reported that the poor were clearly less active in the following activities: voting, working in a campaign, making a campaign contribution, getting in touch with a public official, taking part in a protest, march or demonstration, getting involved in an informal effort to solve a community problem, serving as an unpaid volunteer on a local governing board such as a school board or city council, and being affiliated with an organization that takes stands in politics. The disparity between the two income groups is especially wide when it comes to making campaign contributions. Interestingly, even protesting—which demands little in the way of skills or money and which is often thought of as "the weapon of the weak," is characterized by the income bias. The poor are also underrepresented among the high discussants and overrepresented among the low discussants for both public and private discussion (Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2002). Even the positive effect of political discussions on political knowledge is contingent on income—the discussion among urban poor youth is associated with lower level of knowledge (Lay, 2006).

Although **gender** differences in voting are slight—56.2% of female and 53.1% of male voted in the 2000 presidential election (Scholzman, 2006), statistically significant disparities were found between women and men on campaign contribution, informal community work, contacting an official, and political organizational affiliation. In all of these, women tended to do less (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001: 65). While women

are not less involved in private conversation (Wyatt, Kim, & Katz, 2000), women normally do not engage in public discussions as much as men do because of their lower levels of social connectedness, the higher likelihood to perceive discussions as normally unfavorable, and lower levels of a perceived duty to discuss (Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2002). In addition, women are less politically engaged than men, having poorer political information, political interest, political discussion, and political efficacy (Verba, Burns, & Scholzman, 1997). With respect to the gratifications gained from participation, women and men are similar in terms of how they recalled the reasons for their activity (Schlozman, et al., 1995). Men and women address similar issues; when it comes to the content of participation, however, men and women do speak with different voices, with educational issues and abortion weighing especially heavily in the policy agendas of female activists. Other differences, such as political attitude expression, are also observed (Atkeson & Rapoport, 2003). Women are less likely to express as many likes and dislikes toward the parties and candidates and are more likely to respond "don't know" than men. The political socialization concern is proposed here to explain the gender gap in political participation. Verba, Burns, and Scholzman (1997) pointed out that women have been enfranchised and social mores have changed, but the implicit lesson that politics is a male domain is still taught in various ways – among them is the fact that the overwhelming majority of political figures, especially powerful ones, are male.

The richest body of research on disempowered groups and political participation comes from studies on **racial minorities**. Although socioeconomic status has a significant effect on individuals' levels of participation, class differences do not account

for all of the variation in activity levels across ethnic groups (Leighley, 2001: 49). Election data show that current turnout rates do not manifest big differences between Whites (56.4 percent) and Blacks (53.5 percent), but Hispanics voted at a significantly lower proportion (27.5 percent in the 2000 presidential election; Scholzman, 2006). Asian Americans situate in between—44 percent voted in 2000 (Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2004). In terms of other kinds of political participation, Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995: 231-233) found that African-Americans and Anglo-Whites are fairly similar, while Latinos, in contrast, evince lower levels of overall activity. When looking at specific types of participation, the same pattern was observed in election-related activities. However, Latinos did show a slightly higher percentage in serving a local board than Whites. A survey based on local data shows that the level of Latino participation is not lower in attending community meetings, in auxiliary police program, and in participation as blockwatchers (Marschall, 2001). Reports on Asian Americans' political participation are rarely made at the national level due to the small size of this ethnic group. The most comprehensive dataset is the Pilot National Asian American Survey (PNAAPS), which is conducted in Asian-dense areas including Los Angeles, New York, Honolulu, San Francisco, and Chicago. Wong, Lien and Conway (2005) found that fewer Asian-Americans worked for a political campaign (2%), donated to campaign (12%), and wrote or phoned governmental official (11%). However, almost no differences were found in attending public meetings (14%), working with others in community on problems (21%), serving on a board (2%), and taking part in a protest (6%). Regarding political discussions, initial findings suggest that non-Whites talk about politics less frequently

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during a presidential campaign (Pan, et al., 2006), although no significant racial differences were found in other studies (Wyatt, Kim, & Katz, 2000).

Explaining political participation

The descriptive data on political participation among Americans show a pattern that is neither universal nor representative. Disenfranchised groups including low-educated people, young citizens, the poor, females, and racial minorities manifest lower degree of involvement in politics. The gap in participation can be demonstrated by differences in both the *levels* of participation and the *effects* of participatory factors (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001: 364). In other words, even if the levels were similar across groups, differences should not be disclaimed as long as the sources and effects of participation are distinct among different groups. Thus, I turn to the various models that are used to explain political participation.

Most explanations of political participation generally focus on four groups of factors, namely, resources, political psychology, mobilization and social connectedness. Media exposure has become another interesting predictor as citizens rely more on media to learn, to monitor, and to decide. When considering political participation among disempowered groups such as African-Americans, group-related characteristics including group size, group consciousness, inter-group conflicts and migration-related factors such as nativity, length of residence, and language skills are added as another cluster of explanatory factors. Political representation functions as both a mobilization force and a favorable symbol fostering political socialization of disenfranchised groups. Obviously,

these predictors also influence each other: for example, resources could be increased through mobilization and enlarged social networks; political psychology is formed during social activities in a group context; group characteristics partially shape group members' social networks; and descriptive representation leads to political mobilization and changes political psychology. For the sake of clarity, however, they will be discussed separately.

Resources are critical to political participation, since participating in politics is neither easy nor cost-free. Time, money and skills (Verba & Nie, 1972) have been identified as the three resource factors that have a consistent impact across types of activities and types of groups. To what degree these resources influence activities depends on the nature of the political action per se. Donations are mainly based on the money factor and in contrast, attending a protest addresses the free-time factor (Verba, Burns, & Scholzman, 1997: 289). Other activities such as serving on a board rely more on civic skills, which are directly related to education. The magnitude of the effects of these resources also depends on which demographic groups we are talking about. For instance, many studies show that income is a less important resource for Asian-Americans in terms of influencing their participation (e.g., Leighley & Vedlitz, 1999). In addition, more and more, researchers are starting to focus on the interaction between activities and groups, i.e., how resource factors function differently in specific groups on specific activities. Wong, Lien and Conway (2005) showed that while income has no effects or even negative effects on voting-related behaviors among Asian-Americans, it does encourage participation beyond voting.

Psychological orientations indicate the individual level of variations that cannot be completely explained by socioeconomic status. Traditionally, these political psychological factors refer to political interest, political efficacy, political information/knowledge, strength of ideology (Verba, Burns, & Scholzman, 1997: 345-348), partisanship (Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2004: 83), trust in government, and civic responsibility (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993: 146-150). Recently, this list has been expanded to include interpersonal trust (e.g., Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001), political tolerance (e.g., Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996), political involvement (e.g., Mangum, 2003), cynicism (e.g., Cappella & Jamieson, 1997), political competence (e.g., Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2002), and willingness to talk (e.g., Wyatt, Kim, & Katz, 2000). Although, in general, these orientations (except for cynicism) have positive influence on political participation, we can see that the effects of some psychological orientations are activities-specific. For instance, trust in government is more relevant to governmental politics (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993) whereas personal trust contributes more to community involvement (Uslaner & Brown, 2005). The effects could also be group-specific: Marschall (2001) found that high trust/high efficacy boosted voting among Anglo-Whites, but not among African-Americans and Latinos.

Mobilization is often considered as a political influence that can encourage political participation regardless of individual constraints. As Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) argued, since the distribution of resources cannot change rapidly, mobilization should be the way to enlarge the scope of public involvement. Although Rosenstone and Hansen (1993: 26-27) differentiated direct and indirect mobilization, mobilization here

specifically refers to those actions by political leaders, i.e., direct mobilization. Indirect mobilization will be discussed in the context of social networks. Political mobilization is often initiated by political parties and candidates, members of Congress, and the President through either electoral campaigns or social movements. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993: 217-219) attributed declined turnout partially to declined electoral mobilization: partisan mobilization changed from the labor-intensive canvassing methods to the money-intensive media strategies; the intensity of electoral competition declined; and demands on campaign resources were intensified, in other words, the proliferation of presidential primaries spread the resources of both citizens and campaigns thinner and thinner. One piece of evidence for this comes from a field experiment on mobilizing Asian-American voters. Wong (2005) found that telephone calls and mail increase voter turnout. Mobilization such as campaign exposure and campaign contact can also increase the frequency of political discussions (Pan, et al., 2006).

Social networks and their role in affecting political participation is articulated by Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995: 389) as fostering the development of civic skills and acting as a source of requests for political activity. Similarly, Scheufele et al. (2004) suggested that social settings—such as the workplace, the church, and the volunteer group—shape participation directly by serving as important networks of recruitment, but also work indirectly in channeling participation by facilitating exposure to a diversity of viewpoints and by motivating hard news media use. Indirect mobilization (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993: 26-27) thus could be treated as the recruitment function of social networks. The extent of social networks has been found to have significant consequences for the

likelihood of individual participation (Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2002; Huckfeldt, 1986; Giles & Dantico, 1982), although it remains unclear whether social environment affects all or only some particular kinds of participatory acts (Kenny, 1992; Leighley, 1990). Scholars have studied, in addition to the size of networks, the nature of social networks, namely, heterogeneity (i.e., the extent to which social networks embrace disagreeing opinions). There are inconsistent findings with respect to the effects of network composition on political participation. While Scheufele et al. (2004) found that network heterogeneity increases political participation through enhancing news usage and political knowledge, Mutz (2002a) showed that people whose networks involve greater political disagreement are less likely to participate in politics because they are more likely to hold ambivalent political views and experience controversial social pressures. Concerning the question of social networks and disempowered groups, church attendance and membership in non-political organizations are also identified as positive predictors of African-Americans' (Alex-Assensoh & Assensoh, 2001; Brown & Brown, 2003), Latino-Americans' (Hritzuk & Park, 2000) and Asian-Americans' political activities (Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2004). Regarding the nature of networks among minorities, Mutz (2006: 30-31) found that contrary to the usual directions, non-Whites are significantly more likely to engage in cross-cutting political conversation than Whites. The same pattern was observed in low income and low-educated groups. However, whether network heterogeneity functions differently in disempowered groups remains unanswered.

Mass media and their effects on political participation are complex. The complexity lies in the fact that first, mass media convey multi-dimensional and

sometimes contradictory messages; secondly, people use media for different reasons and thus selectively expose themselves to media messages; thirdly, the effects of mass media are buffered by other social mechanisms such as interpersonal communication and organizational involvement; and lastly, mass media often indirectly influence political engagement through other participatory factors like political psychology. Corresponding to these concerns, political communication research often distinguishes among media content (news vs. entertainment), media formats (newspaper vs. TV), program types (hard news vs. talk shows), the motivations of media use (e.g., informational vs. social-recreational use), directness of effects (e.g., the mediating role of political discussions), and effects on cognition vs. behavior (e.g., knowledge vs. voting). Empirical findings show that news rather than entertainment content (e.g., Hooghe, 2002), newspapers rather than TV (e.g., Scheufele, 2002), and informational use rather than the social-recreational use of mass media (e.g., Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001), have a positive influence on political participation. Mass media often interact with the characteristics of social networks to affect political participation (e.g., Shah, McLeod, & Yoon, 2001), and when media function, they are more likely to have direct effects on cognition (e.g., Eveland, et al., 2005) but only an indirect impact on behavior (e.g., Mondak, 1995). Furthermore, mass media can even have a significant negative influence on political participation, if time is spent on media consumption instead of political activities (see Putnam, 2000), and certain media messages such as attack political advertisements (e.g., Ansolabehere, et al., 1994) and cynical news frames (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997) foster psychological orientations that work against civic engagement. A few studies examined whether media

effects are the same across social groups. Mastin (2000) found that there was no significant relationship between local media use and civic participation among African-Americans and suggested that the mainstream media might not be able to serve the civic information needs of disempowered groups due to their negative portray of these groups. More analyses are needed to explore mass media and their interaction with other participatory factors on shaping political participation in disempowered groups.

The participatory factors discussed to this point are generally applicable to every social group. The following paragraphs focus on those components that are especially relevant to disempowered groups, i.e., **group-related characteristics**. The size of the population that falls into the categorization of one group often influences the status of that group in the political system since aggregative political mechanisms emphasize the power of number. For most disadvantaged groups, a factor known as group consciousness should be considered. Group consciousness is developed when members of a group recognize their status as being part of a deprived group. Group consciousness has been found to stimulate participation among African-Americans (Bobo & Gilliam, 1990; Dawson, 1994), Latino-Americans (Sanchez, 2006; Stokes, 2003), and Asian-Americans (Lien, 1997). However, there are counterarguments claiming that victims of discrimination might also turn away from the political system since they feel alienated from the political process (Salamon & Van Evera, 1973; Henig & Dennis, 1987). In addition, since many disempowered group members are first-generation immigrants, migration status becomes another important group-related characteristic. This group of variables often includes length of residence, citizenship, language skills, nativity, and the

maintenance of transnational ties (Lien, Conway, & Wong, 2004: 147-148). Studies often found positive relations between these migration-related factors and political participation (e.g., Cho, 1999; Johnson, Stein, & Wrinkle, 2003).

Political representation particularly means that members from disempowered groups hold governmental offices. According to Mansbridge (1999), in spite of the fact that descriptive representation does not guarantee the representation of the interests of disempowered groups, it is meaningful in the contexts of distrust and un-crystallized interests. Descriptive representation is needed to bridge the chasm between a dominant and a subordinate group. On issues that many legislators have not fully thought through, the personal quality of being a member of an affected group gives a legislator a certain moral force in making an argument or asking for a favorable vote on an issue important to the group. Descriptive representation helps to construct the social meaning that all descriptive groups are equally capable of ruling. It also makes members of historically underrepresented groups feel as if they themselves were present in politics. Plenty of studies have examined the hypothesized benefits of minority representation among political leaders. In an electoral environment with viable female candidates, women are more internally efficacious, more likely to discuss politics, discuss politics often, convince others, and comment on the political parties, and less likely to say "don't know" (Atkeson, 2003). Banducci, Donovan, and Karp (2004) found that minority representation increases knowledge about and contact with representatives but appears to have no significant impact on efficacy and political participation. Venderleeuw and Liu (2002) showed that the presence of Black candidates, particularly Black incumbents, yields

enhanced political participation among Black voters in urban elections. However, politicians and their mobilization or symbolization have obvious limitations because politicians do not mobilize for the sake of mobilization. They often target their efforts on people who have resources or strong partisan allegiances, and people who are centrally placed in social networks in order to affect the election outcomes (Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993: 210). Disempowered groups who have no strength on both number and influence are easily ignored. Incentives for leaders to attend to the needs of people who neither affect the achievement of their policy goals nor influence the perpetuation of their tenure in office are few.

Limitations of political participation: The experience and influence

In the political participation literatures, how one experiences certain political activities such as voting and attending a political rally is rarely reported and studied. In addition, whether the same political behavior can generate same influence on either other individuals or the whole society has seldom been examined. Operationally speaking, frequencies of political activities (such as how often one votes) function as the main measures of political participation in previous studies. Focusing on the quantity of political activities ignores the fact that people **experience** one same activity differently and such experience is going to be carried into one's future behaviors. Behaviorist models such as Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein et al, 1991) indicate that previous experience might influence later behavior through affecting one's beliefs and attitudes toward the behavior in examination. For instance, serving one's jury duty might be very

different experiences for different people depending on which role one plays during the procedure. A person who speaks out actively and successfully influences the final decision might have a positive evaluation on their experience and such a positive attitude will increase his/her intention to be involved in another jury duty in the future. On the contrary, a person whose opinion is ignored or opposed by other jury members might form a negative impression about jury duty and tends to opt out future similar activities. For a relatively new practice such as deliberation, the sustainability of this alternative form of political participation should be one of the major concerns when we think of its generalizability. Although this behaviorist model has rarely been applied to explaining political behaviors, we can reasonably expect that experience matters when it affects intention of future behavior through altering attitudes and beliefs.

Another thread of research that suggests the importance of experience comes from the small group communication studies (Frey, 1999). Satisfaction and dissatisfaction in group communication are two crucial variables because they represent group members' perspective on both task performance and social relationship in their groups (Fisher, 1980; Keyton, 1999). In small groups such as deliberation, opinion disagreement is manifested and encouraged to be exchanged. Small group studies suggest that disagreement and diversity lead to group conflicts and therefore, lower satisfaction and higher dissatisfaction (e.g., Wall, Galanes, & Love, 1987). However, such a relationship is moderated by conflict management styles (e.g., Hagen & Burch, 1985). Deliberation groups often stress on the fairness of the procedure, which is supposed to counteract the negative effect of conflicts that are associated with disagreement and diversity. We can

see that the specific features of deliberation affect group members' experience in different, if not contradictory, ways and how the experience turns out to be is an interesting question that is open to all kinds of possibilities. Examining experience in deliberation thus provides us a way to rethink of deliberation and its structural arrangements.

Deliberation is a type of political participation that puts a lot of emphases on the procedure of generating **influence**. In order to clarify what influence in deliberation means, we need to first clarify what deliberation means. Regardless of different theoretical approaches to deliberative democracy, deliberation among citizens is treated as essentially a communication procedure. Habermas, Lennox, and Lennox (1964) explicitly states that by public sphere, he means "a realm of social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed." In other words, deliberation is considered as a procedure of public opinion formation. According to Price (1992: 91), public opinion "remains fundamentally a communication concept" because public opinion has a close connection with processes of discussion, debate, and collective decision making. Similarly, Gutmann and Thompson (1996: 1) point out that the core idea of deliberative democracy is that "when citizens or their representatives disagree morally, they should continue to reason together to reach mutually acceptable decisions." Defining deliberation as a communication procedure, influence in deliberation is thus considered primarily rendering from communication actions.

Habermas borrows the concept of influence from Parsons and defines it as "a symbolically generalized form of communication that facilitates interactions in virtue of

conviction or persuasion" (1998: 363). Conviction or persuasion is separated from forces

and authorities when it comes to the way through which people are changed by others. In

a public sphere where deliberation takes the center, public opinion "can be manipulated

but neither publicly bought nor publicly blackmailed" (Habermas, 1998: 364). People

could be influenced because of either their beliefs in the influential themselves or their

agreement to the contributions that are made by the influential. Only when influence

reaches authorized members of the political system and affects their actions, can power

emerge. Therefore, contributions that are made by deliberating citizens during

deliberation could be considered as sources of influence. However, only when these

contributions are adopted by the political actors, does deliberation exert power in the

decision-making system.

Influence that is based on persuasion does not have to be discursively rational, as

indicated by Habermas when he said that public opinion can be manipulated. Rather,

influence is a norm-free concept which refers to the empirical fact that some opinions

gain more favorable reactions than others. Habermas notices that influence could be

already acquired by some of the actors in the public sphere but not others. He lists

experienced political leaders, officeholders, religious leaders, and well-known groups as

those who have advantages in exerting influence on the formation and reformation of

public opinions. These actors, of course, are "furnished with unequal opportunities for

exerting influence" (Habermas, 1998: 364). However, Habermas thinks that the final

approval of these actors' influence is still in the hands of a lay public, whose composition

is egalitarian. The problem resides exactly on the assumption of an egalitarian public that

is present in the public sphere. The review on unequal participation in politics has already demonstrated that attendance in deliberation is not expected to be egalitarian given the social economic inequalities that significantly limit full participation. The counter-argument regarding the political consequences of unequal participation is that although the disempowered is under-represented, their views and opinions would be treated fairly. But the "unequal opportunities for exerting influence" limit the possibility that minority opinions would be influential in deliberation. It further limits the possibility that minority influence could be transferred into political power, in other words, decisions that are made by the political system. That is why we should examine the disempowered and their influence in the deliberative public sphere.

Disempowered group members have been studied extensively in group communication research. One approach focuses on individual differences and how such differences shape the group's communication and its consequences (Haslett & Ruebush, 1999). The other approach is an even more fruitful area of group influence, studying how social comparison, minority influence and in-group/out-of-group conflicts function during the influence process (Meyers & Brashers, 1999). Haslett and Ruebush (1999) identified demographic characteristics as one of those most relevant individual differences that influence groups' processes and outcomes. External status characteristics (e.g., gender and race) can be transferred to group settings because (1) people form expectations and make judgments about others on the basis of such characteristics; (2) general social status also influences perceptions of members' power and status in groups; and (3) status characteristics shape differences in terms of thinking pattern,

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communicative behavior and conflict management style. External minorities who are disadvantaged in SES terms have been found to participate less, challenge ideas less, have less influence on group decisions and be less satisfied than non-disadvantaged majorities (Johnson & Schulman, 1989; Rozell & Vaught, 1988). Because such disenfranchising in groups could be attributed to the biased expectations that group's participants hold toward disempowered members, computer technology might be able to discourage the biased expectation by reducing the external status cues (this is discussed further below). But the genuine differences that diversify the group's composition persist. Group diversity could lead to both conflict in the group and low contribution rates among the disempowered group members (Ibarra, 1992; Kirchmeyer & Cohen, 1992). But such diversity is also found to have an overall positive effect on the group's performance, mainly because diverse participants can bring in varied perspectives (McLeod, Lobel, & Cox, 1996; Thomas, Ravlin, & Wallace, 1996). Research suggests that heterogeneous groups' process costs may be mitigated by time, and that the benefits of decision-making will finally emerge (Watson, Kumna, & Michaelsen, 1993). However, because deliberation practices are voluntary and include no obligation to participate, process costs could drive disempowered group members away; thus we might never see the group's final benefits. Such concerns urge researchers to think about procedural leverage that might counteract external inequality's influence on groups' processes and outcomes.

The group influence literature also identifies the mechanisms through which disempowered group members are marginalized in terms of influence (Meyers & Brashers, 1999). Research on group information processing (Propp, 1999) demonstrates

that group members use external status cues to determine whose knowledge will more probably be shared with the group, and whose information is given more weight in decision-making. There are two implications of this finding: first, disempowered group members' low participation rate implies that their perspectives are not expressed and that if we could only "make them talk," the disempowered might be able to exert their influence; secondly, if we can minimize the external status cues, the disempowered's opinions would be given equal weight, and thus could exert equal influence. But deliberation is more than a process of uttering one's valence regarding certain choices. Valence is expected to be modified, if not totally changed, based on arguments exchanged during discussions.

This emphasis on reasoning separates influence in deliberation from traditional empirical studies on influence. Here the concern is no longer whether people tend to conform to their group members' expectations and actually plays down the personal connections between deliberating citizens. Rather, people involved in deliberation are considered as citizens who exert their influence through providing arguments and contesting on which arguments are better. The mechanisms of minority influence are not necessarily consistent with the deliberative model of persuasion. For example, consistency is found to be one mechanism of minority influence, in which if minority members consistently stick to a point of view, that view might be adopted by the majority (Meyers & Brashers, 1999). However, deliberation assumes minority influence entirely based on its superiority in term of argument quality, without considering the degree to which minority members stick to their argument. Therefore, although deliberation might

involve many mechanisms of influence that could be empirically observed, the normative nature of deliberation directs our attention to the one that is consistent with the ideal, which is the mechanism of influence by better arguments.

The emphasis on communication of reasons leads our attention to the so-called argument message level (Meyers & Brashers, 1999), examining how disempowered members reason in groups and how they influence decision-making through reasoning. On the one hand, disempowered members' inferior social status limits their ability to reason efficiently in groups, which is manifested in their production of fewer arguments. On the other hand, disempowered members bring in novel arguments, which can alter other members' opinions if they are convinced. How many, and which kinds of, arguments disempowered members can provide become important questions to be answered.

In short, whereas the political participation literatures have significant contributions in defining and explaining the unequal participation in politics, they do not involve much analyses on the experience and the influence that are produced by such participation. Both political behaviorists and group communication researchers provide us legitimate reasons and relevant evidence to support an expanded analysis of political activities. In other words, not only attendance but also experience and influence should be examined in light of the inequalities that exist among the disempowered groups and others. Such a concern is further addressed in the following section of review on deliberative democracy theories and practices.

Deliberative Democracy and Inequality: Theories, Practices and the Internet

Deliberative democracy is a concept linked to multiple scholarly traditions. My review of deliberative democracy theories is based mainly on Habermas' notion of the Public Sphere, and on Gutmann and Thompson's work on disagreement and democracy. Critiques of deliberative democracy focus on its failure to deal with injustice. Unequal access might exclude disempowered group members from deliberation (i.e., descriptive under-representation), and so might their opinions (i.e., opinion under-representation). Even when disempowered group members are included, they might not have a favorable attitude toward deliberation and might not gain much from it due to their inferior position in the discussion's hierarchy (i.e., unequal experience) and finally, even when their perspectives are expressed, they might not influence the outcomes (i.e., unequal influence) because of their lack of persuasive ability. Deliberative democracy, which has to operate in an unjust power structure, needs to recognize these potential inequalities and try to treat them, instead of ignoring them.

After the theoretical discussions, deliberation practices are reviewed and evaluated against the justice principle. Everyday political discussions are found to be unequally distributed among American citizens. The disempowered seem to be less actively involved in political talk than others. Preliminary findings regarding small group deliberation suggest unequal attendance as well, with the disempowered less likely to attend small group deliberation than others. Mixed findings are present in terms of whether the disempowered have low participation rates during deliberation, and whether they gain negative experience from participating in deliberation. In addition, because this

dissertation focuses on online deliberation as its research object, the Internet and its role in deliberative democracy are reviewed. It is shown that the injustice concern is also central in debating the Internet's democratic potential.

Deliberative democracy theories and inequality

A deliberative turn in democratic theory has been claimed (e.g., Dryzek, 2000) and observed in both academia (e.g., edited volumes such as Bohman & Rehg, 1997; Elster, 1998; Macedo, 1999) and political practices such as civic journalism (Perry, 2003), the Deliberative Poll (Fishkin, 1995) and e-thepeople.org (an online public forum for democratic conversations among citizens). One of the most important figures who shaped this turn is Jürgen Habermas. His theory of the Public Sphere not only revives interest in deliberative democracy, but also illuminates the practical foundation which deliberative democracy might be functionally based. Although critical thinking about deliberative democracy can be found also in works by Hannah Arendt (1958), John Rawls (1971) and other canonic writings, Habermas' Public Sphere is, without doubt, the most widely accepted idea in current years. Continuous and significant contributions on theorizing deliberative democracy have been made after Habermas' central work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, was introduced to the English world in 1989 (e.g., Chambers, 1996; Dryzek, 2000). Among these attempts, Amy Gutmann's and Dennis Thompson's book, *Democracy and Disagreement*, provides "serious and normative philosophical confrontation with the fact of disagreement in contemporary political life" (Schauer, 1999). Their work relied on detailed examples of issues that are prevalent in

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American society, and all the deliberative principles they identified were examined against these practical concerns. More importantly, both Habermas and Gutmann and Thompson creatively and responsively answered theoretical and practical challenges from various perspectives. Because the focus here is on disempowered groups, reviews of critiques would give priority to justice-related reflections, which include Iris Marion Young and her criticism from the perspective of the Politics of Difference and Nancy Fraser based on the theory of Subaltern Public Spheres. The following paragraphs address the definition of deliberative democracy, the philosophical ground on which deliberation grows, important theoretical discussions by Habermas and Gutmann and Thompson, and the corresponding critiques.

Defining deliberative democracy. "Broadly defined, deliberative democracy refers to the idea that legitimate lawmaking issues from the public deliberation of citizens" (Bohman & Rehg, 1997: i). Gutmann and Thompson (2004: 7) also emphasized that deliberative democracy is, first of all, a form of government. Habermas (1989) "asks when and under what conditions the arguments of mixed companies could become authoritative bases for political action." The core concept here is deliberation, or rational-critical discussion, which is claimed to be the foundation of legitimate governance. As Bohman and Rehg said (1997), the legitimacy of governance has been a subject of intense conflict in both theory and practice since the onset of modernity. Deliberative democracy arose from such debates, especially between the two major political traditions of liberalism and republicanism and specifically, its 20th century counterpart,

communitarianism. Habermas (1996) set his theory of the public sphere as a third normative model of democracy, in addition to liberalism and republicanism.

Different from the liberalist model, deliberative democracy does not share the key assumption of the priority to maximize private self-interests. Deliberative democracy is thus often challenged by scholars from the liberal tradition for its arguably utopian features (e.g., Bell, 1999; Hooghe, 1999; Iyengar, 1999); in other words, self-interests cannot be transcended or bracketed in the process of democracy. Different from republicanism, deliberative democracy does not assume a substantively integrated ethical community, nor a fixed concept of the common good. Some scholars (e.g., Galston, 1999; Park, 2000) misunderstood deliberative democracy as a variant of republicanism, in which "the creation of solidarity among citizens" (Benhabib, 1996: 6) is one of the ultimate goals.

In contrast, deliberative democracy stresses an idealized deliberative procedure as the crucial part of democracy (Bohman & Rehg, 1997: xiii-xvii); in other words, "(t)he deliberative model is interested more in the epistemic function of discourse and negotiation than in rational choice or political ethos" (Habermas, 2006). As Habermas (1996: 26) said, both liberalism and republicanism "presuppose a view of society as centered in the state—be it as guardian of a market society or the state as the self-conscious institutionalization of an ethical community." Instead, deliberative democracy occurs within a de-centered society, through which communication flows through both the parliamentary bodies and the public sphere's informal networks.

Based on such an understanding of deliberative democracy, the justice issue is taken care of in a way different from either liberalism or republicanism. Liberalism pays more attention than republicanism does to justice as freedom, which means that every individual should be able to equally pursue his interests. Republicanism emphasizes the common good, without which justice would be rendered aimless. Deliberative democracy treats justice as an equalized process which involves rational political will-formation. This deliberative type of political discourse is not necessarily oriented toward a presumed common good. Because deliberative democracy has this unique interpretation of justice, whether disempowered groups are equally included and their opinions expressed in the public sphere remains a central theoretical issue and an empirical question.

Habermasian public sphere. According to Habermas, as the discursive aspect of civil society, the public sphere is autonomous from both the nation state and the market economy. Neither government officials nor the representatives of commercial entities can dominate the discursive contestation in the public sphere because the public sphere follows norms other than money and power (Calhoun, 1992). The first set of norms relates to the equality of participation, which means that all citizens have the opportunity to enter and discuss in the public sphere, regardless of their social statuses and personal interests. Habermas' concern with universal access demonstrates his awareness of the justice issue. Gutmann and Thompson (1996) proposed the principles of *basic and fair opportunity* as inherent in deliberative democracy and these two principles, as suggested by Young (1999), can be thought of as principles of justice. While *basic opportunity*

refers to basic resources such as a job or a basic income, *fair opportunity* means that these resources are fairly accessible to all citizens.

The second set of norms relates to the nature of discussions, referring to a deliberative discourse as being marked by reason. According to Habermas, whether certain political activities are deliberative could be assessed based on several criteria. Deliberation is, in the first place, a discursive process. Putting discourse in the center of politics means that actions, especially violent actions, are not preferred in the public sphere, although violent actions might be the way that disempowered groups exert their power. Secondly, the discussion is rational and critical, which means that all the assertions are open to critique despite their various cultural, social and economic origins. Here deliberation implies that emotion, as opposed to reason, is not considered crucial in the public sphere. Similarly, Gutmann and Thompson (1996) concluded that the conditions of deliberation are *reciprocity*, *publicity* and *accountability*. *Reciprocity* means that citizens seek mutually acceptable ways of resolving disagreement. *Publicity* requires that the reasons that deliberators give be public. *Accountability* implies that everyone should give an account to everyone else, or that everybody should give reasons. In sum, the nature of deliberation means that everybody should give reasons, and that these reasons should be reciprocal (i.e., mutually acceptable) and public.

Habermas (1992: 453) realized that his idea of the public sphere would be utopian without proper institutionalization. From his historical analysis of various public spheres, we find that there was a bourgeois public sphere, which at least approached the ideal of deliberative democracy. The institutions were coffee houses in Britain and salons in

France. In both countries these establishments were centers of criticism, literary at first, then also political. Similar elements existed in Germany, beginning with learned table societies and old literary societies. The social relationships among the participants were mostly equal because the bourgeois public sphere "disregarded status altogether" (Habermas, 1989: 36).

Critiques of Habermas. The Habermasian notion of the public sphere has been criticized both historically and theoretically. The strongest historical critique of the bourgeois public sphere relates to its exclusion, namely of women, proletarians, Blacks, and so on (Fraser, 1992). Historians showed that the universal access claimed was never achieved because the bourgeois public sphere was open only to property-owners (Eley, 1992; Landes, 1993; Negt & Kluge, 1993; Ryan, 1992). Habermas responded to this historical challenge by emphasizing that this open and rational discursive space could absorb the historically excluded without colonizing them. While the proletariat or the plebeian public sphere was "a bourgeois public sphere whose social preconditions have been rendered null" (Habermas, 1992: 426), the historical exclusion of women "does not dismiss rights to unrestricted inclusion and equality, which are an integral part of the liberal public sphere's self-interpretation" (Habermas, 1992: 429). In his eyes, the feminist movement's success reflects the bourgeois public sphere's potential for self-transformation. In short, Habermas treated feminist and leftist critiques as requesting expanded access to the public sphere.

Felski (1989) criticized Habermas' ideas further, based on historical facts showing that reason was not the only discourse that played in women's public sphere. In

her analysis of feminist literatures she found that autobiography and self-discovery narratives were very popular in women's public sphere because women could share their life experiences through these books. Not only rationality, but also affective experience, can contribute to the construction of women's public sphere. Negt and Kluge (1993) defined the public sphere as a horizon for the organization of social experience, and said that the proletarian public sphere is embodied by any practices that bring the proletarian experience onto the visible horizon of social experience. They also demonstrated that rudimentary and ephemeral instances of the proletarian public sphere have already emerged. Both pieces of work challenged the centrality of reason in the public sphere from a historical perspective.

Historical findings have theoretical implications. Fraser (1992) criticized the norm of universal access by introducing the idea of subaltern public spheres, which refers to discursive spaces that are limited to disempowered group members. Fraser pointed out that Habermas wrongly assumed that a single, comprehensive public sphere is always preferable to a nexus of multiple public spheres. Members of subordinate groups would have no arenas for deliberative discussions among themselves if a unitary sphere were all we need. In a single public sphere bracketing social inequalities, deliberation might work to the advantage of dominant groups when discursive contestation is governed by protocols of style and decorum that are correlations and markers of status inequality. In other words, in a world whose resources are unequally distributed and whose opportunities are never fairly accessible to all citizens, it is hardly true that one single public sphere can grant everybody equal access, experience and influence.

Fraser questioned the sincerity of rationality in the bourgeois public sphere when it is based on fictitious universalism. However, she did not deny the belief in rationality and wanted to recover the "real" rationality within subaltern public spheres. She adhered to norms of procedural rationality as the best institutionalized procedure for excluding violence from the social arena (McLaughlin, 1993). Other critics such as Felski went further to challenge the centrality of reason in the public sphere. They were afraid that the focus on reason disadvantages disempowered groups. Knight and Johnson (1997) pointed out that even if equal access were achieved, it is doubtful that equal influence would be possible if citizens must have the capacity to advance their arguments via reasons. Bohman (1997) refers to the same idea as "equal capability for public functioning." According to Young (2000), social groups which occupy inferior positions in the social structure might not be able to have their views on issues represented, and others might not be held to account in the face of their perspectives. How to transform the opportunity to access the public sphere into the capacity to influence other fellow citizens remains particularly critical for disempowered social groups. In addition, Young (1996) argued that some participants could be disadvantaged by traditional elite understanding of reason-giving, and asked that the elements of greeting, rhetoric and storytelling be added to deliberation. Empirical evidence regarding the potential of developing equal capacity to influence via various discourses thus is thus needed. A piece of such work is from Gamson (1992), in which ordinary citizens were found to draw upon media discourse, popular wisdom, and personal experience to talk about politics in small groups.

The discussion of multiple public spheres reveals the existence of various publics and the systematic oppression they bear. It not only implies a request for the rights of the suppressed, but also points out that democracy needs to continuously expand its inclusion. Deliberative democracy, which puts procedural rationality at the center, should not underestimate the influence of the existing unequal power structure. Because modern society is multicultural and has systematic socioeconomic inequalities, the essentially conflicting relationships among different publics will lead to a fragmented society if a dialogue that crosses spheres is never successful. As Calhoun (1992: 6) said, "The importance of the public sphere lies in its potential as a mode of societal integration." If considering this primary goal, Habermas' idea of a unitary public sphere is no longer out of context. The problem is not whether the public sphere is a desirable concept, but how we can achieve social integration while recognizing people's differences. The answer might be the co-existence of subaltern public spheres and a unitary public sphere. If disempowered groups could thoroughly discuss their authentic preferences and form publicly acceptable reasons in subaltern public spheres, their representatives might be able to gain equal recognition in a more competitive unitary public sphere later.

Considering arguments and counterarguments regarding justice in deliberative democracy, we can see that Habermas might have been too optimistic in his belief that a just procedure itself could secure justice. Gutmann and Thompson added substantive principles to guarantee the protection of disempowered groups; in other words, the decisions generated by deliberation should never violate basic liberty, basic opportunity and fair opportunity. However, the definition of basic liberty, basic opportunity and fair

opportunity is limited by the unequal power structure. Young asked for a priority of justice, supporting inclusion as another principle of deliberation. Such an inclusion not only refers to the presence of minority perspectives, but also means that these perspectives are given equal consideration, and exert equal influence, during deliberation. However, considering the disempowered groups' limited capacity to transform access into influence, whether a reason-exchange process could benefit them remains unanswered. As Fraser and other feminists suggest, maybe a two-part model is more appropriate: the disempowered exchange opinions and experience through diverse discourses (not limited to the reasoned ones) within subaltern public spheres, and capable disempowered group members rationally argue with other social members in the public sphere. The disempowered then reform their opinions based on their communication with other social members, then they present their revised opinions to a larger public, and so on.

These theoretical constellations actually raise a set of empirical questions: if deliberative democracy has to operate in an unjust power structure, how do the existing inequalities affect equal access and experience, and influence deliberation? What are the mechanisms through which lack of access could be transformed into lack of influence, even when the deliberative procedure is made as fair as possible? Knowing these mechanisms, could we design institutional arrangements which might buffer these inequalities' negative effect on disempowered groups? In the following section I introduce several operational definitions of deliberation and evaluate their performance, especially regarding the justice aspect.

Deliberation practices and inequality

Deliberative democracy cannot be achieved without both normative principles and institutional practices. Deliberative principles should be examined in a practical setting and practices of deliberation need to be evaluated based on these principles. The following paragraphs discuss various deliberation practices and focus on their efforts to accommodate the justice principle. Although deliberation practices are quite diverse (see Gastil, forthcoming), the practices to be examined in this dissertation have a narrower range, including only interpersonal and small group communication among citizens. This limited range corresponds to the concern that deliberation practices are treated as a certain type of political participation, recognizing the opportunities that already exist in citizens' everyday interactions. Therefore, the review will follow Delli Carpini, Cook and Jacob's (2004) idea of discursive participation, focusing on political talk and small group deliberation such as juries and public meetings.

Political talk, or conversation, has been treated as a type of civic engagement, and many studies have shown its influential role in democracy. Political discussion has been found to be positively connected to political knowledge, political interest, political efficacy and conventional political participation (e.g., Eveland, 2004; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; Mondak, 1995; Wyatt, Katz, & Kim, 2000). However, whether ordinary political talk embraces deliberative principles remains unclear, rendering the claimed benefits of political talk questionable. On one hand, theorists argue that casual and spontaneous conversations among private individuals cannot satisfy the needs of deliberative democracy. Schudson (1997) concluded that what makes conversation

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democratic is "equal access to the floor, equal participation in setting the ground rules for discussion, and a set of ground rules designed to encourage pertinent speaking, attentive listening, appropriate simplifications and widely apportioned speaking rights." Schudson's critique shows the problem of spontaneous conversation—it does not involve norms which can protect equal access and participation. Its failure to address inequalities is one of informal political talk's key shortcomings. The other critique regards political talk's homogeneity, claiming that talk among like-minded people cannot foster deliberative democracy. On the other hand, Mansbridge (1999) argued that citizens' everyday talk is as valuable as formal deliberation in a public arena, and that political discussion as a step in the early stage of a deliberative process needs not perfectly fit deliberative principles such as publicity and reason. In other words, despite political talk's potential problems, it remains a "masterpiece" of the "deliberative system" (Mansbridge, 1999).

As more and more studies have been done regarding political talk, complex, if not contradictory, findings have emerged. Political discussion is found to be widespread among American citizens (Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacob, 2004), although the discussion is infrequently public—both in the range of topics and the context of discussion (Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2002). Women and the elderly are consistently underrepresented among the people who discuss political issues very often and overrepresented among those who discuss a little; and the poorly educated, the poor and non-Whites also tend to talk less than others in certain contexts (Bennett, Flickiner, & Rhine, 2000; Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2002; Pan, Shen, Paek, & Sun, 2006). In addition, the degree of

under-representation is greater in public than in private discussion (Conover, Searing, & Crewe, 2002). However, if we look at inter-class discussions, non-Whites, the poor and the poorly educated are significantly more likely than other groups to engage in discussions with people who hold views dissimilar to their own (Mutz, 2006: 30). Although we need more data to verify this finding, the disempowered groups' high exposure to disagreement suggests that the nature and consequences of political talk might vary among different social groups.

Unfortunately, current research still focuses on political talk's general influence, and differentiates only regarding the types of talk, i.e., political talk vs. social conversation. Studies have shown political discussion's direct and positive influence on both political knowledge (Eveland, 2004) and news usage (Scheufele, et al., 2004). Political discussion can interact with party identification and discussants' competence to affect voting behavior (Cho, 2005; Kenny, 1998; McClurg, 2006). Regarding political participation in the traditional sense, a positive effect occurs when political talk is defined as other than social conversation (Kim, Waytt, & Katz, 1999; Scheufele, 2000) and involves at least some degree of heterogeneity (Kwak, et al., 2005; Scheufele, et al., 2004; Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001). On the contrary, Mutz (2002b; Mutz & Mondak, 2006) found that, despite political talk's positive influence on tolerance, political talk among disagreeing citizens actually reduced active participation in politics (Mutz, 2002a). Another interesting outcome variable is argumentation, because if political discussion does include opportunities to reason with fellow citizens, it should be able to increase people's awareness of different reasons both for and against their own views. Such a

positive effect was confirmed by some studies (argument quality in Kim, Waytt, & Katz, 1999; rationales for own and oppositional views in Mutz, 2002b; and argument repertoire in Cappella, Pirce, & Nir, 2002), but not others (Moy & Gastil, 2005). Specifically, the latter authors found that political discussion was negatively related to comprehension of opposing views, which was a self-reported measure. Although the discrepancy might be explained by different measurements, it at least suggests that political discussion's merits are not as straightforward as some students think. Regarding disempowered groups and political talk, two propositions could be drawn. First, disempowered groups are excluded from political discussion, especially public ones. Secondly, disempowered groups are exposed to more disagreeing discussions than are other groups, so we could hypothesize that higher exposure to disagreement can lead to more negative effects on these groups, such as political demobilization.

The contestation regarding political talk research could be extended to more institutionalized, more norm-governed political discussions such as **small group deliberations**. The key question still concerns these small group discussions' deliberative nature. Are members of disempowered groups excluded? And if they are present, do group dynamics generate more negative consequences for them than for other groups? Do they have the ability to influence the group? Gastil (2000) reviewed existing opportunities for public deliberation, including deliberative civic education, community deliberation, and deliberative forums such as citizen conferences and juries. Deliberation practices experienced ups and downs in terms of popularity due to historical reasons (Gastil & Keith, 2005), and their reemergence in the 1990s reflected the confluence of

technological convenience, a civic impulse to understand cultural differences, and new civic actors such as foundations and organizations that promote public dialogue across partisan lines. Gastil and Keith (2005) pointed out that as a historical phenomenon, the current deliberative movement could also end if it cannot achieve its claimed goals or cannot perform better than alternatives. Empirical examination of small group deliberation thus becomes highly important.

The very first question is who deliberates. Are members of disempowered groups included and, more importantly, are their perspectives included in the deliberation? Many deliberative forums use self-selection to recruit participants (Button & Ryfe, 2005), which means that the structural inequalities which hinder minority participation in politics remain untreated. We know that citizens who have more resources, ability and motivation tend to participate more, and that these factors are often positively skewed toward those occupying an advantageous social position. Karpowitz (2006) systematically examined factors that influence attendance at local public meetings and found that older people, low income people, less educated people, non-Whites and females are less likely to attend than other groups. Similar to other forms of political participation, partisanship, interest, knowledge, political discussion and efficacy were positively related to attendance. Mobilization contact and membership of associations contributed to attendance as well. Practitioners also recognized the challenge of attracting a diverse cross section of the community when "(f)orum participants are likely to be well-educated people who are civically active" (Meiville, Willingham, & Dedrick, 2005). In order to gain adequate representation, some deliberation practices use random selection

(e.g., Deliberative Polling). But as Mansbridge et al. (2006) said, because some individuals who were asked to participate declined or could not attend, even random selection still contains an element of self-selection. The question becomes whether the declination is simply random, or is systematically biased in certain ways. Dutwin (2003) provided some preliminary findings which suggest that higher educated and older people still participated more than other groups, even though random selection was used to recruit participants. Practitioners of citizen deliberation are aware of this situation and try to seek demographic representation by actively recruiting hard-to-reach groups (e.g., Lukensmeyer, Goldman, & Brigham, 2005). Others try to lower the socio-economic barriers by providing critical incentives to participators such as free airfare and a generous stipend (Fishkin, 1995). Considering the importance of ability in deliberation, information and expertise are also made easily accessible to potential participants (e.g., Fishkin, 1995; Price & Cappella, 2000). But how successful these efforts work to make deliberation more inclusive needs more empirical evaluation.

After a deliberative opportunity is accepted, it is still unknown whether participants take advantage of it and actually deliberate political issues. Eliasoph (1998) suggests that the answer is "not likely." Members of the volunteer and recreational groups she studied assiduously avoided "public-spirited political conversation," and even members of activist groups were initially hesitant about the value of public deliberation and, once they perceived its value, were more likely to engage in it in the safety of their own company than in more pubic settings. However, Eliasoph thinks that this results from a poorly developed public sphere, rather than from an inherent or natural aversion to

politics. Research on juries finds that their decision making process is often dominated by members with high social status (see Mendelberg, 2002 for a brief review). At least female and African-American jurors were found to be less influential than Whites and men on final decisions in certain circumstances. Mendelberg and Oleske (2000) examined town meetings on school desegregation and found that Whites used rhetoric that appeared to be universal, well-reasoned and focused on the common good, but that, in fact, advanced their group interest, while Blacks interpreted such rhetoric as racist and group interested, which resulted in conflict. These findings come mainly from small group discussions that are not explicitly informed by deliberative principles. Things might be different in better designed and more deliberation-oriented practices. Generally speaking, practitioners draw an optimistic picture, confirming that deliberation can attract a large number of ordinary citizens to engage in vivid discussions (e.g., Scully & McCoy, 2005). Practitioners often report that they pay special attention to guarantee everyone an equal chance to speak and elicit diverse perspectives as much as possible (Mansbridge, et al., 2006). Whether these facilitating efforts successfully curb the unequal distribution of group power merits more investigation. Dutwin (2003) provided some results regarding this issue. Using a deliberative forum as the research site, he examined the overall amount of talking, different types of dialogic contribution, the degree to which individuals argued and the number of topics discussed, and found no evidence to support the notion that deliberation is unequal across education, income, gender and race (age was found to be negatively related to amount of speaking).

In addition to the participation rate concern, whether small group discussions produce beneficial outcomes is debatable. Research shows that participation in deliberative forums facilitates cognitive learning, as measured by pre-post tests of actual knowledge (Fishkin & Lushkin, 1999; Barabas, 2004), levels of opinion holding (Price, et al., 2006), the range of arguments people hold (Cappella, Pirce, & Nir, 2002), and political sophistication (Gastil & Dillard, 1999). Opinion changes were often observed after deliberation (Fishkin & Lushkin, 1999; Gastil, 2000; Barabas, 2004; Fournier, Blais, & Carty, 2006; Gastil, Black, & Moscovitz, 2006) and shifts in policy preferences were found to move citizens in the direction of elite opinion (Price, 2006). Deliberation can also increase political efficacy (Lushkin et al., 2000; Gastil, 1999), political interest (Gastil, 1999; Fournier, Blais, & Carty, 2006), social trust, community engagement and political participation (Gastil, Deess, & Weiser, 2002; Price, Goldthwaite & Cappella, 2002; West & Gastil, 2004). Citizens who deliberate in a context that includes conflicting perspectives were free of elite framing effects (Druckman & Nelson, 2003; Druckman, 2004). Some negative findings were also presented. Fournier, Blais and Carty (2006) pointed out that, although deliberation can change opinions, it cannot change citizens' socio-political values or their personality traits, suggesting that deliberation might not be able to solve value-laden moral conflicts. Sturgis, Roberts and Allum (2005) checked attitude constraint, which is the level of consistency between attitudes within an individual belief system, and found that after some deliberative polls, constraint showed a downward movement. Morrell (2005) demonstrated that deliberative decision-making had no direct effect on a global measure of internal political efficacy, nor did the

decision-making structures. Mendelberg and Oleske (2000) found that participation in a meeting on school desegregation led to intense dissatisfaction among participants, paralleling Mansbridge's (1983) finding of frustration and anger among those attending a New England town meeting. The preliminary findings on the attendance, participation rate and outcomes of deliberation suggest that the democratic potential of deliberation is highly context dependent and rife with opportunities to go awry.

Summarizing the findings from political talk and small group deliberations, we can see that the disempowered are often excluded and that their opinions are often under-represented in discursive participation. But this does not necessarily mean that the disempowered cannot gain favorable experience or exert influence in any circumstances. The key is to identify those characteristics of deliberation that might foster or hinder equal access, experience and influence. The Internet is often expected to provide an equal context for deliberation because of its institutional features. I now turn to a discussion of whether the Internet can transcend structural inequalities and foster deliberation.

Deliberation, inequality and the Internet

The Internet's democratic potential has been examined from multiple perspectives. Media scholars often treat Internet use as another kind of media consumption, and ask how this new media's behavior influences political engagement such as knowledge, interest, efficacy and political participation (e.g., Hardy & Scheufele, 2005; Polat, 2005; Shah, et al., 2005; Uslaner, 2004). Internet use could also be considered one type of civic engagement, and this view helps us to shift our focus from the Internet as an independent

media exposure variable to the Internet as a dependent political activity variable. Obviously, the two perspectives have different focuses: the "Internet as media" perspective emphasizes online news usage and political information seeking, while the "Internet as political participation" perspective often stresses the importance of being involved in online political discussions in various cyberspaces (e.g., instant messaging with friends, participating in candidates' blogs, debating other citizens in online forums, etc.). Consistent with this dissertation's thesis, I mainly review research about online political discussions that occur among citizens, and their potential to enrich the public sphere or deliberative democracy.

Online political discussions become salient when taking a deliberative approach to study the Internet (Dahlberg, 2001a, 2001b). Distinguished from both the liberal individualist approach, which focuses on granting individuals more freedom, and the communitarian approach, which seeks to establish communities, a deliberative approach tries to clarify the Internet's possibilities of becoming a public sphere. Theorists have expressed optimism regarding a revitalized public sphere on the Internet. They have argued that first, unlike other social mechanisms, the Internet does not depend on either the state or commercial control (Dahlberg, 2001a). The Internet's institutional characteristics echo Habermas' requirement that the public sphere be an independent social and discursive arena. Secondly, the Internet is relatively open compared to other discursive spaces such as mass media (Coleman, 2005). The Internet's openness corresponds to the universal access Habermasian the public sphere asks for. Thirdly, the Internet's interactive features foster communication among citizens, including on

political topics (Kiousis, 2002). It is possible to achieve the rationality requirement of the public sphere given appropriate normative, technological and administrative support (Dahlberg, 2001a). All these arguments face criticism, however, at both theoretical and empirical levels.

The Internet's independence is questioned due to the ongoing expansion of state censorship and commercialization. Papacharisssi (2002) argued that the Internet exists in a political and economic structure that has thrived for centuries, and whether the Internet can transform such a structure depends on human agency (also see Muhlberger, 2005). Dahlberg (2004) found that increased ownership of the network's content, code and bandwidth by a few vertically and horizontally integrated media corporations provides a basis for the control of online communication (also see Blevins, 2002). Content discrimination has already been practiced by some broadband network providers. Another study by Dahlberg (2005) showed that large corporate portals and commercial media sites dominate online attention to news, information and interaction, privileging consumer content and practices while marginalizing many critical forms of participation. In addition, scholars are also concerned by the ability that the Internet provides to corporations to collect private information for commercial interests. Campbell and Carlson (2002) claimed that the online gathering of personal data enhances corporate surveillance. The tension between commercial control and citizens has been documented in studies such as media fans (Consalvo, 2003); as has the tension between state power and citizens (Zimmer, 2004). Meanwhile, critics (e.g., Dahlberg, 2005) admitted that civil society initiatives may counteract such a trend. Online forums are an initiative that

provides citizens with opportunities to critically and politically communicate. Janssen and Kies (2005) concluded three such types of forums, including Usenet groups (Davis, 1999; Wilhelm, 1999), web-based political forums (Weiksner, 2004) and e-consultation forums (Coleman, Hall, & Howell, 2002). Although these forums are by no means the dominant online communication channels, their existence implies that the Internet's current infrastructure can still accommodate civic activities.

The Internet's open and equal access is also challenged by Digital Divide scholars as utopian. Concerns regarding disempowered groups have driven this research thread for years. Early research focused on equal access to a computer, and then to the Internet. Considerable empirical evidence shows that income, education, age, race and gender significantly predict access to and use of the Internet (e.g., Bucy, 2000; Hacker & Steiner, 2002; Loges & Jung, 2001). The second-level digital divide (e.g., Bonfadelli, 2002) proposes the inequality of skills/ability (i.e., quality use of the Internet) even as the access gap is closing. The same predictors were found to significantly shape users' Internet skills (Van Dijk & Hacker, 2003). If there could be a third-level digital divide, I would suggest the inequality of influence or of the ability to achieve desired consequences. Some studies (e.g., Mossberger, Tolbert, & Gilbert, 2006) show that disempowered groups do value the Internet more than other groups, but whether disempowered groups who gain access and skills can achieve their goals has not yet been answered. Jung, Qiu and Kim (2001) developed the Internet Connectedness Index, which captures the scope and centrality of the Internet's incorporation into the everyday lives of diverse social groups, and found that education, income, age and gender gaps persisted.

All these inequalities could be found in online political discussions. Studies that examined participators in online political debates (e.g., Albrecht, 2006) basically showed that participants in one certain online forum can hardly represent the whole population. However, if disempowered people's opinions are not underrepresented, the divide might not be as harmful as is claimed. Some positive evidence exists regarding this point; Robinson, Neustadtal and Kestnbaum (2002) found that Internet users were more supportive than nonusers of diverse and tolerant points of view, and that they expressed slightly more optimistic and sociable attitudes; whereas Muhlberger (2003) found no significant differences in terms of attitude and value between online and offline political activists and discussants. Interviews with online political discussants (Stromer-Galley, 2003) revealed that they appreciated and enjoyed the diversity of people and opinions they encountered online. These findings indirectly imply that first, online opinions are diverse; and secondly, that if minority opinions exist, they are unlikely to be totally silenced. More direct evidence is needed about the representation of alternative perspectives on the Internet.

Another counterargument to the negative view of the Internet comes from empowerment studies. Many case studies have shown that various disempowered groups, including immigrants (Chan, 2005; Hiller & Franz, 2004; Mirtra, 2006), women (O'Donnell, 2001; Panyametheekul & Herrings, 2003), homosexuals (Berry & Martin, 2000), and fan groups (Pullen, 2000), use the Internet as a secure space to construct their own communities. Meanwhile, the Internet could be used by hate groups and extremists as well (Campbell, 2006; Duffy, 2003). Inflammation and conflict beyond reasonable

boundaries are evident in many cases (Mitra, 1997; Schimtz, 1997). As Papacharisssi (2002) suggested, online political expression may leave people with a false sense of empowerment. It is false because on one hand, the expression happens in a homogeneous group, which lacks a true understanding of the conflicts, and on the other hand, the expression is made only online and has no impact on policymaking. Such a process leads to opinion polarization at the individual level, and to fragmentation at the collective level. Wojcieszak (2006) found that participation in ideologically homogeneous groups engendered misperception of public opinion distribution, pointing to the Internet's potential impact on societal polarization. Sunstein (2001) warned that the Internet merely encourages enclave communication among very like-minded citizens, resulting in a bad mutual understanding across social groups. These critiques posit diversity or disagreement at the center of online political discussions, suggesting that online deliberative forums which involve various opinions might be a better place than current forums to observe and evaluate political communication among citizens.

Assuming that online forums provide some tangible opportunities to involve diverse citizens and their opinions, scholars still disagree about **the Internet's potential to foster communication among citizens**, with some of them preferring face-to-face (F2F) conversation (Fishkin, 2000). Such a debate has already existed since the early age of computer-mediated communication (CMC). The cues-filtered-out perspective claims that because CMC lacks nonverbal cues, it is less personal and socio-emotional than F2F communication (Rice & Love, 1987; Sproull & Kiesler, 1986; DeSanctic & Gallupe, 1987; Spears & Lea, 1992). Later studies demonstrated CMC's ability to develop

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personal relationships such as friendship and romance over time (Duel, 1996; Markham, 1998; Katz & Aspeden, 1997). But a similar debate occurs over whether CMC can help to construct politically functional groups. A comprehensive review of group communication technology (Scott, 1999) showed that Group Support System (GSS, a type of electronic meeting system that combines communication, decision and computer technologies to assist varied group activities) can improve groups' performance, especially as measured quantitatively (e.g., number of solutions proposed and number of alternatives considered (Valacich & Schwenk, 1995)). But measures of decision quality indicated that GSS groups performed worse than or equal to F2F groups (e.g., Olaniran, 1994). Groups which used communication technology usually took more time to complete tasks than F2F groups (e.g., Dennis, et al., 1998); but GSS group members were as satisfied as, or more so than, F2F group members (e.g., Chidambaram, 1996). Lower or equal member participation rates were observed in groups using GSS than in F2F groups (e.g., Hollingshead, 1996). Laboratory studies verify that status is persistent in GSS groups, which means that differential influence is still quite possible, even with systems designed to minimize them (e.g., Scott & Easton, 1996). The findings for information change based on laboratory groups showed that GSS groups are not as good as F2F groups (e.g., Highertower & Sayeed, 1996). Exceptions exist regarding each of these conclusions, and whether the Internet's technology can leverage SES factors' negative influence needs further study. Promising research areas include member participation; member satisfaction with process, outcome, leaders, other members, etc.; and information exchange and influence in groups. These measures could be compared

between GSS and F2F groups but, more importantly, differences should be examined across GSS groups with different features (e.g., homogenous vs. heterogeneous, facilitators vs. no facilitators, consensus vs. majority rule, etc.) in order to efficiently use the Internet for political purposes.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

The last section of this literature review is to propose an analytical framework that examines how disempowered groups perform in online deliberation. Combining the review on political participation and deliberative democracy, the framework allows the study of the disempowered groups in terms of "attending," "experiencing" and "influencing" deliberation through a set of specific hypotheses and research questions.

The research on participatory inequality reveals those social groups which are normally under-represented in political participation. The explanations provided by the political participation literatures help us to understand why certain groups of people are less likely to be involved in politics than others. Participation in deliberation can be exposed to the threat of participatory inequality and thus explained by the same factors as well. How well the current model predicts deliberation implies the degree of distinctiveness of deliberation. If it manifests the same inequality pattern that other political activities have, claiming deliberation as friendly to disempowered groups might be a misplaced hope. If deliberation does show significant variation from other political activities, whether participatory inequality remains a central problem for deliberation and which kind of inequality is salient become interesting empirical questions to be answered.

Based on these concerns, the first research question introduces a comparison between the deliberation practices discussed here (i.e., online deliberation) and other forms of political participation (e.g., voting).

RQ1: Is online deliberation a form of political participation?

The first hypothesis regarding disempowered groups in online deliberation deals with unequal attendance, i.e., whether participatory inequality persists in attending online deliberation. Attendance, or "attending" deliberation, is treated as a step-by-step self-selection procedure, including the very first stage of enrolling in the online deliberation, the second stage of actually showing up and the third stage of continuous attendance. Since both theoretical arguments and empirical findings on political participation suggest that attending deliberation is constrained by the social-economic inequalities, I hypothesize that disempowered groups would be under-represented in attendance.

Hypothesis 1: Disempowered group members are less likely than other group members to *enroll* in, to *attend*, and to *continuously attend* online deliberation.

The review of political participation sets an analytical framework for predicting the level of "attending" deliberation but tells us very little about "experiencing" and "influencing" deliberation. For instance, being an ordinary member and being a leader in a community group are very different experiences and come with unequal levels of influence on group decisions. Questions and hypotheses are made regarding the experience of participating in deliberation. The concern here is that even if disempowered groups are included, they might experience online deliberation differently from other groups. Their perceptions of the experience of online deliberation might not be positive,

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and these negative perceptions might discourage their future engagement in deliberation practices, considering their lower ability to reason and their lower status in the group's hierarchy compared to others. Thus the first hypothesis regarding experience proposes the significant role of experience in predicting future behaviors and the second hypothesis generally expects a negative reaction to deliberation among the disempowered.

Hypothesis 2.1: Experience (i.e., enjoyment, perceived disagreement, and perceived opinion expression) can influence *drop-out* and *future intention to participate*.

Hypothesis 2.2: Disempowered group members are less likely than other group members to *enjoy* online deliberation and to *express their opinions*, but they are more likely than other group members to *perceive disagreements* in online deliberation.

Theories of deliberative democracy and their critiques show that inequality is not only a threat to the norm of universal access that Habermas proposed, but also a challenge to the emphasis on rational discussions. The focus on reasoning reintroduces those existing inequalities that deliberative democracy wants to bracket. The connection between unequal ability to reason and existing power imbalances is so strong that the influence from the disempowered is minor due to their inferior position in the discussion's hierarchy. Current evidence is far from comprehensive, and this dissertation proposes to explore the following under-studied question regarding influence in deliberation, in addition to attendance and experience.

Hypothesis 3: Disempowered group members are less likely than other group members to *talk* and to *argue* during online deliberation.

The disempowered group members' under-representation does not necessarily mean that their opinions are under-represented. If disempowered people do not hold distinctive policy preferences, the aggregative opinion distribution in deliberation would not change even if they are fully represented. This leads to comparisons of opinions and policy preferences among disempowered people and other groups. Previous studies suggest that there should be consequential differences (Berinsky & Tucker, 2006), so it is hypothesized that disempowered group members do hold different opinions than others.

Hypothesis 4: Demographics (i.e., education, income, age, gender, and race) influence opinions and policy preferences.

If the disempowered do hold different opinions than others and they are less likely to attend deliberation compared to others, it is reasonable to suspect that opinion representation in deliberation is distorted. Comparisons between opinions held by attendees and opinions imputed for all potential attendees reveal the degree of such distortion. In addition, deliberation is a process of arguing and counter-arguing. It stresses the importance of active reasoning. Presumably, the opinion distribution might be misperceived, i.e., biased toward those with the loudest voice; so the difference between the imputed opinions held by all and those held by active talkers should be examined.

RQ2: Do pre-discussion imputed opinion distributions, estimating what would be observed under full descriptive representation, differ from those among attendees and actively-talking attendees?

Disempowered groups risk not only being under-represented in terms of their opinions, but also being less likely than other groups to influence the opinion climate.

Non-attendance, low participation rate and weak reasoning all contribute to an unequal exchange of opinions, resulting in opinion distributions that are skewed in certain directions. Simulated end-of-project opinions based on amount of talking and number of reasons are calculated and compared to those observed among current attendees.

RQ3: Do post-discussion simulated opinion distributions differ from opinion distributions actually observed?

This set of research questions and hypotheses addresses three issues related to online deliberation, namely, "attending", "experiencing" and "influencing" deliberation. They work together to provide a full analytical framework, which could be used to comprehensively study the disempowered and their performance in deliberation. In addition, both imputation and simulation analyses provide evidence regarding the political consequences that are generated by the unequal attendance, experience, and influence.

CHAPTER 3: DATA AND OPERTIONAL DEFINITIONS

Data come from the *Electronic Dialogue* project (ED2K) and the *Healthcare Dialogue* project (HCD), two multi-wave panel projects each lasting roughly one year. Principal Investigators on both projects are Vincent Price, Ph.D., The Steven H. Chaffee Professor of Communication and Public Opinion, and Joseph N. Cappella, Ph.D., The Gerald R. Miller Professor of Communication, both of the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania. The two projects are distinguished from other deliberation studies and the Internet-based studies in a number of ways. While most deliberation studies examine deliberation practices in a face-to-face setting, ED2K and HCD take the advantage of unique capacities of the Internet and World Wide Web for circulating information, conveying public discourse, and gathering survey data. Different from most Internet-based studies which examine asynchronous message boards or less formal and happenstance "chat" experiences on the Web, both projects here created synchronous, real-time, moderated group discussions that were designed specifically to produce useful citizen deliberation. Facilitation/moderation was present and more importantly, was standardized across either discussions or groups. In addition, both projects did not rely upon a convenience sample of Internet users, as is common in most deliberation studies and Web-based studies; instead, they began with a broadly representative sample of Americans and attempted to recruit from that sample a set of discussion groups that would be, in their entirety, as nearly representative as possible of U.S. citizens.

The core of both projects consisted of groups of citizens who engaged in a series of real-time electronic discussions about issues facing either the unfolding 2000 presidential campaign or the country's health care reform. A set of baseline surveys assessed participants' opinions, communication behaviors, political psychology, political activities, and a variety of demographic, personality, and background variables. Subsequent group deliberations generally included pre- and post-discussion surveys. The full text of all group discussions, which lasted an hour apiece, was recorded. A series of end-of-project surveys were then conducted after the last discussion was finished.

Electronic Dialogue 2000 (ED2K)

Initial recruitment. In February 2000, a random sample of American citizens aged 18 and older ($N = 3967$) was drawn from a nationally representative panel of survey respondents maintained by Knowledge Networks of Menlo Park, California[1]. The aim of the initial sample survey was to recruit participants into three groups for the Electronic Dialogue project: first, a main group of people who would participate in monthly, hour-

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[1] Beginning recruitment in 1999, Knowledge Networks (KN) randomly recruited panel members by telephone. Households are provided with access to the Internet and hardware if needed. KN initially selects households using random digit dialing (RDD) sampling methodology. Once a household is contacted by phone and household members recruited to the panel by obtaining their e-mail address or setting up e-mail addresses, panel members are sent surveys over the Internet using e-mail (instead of by phone or mail). For all new panel members, demographics such as gender, age, race, income, and education are collected in a followup survey for each panel member to create a member profile. Chang & Krosnick (2002) conducted a study using KN data and reported various response rates: The rate at which contacted households agreed to participate in the initial telephone interview and agreed to join the KN panel is 56%. The rate at which households that agreed to join the KN panel had the WebTV device installed in their homes is 80%. The rate at which invited KN panel respondents participated in the survey is 70%. They found that KN panel worked well in terms of generating responses from populations that matched the U.S. census measures of demographics and producing consistent measures on the substantive survey questions

long moderated discussions about the presidential election in small groups; secondly, a control group of people who would complete all monthly surveys associated with the project but would not engage in online discussions; and a third group of people who would complete only the project's initial baseline surveys in February and March 2000 and the final, post-project surveys one year later. Assignment to the three groups (main discussion panel, survey-only control panel, and pre/post only "set-aside" group) was randomized. Overall, 51 percent of those recruited agreed to participate and completed the consent forms, with overall acceptance rates roughly similar across the three groups of respondents.

The baseline surveys. Two baseline surveys were conducted, the first from February 8 to March 10, and the second March 10 to 23. One thousand, eight hundred and one respondents completed the first baseline (89%), and 1743 completed the second (87%). Both baselines were completed by 1684 respondents, or 84 percent of those who completed consent forms. Cooperation rates were generally similar across the three main groups.

Organization of the small-group discussions. Beginning in April, participants in the main discussion group were invited to attend small group (i.e., 5–10 persons) discussions once a month. A complete listing of participant availability (in the afternoons and evenings, seven days a week) and rank-ordered preference for meeting times was obtained from all respondents. Analysis of these data suggested that sixteen timeslots would accommodate over 60 percent of participants' first choices of meeting times and

would meet virtually all availabilities (though for many participants not a top choice). Final groups, sixty in all, were then constituted.

Three experimental conditions were created: homogeneously liberal groups, homogeneously conservative groups, and heterogeneous groups, each containing 20 groups. A 7-point party identification scale and a 5-point political ideology scale were combined into a single index, which ranged from –5 (strong Republicans/very conservative), through 0 (independents/moderates/other centrists), to +5 (strong Democrats/very liberal). Conservative groups were drawn from the lower end of this continuum ($M = -3.1$, $SD = 1.6$), and liberal groups from the upper end ($M = 2.5$, $SD = 1.6$); the heterogeneous groups were drawn from the entire continuum ($M = -.33$, $SD = 3.5$).

The discussion events. Most monthly discussion "events" consisted of three parts: a pre-discussion survey, an online discussion, and a follow-up post-discussion survey. Participants in the main discussion panel ($N = 915$) were asked to do all three parts, whereas those in the control panel ($N = 139$) completed only the survey portions.

Participants logged on to their "discussion rooms" at prearranged times, using their WebTV devices, television sets, and infrared keyboards. The full TV screen was used. Participants typed their comments and, when they hit the "enter" key on their keyboards, would post these comments to all other group members present in the room.

All discussions were moderated by project assistants working out of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, and were carefully coordinated and scripted to maintain consistency across groups. Prompts and questions

were "dropped" by moderators into the discussions at prearranged times. The full text of all discussions, including time stamps for each comment, was automatically recorded. Discussions were lively and engaging, and participants contributed on average between 200 and 300 words per event. Topics of discussion included which issues respondents thought were of importance to the country and which ought to be the focus of attention in the campaign, specific issues and policy proposals (e.g., in areas of education, crime and public safety, taxes, and foreign affairs), characteristics of the candidates, campaign advertising, and the role of the media.

The end of project surveys. From January, 2001, two end-of-project surveys were conducted. The first was fielded from January 4 to 18, and the second from January 19 to February 1. All three original study groups surveyed during the project baseline (those invited to discussions, the survey-only control group, and the set-asides) were contacted for re-interview at this time.

Health Care Dialogue (HCD)

Initial recruitment. Different from ED2K, HCD employed a stratified sampling strategy, including both a general population sample of adult citizens, as well as a purposive sample of health care policy elites with special experience, knowledge, and influence in the domain of health care policy and reform. Health care elites were defined as health care policy makers, experts, and industry representatives, who have a professional interest in health care issues and some measure of influence over policy outcomes. Health care elites were recruited from both the Knowledge Networks panel on

the basis of their occupation, as well as from membership rosters of numerous healthcare-related associations assembled by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania.

The aim of the initial sample survey was to recruit participants into two groups for the HCD project: first, a main group of people who would participate in four hour-long moderated discussions about health care issues in small groups; secondly, a control group of people who were asked to complete project surveys but were not invited to the discussion meetings. The second group was intended as a control for panel effects. Overall, 79 percent of those recruited agreed to participate and completed the consent forms, with overall acceptance rates in the control panel somewhat higher than that in the discussion panel (86% vs. 75%).

The baseline survey. The baseline survey was conducted in summer 2004. The final number of recruited project participants was 3,080 and of these, 2,497 completed the baseline survey. One thousand, four hundred and ninety one of them were assigned to the discussion panel and the rest of them were assigned to the control panel.

Organization of the small-group discussions. Participants in the main discussion group were invited to attend two waves (two discussions each wave) of moderated small group (i.e., 6–10 persons) discussions, with participants meeting in the same group for each of the waves. The first ("Wave One") includes the two discussions in September and November, 2004, and focuses on identifying problems and policy solutions regarding health insurance. The second ("Wave Two") involves the discussions in February and April, 2005, and focuses on problems and policy salutation about prescription drugs. Eighty groups were formed in the first wave as a result.

In the first wave, forty of the discussion groups were designed to be homogenous within strata (8 elites only, 32 general citizens only); the other forty were mixed across strata. Because of the small number of elites, several groups intended to combine elites and general citizens ended up, owing to fluctuations in attendance, including only the latter. By the second discussion, then, 51 groups were homogenous (8 elite groups and 43 general-citizen groups) and 29 groups were heterogeneous. Only people who attended at least one discussion in the first wave were invited to participate in the second wave, resulting in a pool of 606 eligible people. These 606 people were re-assigned to fifty groups in the second wave: four of them involved elite participants only, 16 general citizens only, and 30 mixed. A significant change in Wave Two assignment is the switch, namely, between homogeneous and heterogeneous groups. People who attended homogenous groups in Wave One were randomly assigned to either heterogeneous or homogeneous groups in Wave Two. The same thing happened to participants who joined in the Wave One heterogeneous groups. The theoretical concern here was to see whether discussing within one stratum first or across multiple strata first can make a difference.

The discussion events. Topics of discussion included which issues respondents thought were of importance to health care system (e.g., health insurance or prescription drugs) and which ought to be the focus of attention in policy proposals (e.g., universal health coverage or cutting costs). The first event, with discussions held in September, 2004, focused on identifying issues of main concern to participants in terms of health insurance. The second, held in November, focused on identifying best policy solutions to the top problem the group recognized in the first event. The third, held in February, 2005,

centered on identifying the top problem regarding prescription drugs. Following that, the last event in April asked participants to figure out the best policy solution to the problem they identified last time.

The end of project survey. In summer 2005, the end-of-project survey was conducted. All two original study groups surveyed during the project baseline (those invited to discussions and the survey-only control group) were contacted for re-interview at this time.

Operational definition of disempowered groups

Less-educated people. According to the categorization of education attainment used by U. S. Census Bureau, people who have an education lower than high school fall in the lowest category. The ED2K recruitment survey showed that among those contacted for the project, 7 percent of respondents did not finish high school, while the HCD recruitment survey indicated that 9 percent could be treated as having low education. In regressions and correlations, year of education is used since a continuous variable contains more statistical information these analyses need (ED2K: $M = 13.30$, $SD = 1.84$; HCD: $M = 14.34$, $SD = 3.10$).

Younger people. Following Shah, McLeod, and Yoon (2001) and others (e.g., Putnam, 2000), people born after 1978 (i.e., Generation Y and younger) were defined as younger people. According to the recruitment surveys, there were 8 percent of ED2K respondents and 10 percent of HCD respondent in this age range. Similar to education, a

continuous version of age is used in regressions and correlations (ED2K: *M* = 42.19, *SD*=

15.17; HCD: *M* =46.34, *SD*=15.53).

The poorer. To be consistent with previous studies on political participation (see

Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995), people whose yearly income was lower than 15,000

dollars were treated as low income people. Nine percent of HCD recruitment respondents

fell in this category. The baseline survey in ED2K showed that 8 percent of respondents

who answered this question were low income people. Income in regressions and

correlations uses an ordinal version (ED2K: *M* = 64,15, *SD*= 52,67; HCD: *M* =64,11,

SD=53,66).

Females. Fifty percent of ED2K recruitment respondents and 52 percent of HCD

respondents were female. The variable was a dummy one, with "1" referring to male

while "0" female.

Racial minorities. In ED2K, 78 percent of recruitment respondents were Whites,

8 percent Blacks, 7 percent Hispanic, 3 percent Asian, 1 percent American Indian, 3

percent others or don't know. The race variable was recoded into a dummy one, with "1"

referring to Whites (78 percent) while "0" non-Whites (22 percent). The HCD baseline

survey showed an almost same racial composition as ED2K. The recoded dummy

variable includes "1" as Whites (80 percent) and "0" as non-Whites (20 percent). Since

previous studies show that Blacks, Hispanics and Asians often have distinct patterns in

terms of political participation (e.g., Scholzman, 2006), this study will also look at these

racial groups individually.

CHAPTER 4: THE DISEMPOWERED AND ATTENDANCE

This chapter focuses on explaining attendance in online deliberation. The political participation literatures suggest that disempowered groups are often under-represented in various types of civic activities. The critiques on Habermasian public sphere point out that deliberation advantages rational reasoning, which is systematically unfriendly to the disempowered due to their lack of resources and ability. The digital divide research talks to the situation of being online, demonstrating the unequal access to information technology and the unequal acquisition of related skills. Based on these three threads of theoretical thinking, the first section of this chapter examines the hypothesis regarding the negative relationship between the disempowered and attendance.

Hypothesis 1: Disempowered group members are less likely than other group members to *enroll* in, to *attend* and to *continuously attend* online deliberation.

The test of this hypothesis informs us whether online deliberation, a relatively new form of engaging citizens in political discussions, still faces the problem of unequal participation. The test also helps to clarify the differences between deliberative democracy and participatory democracy. Some scholars (e.g., Mutz, 2006) argue that deliberative democracy favors principles that are quite different from participatory democracy and thus deliberation practices might not associate with traditional political participation in a positive way. Therefore, the latter section of this chapter deals with one research question that examines the argument.

RQ1: Is online deliberation a form of political participation?

The current chapter starts with a description of the five major independent variables that characterize the disempowered. Then a series of control variables are introduced, which along with the five demographics, are used across the entire dissertation consistently. Then I define the major dependent variables that are supposed to tap into the concept of attendance, including enrollment, dummy attendance, and continuous attendance. Multiple regressions were run to examine unequal attendance in online deliberation. Content analysis is then used to examine the reasons why people did not attend online deliberation. A set of logistic regressions shows whether the reasons differ between the disempowered groups and others. At the end of this chapter, I provide a comparison between engagement in online deliberation, traditional political participation, political discussions, and community activities. This comparison is based on measures of frequency of being involved in such activities and through both zero-order correlations and multiple regression models.

<div align="center">Unequal Attendance</div>

Measurement of demographics

Education is measured as year of education (ED2K: $M = 13.30$, $SD= 1.84$; HCD: $M =14.34$, $SD=3.10$). Similar to education, a continuous version of **age** is used in analyses (ED2K: $M = 42.19$, $SD= 15.17$; HCD: $M =46.34$, $SD=15.53$). Gender was a dummy variable, with "1" referring to **male** while "0" female. Fifty percent of ED2K recruitment respondents and 48 % of HCD respondents were male. **Income** uses an ordinal version in HCD: $M =64.11$, $SD=53.66$. The measure is not available for every

respondent in ED2K (746 out of 2327 respondents answered the income question) but among those who answered this question, the statistics are as follows: $M = 64.15$, $SD= 52.67$. In ED2K, 78% of recruitment respondents were Whites, 8% Blacks, 7% Hispanic, 3% Asian, 1% American Indian, 3% others or don't know. The race variable was recoded into a dummy one, with "1" referring to **Whites** (78%) while "0" non-Whites. Not everyone gave us their race information in HCD but among those we know (1949 out of 3134 respondents), it showed an almost same racial composition as ED2K (80% Whites).

Measurement of control variables

The control variables are aimed at controlling for available time. Time is an important resource to support online deliberation and it is prompted by five different variables. First, whether one is **married** (ED2K: 64% married; HCD: 64% married). Secondly, **number of children at home** (ED2K: $M = .35$, $SD = 1.00$; HCD: $M = .59$, $SD = .98$). Thirdly, whether one has a **fulltime job** (ED2K: 57% does; HCD: 56% does). Fourth, whether one is a **student** (ED2K: 4%; HCD: 4%). Finally, how many available time slots one checked, which indicates one's **schedule flexibility** (ED2K: $M = .67$, $SD = 1.45$; HCD: $M = 34.27$, $SD = 16.63$). The large difference between two projects was due to the available time slots from which respondents could choose. In ED2K, only 12 choices were provided, whereas in HCD, 71 were available.

Measurement of attendance

Enrollment. The ED2K recruitment survey asked for respondents' consent to participate in the study. Among the 2,327 people who were asked to participate in the experimental discussion panel, 45% (1,054) consented to join. The HCD recruitment survey followed the same procedure in addition that only respondents who completed the baseline were assigned to discussion groups. Two thousand, four hundred and six out of 3,119 (77%) respondents consented to join and 81% of those 2,406 respondents filled out the baseline survey. As a result, 63% of recruitment respondents were assigned to the discussion groups.

Dummy attendance. A respondent was considered to have participated if she logged into a discussion during her scheduled time and stayed more than 5 minutes. A dummy variable indicating that respondents who consented to join indeed attended at least one of the discussions was calculated (65% attended in ED2K). The HCD project involved two rounds of discussions, four individual discussion events in total. Only people who attended the first round were invited to join the second round. Therefore, there are two dummy variables indicating either the first round attendance (41%) or the second round attendance (71%).

Continuous attendance. The other attendance variable is a continuous measure of number of discussions one participated in. There were nine rounds of discussions in ED2K, but since the first and the last round were not focused on issue debates, attendance was calculated based on showing up in Discussion 2 to 8 ($M=2.12$, $SD=2.27$). A continuous measure of number of attendance is also available in HCD ($M=.97$, $SD=1.37$).

Analytical strategy

Mean comparisons and regressions. Mean comparisons based on t-tests and cross tabulations were run between the enrollment variables and the five variables defining disempowered groups because not every demographic variable is available in the enrollment surveys. Then OLS regressions were conducted if the attendance variable is continuous and logistic regressions were used if nominal. Control variables were added after social economic status variables in the regression models.

Open-ended questions. A content analysis of the open-ended questions regarding reasons for non-attendance was conducted. The wording of the question was: "Why weren't you able to participate?" The question was only asked in HCD Discussion 1 through 3. Among those 1,491 people who enrolled but did not attend the discussions, there were 1,044 people who gave us at least one response about why they were not able to participate in a specific discussion.

Coding scheme. The coding scheme was developed as a 9-category frame (25 sub-categories), which included time, location, weather, illness, technological problems, personal problems, structure problems, discussion problems, and others. Within some categories such as time, there are a few sub-categories such as work issues, family issues and so on.

Inter-coder reliability. The second coder was a graduate student at Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania. She was trained for two hours to understand the coding book and asked to try to code 50 responses to see whether she had

any questions. After the training finished, the second coder coded another 100 responses and the inter-coder reliability was calculated based on these 100 answers. Responses were coded into multiple reasons if necessary. It turned out that the open-ended answers contained no more than two reasons at the maximum. As a result, there are two reliability statistics to report for each reason. For the first reason, the Krippendorff's *alpha* equals .96 and for the second, it is .86. The second alpha is lower because the two coders sometimes disagreed on either whether there existed a second reason or whether the reason refers to the same category.

Results

Mean differences between enroller and non-enrollers in terms of their demographic characteristics are reported in Table 4.1. The first two columns indicate the findings from ED2K and the second two columns are results from HCD. T-tests are run when comparing education years, age, and income (i.e., first three rows). T-tests are not applicable to gender and race because they are dummy variables. Percentages of enrollers are reported and cross-tabulations nominal by nominal tests focusing on Phi and Cramer's V are used instead (see the fourth and fifth row). There is one variable missing in each of the project: Income is not measured in the enrollment survey in ED2K and race is not measured in HCD.

Table 4.1 shows that generally speaking, about half of the people we contacted enrolled in the ED2K project and about two thirds of the people in HCD actually enrolled. Across the two projects, enrollers consistently show higher education than non-enrollers. Although only ED2K shows significant older age of enrollers than non-enrollers, the

trend in HCD is the same. HCD enrollers are also significantly wealthier than non-

enrollers. A contradictory pattern is found in gender: There were significantly more

males enrolling in ED2K but fewer males in HCD compared to females. There is no

significant difference between enrollers and non-enrollers in terms of their race.

Table 4.1. *Mean differences between enrolled and non-enrolled respondents broken by demographics*

	ED2K		HCD	
	Enrolled (N = 1,054)	Non-enrolled (N = 1,273)	Enrolled (N = 1,951)	Non-enrolled (N = 1,167)
Education years	13.48***	13.12	14.93***	14.49
Age	43.93***	40.59	45.54	44.67
Income	NA	NA	49399.06***	43499.65
	White (N = 1,827)	Non-white (N = 476)	White	Non-white
Enrolled	44%	48%	NA	NA
	Male (N = 1,160)	Female (N = 1,167)	Male (N = 1,500)	Female (N = 1,618)
Enrolled	49%**	42%	60%*	65%

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 4.2 includes a rigorous test of the relationship between demographics and

attendance by using a series of regression models that control for the variables of

available time. The first block of independent variables refers to demographics and the

second block includes the controls. The sample sizes in this table are smaller than those

in the enrollment analyses (see Table 4.1) for two reasons: (1) in both projects, only

respondents who have values in all the predictor variables were included and (2) in HCD,

only people who both consented to enroll and filled out baseline surveys (otherwise no

controls are available) were included in this set of analyses. About 92% of ED2K

enrollers and 71% of HCD enrollers did both. The first column is the result for the

dummy attendance variable in ED2K. The second and third columns are results for the

dummy attendance in either the first or the second round of discussions in HCD. The last

two columns present findings for the continuous attendance variable, in ED2K and HCD

respectively.

Table 4.2. *Regressions predicting attendance*

	Attended at least once or not			Number of attendance	
	ED2K	HCD		ED2K	HCD
	D2-D8	D1-D2	D3-D4	D2-D8	D1-D4
(Constant)	-2.230***	-2.434***	-.435	-1.197*	-.457+
Education	.085*	.104***	-.014	.094*	.061***
Male	-.106	-.132	.056	.047	-.075
Age	.032***	.003	.026**	.038***	.006*
Income	-.001	.000	-.006	-.001	-.001
Whites	.242	.440**	.076	.514**	.286**
Married	-.220	.116	.152	-.089	.071
Schedule flexibility	.165***	.001	.000	.118**	.002
Children under 18	-.037	-.111+	.180	-.034	-.037
Fulltime job	-.238	-.073	-.039	-.323*	-.029
Student	-.714*	-.244	.120	-.636*	-.014
N	965	1,388	565	964	1.387
R-Square	.11	.04	.03	.15	.04

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 4.2 shows that the models explained around 10 to 15% of the variance in

ED2K but only a small percent of variance in HCD (ranging from 3 to 4%). Considering

that variables included in the two models are identical, the difference in the ability to

explain attendance in two projects implies that the topics that are discussed in the two

projects have some influence on attendance. This point will be further elaborated in the section comparing online deliberation to traditional forms of political participation. The coefficients in this table show that education remains a significant positive predictor of attendance in both projects when using both dummy and continuous measures. The exception is the dummy attendance in HCD D3-D4. But considering that D3 and D4 occurred in the later part of this project when attritions due to lack of education have already emerged, this finding does not pose a serious challenge of the general positive influence of education on attendance. Older people consistently are found to attend more than younger people. Although the coefficient in HCD D1-D2 for dummy attendance is not significant, the direction is consistent with the general finding. Being White is a significant positive predictor of attendance in most cases. Although the coefficients for ED2K dummy attendance and HCD D3-D4 dummy attendance are not significant, their directions are consistent. The block of controls manifests a few significant findings. Schedule availability is a significant predictor in ED2K but not in HCD. Number of children under 18 generally decreases attendance, although coefficients are rarely significant. Having a fulltime job and being a student both show negative influence on attendance variables, with some of the coefficients being significant.

Table 4.3 summarizes the enrollment and the attendance analyses reported in Table 4.1 and 4.2. "Negative" refers to either a significant lower mean or percentage of the disempowered groups among enrollers compared to non-enrollers, or to significant negative relationships between disempowered status and the attendance variables. Blank spaces refer to coefficients that are not significant. "NA" means the variables are not

available in the corresponding project. The table shows that the negative effects of disempowered status are generally consistent, although a few exceptions exist. Specifically, less education was consistently associated with lower enrollment and lower attendance. Age, in most of circumstances, was a positive predictor of enrollment and attendance. Although race did not show significant influence on enrollment, it was found to be influential in attendance. In other words, Whites were always more likely to attend the discussions than non-Whites. Income was positively related to enrollment in HCD. Contrary to expectation, females showed a higher enrollment rate in HCD, but had a lower rate in ED2K than males. H1 is thus generally supported.

Table 4.3. *Effects of disempowered status on attendance*

	Enrollment		Attendance	
	ED2K (N = 2,245)	HCD (N = 2,944)	ED2K (N = 974)	HCD (N = 1,464)
Less education	negative	negative	negative	negative
Younger age	negative		negative	negative
Lower incomes	NA	negative		
Non-Whites		NA	negative	negative
Females	negative	positive		

Content analyses were conducted to investigate the reasons for non-participation and whether the disempowered failed to participate for different reasons than others. Table 4.4 includes the full coding scheme, in which 9 first-level categories and 25 sub-categories are identified. Frequencies and percentages of each sub-category are reported in the last two columns. The five most mentioned reasons for non-attendance, including technical problems, work issues, family issues, no time, and out of town, are showed in bold font.

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Table 4.4. *Frequencies and percentages of reasons for non-attendance (HCD)*

	Frequencies	Percentages
1. Time	738	43
1.1 work	**316**	**18**
1.2 family	**195**	**11**
1.3 social activities	29	1.7
1.4 other emergency	12	.7
1.5 no time in general	**175**	**10**
1.6 bad timing	11	.6
2. Location	140	8.1
2.1 travel	26	1.5
2.2 moving	6	.4
2.3 out of town in general	**108**	**6.3**
3 Weather	25	1.5
4 Illness	82	4.8
5 Technological problems	**479**	**28**
6. Personal problems	126	7.4
6.1 own inability	6	.4
6.2 don't like it	11	.6
6.3 forgot	79	4.6
6.4 late	9	.5
6.5 wrong time	21	1.2
7. Structural problems	37	2.2
7.1 not invited	17	1.0
7.2 no reminder	7	.4
7.3 no package	3	.2
7.4 customer service	10	.6
8. Discussion problems	6	.35
8.1 discussion issues	2	.1
8.2 too few participants	3	.2
8.3 too full session	1	.05
9 Others	80	4.7
TOTAL	1713	100%

The findings indicate that as a form of civic engagement, online deliberation faces technological barriers, which account for 28% of total reasons for non-attendance. This technological concern is unique to online deliberation and needs to be addressed carefully in future practices. Other than this, attendance in online deliberation is influenced by

factors that are common across all types of political participation. These factors generally reflect that citizens have to be engaged in other life activities such as work and family. In other words, citizens only have a relatively fixed amount of free time, and they have to give up other activities in order to contribute to online deliberation. Specifically, the time category accounts for 43% of reasons for non-attendance. Although online deliberation has flexible requirements in terms of location, participants still need to have access to computers and the Internet in order to attend. They also needed to attend at a pre-determined time. As a result, being out of town accounts for 6% of non-attendance reasons and location accounts for 8%. Location is the third largest category of reasons for non-attendance.

The next question is whether the disempowered did not attend for reasons that differ from others. Logistic regressions in Table 4.5 were used to answer this question. The open-ended question is not available in ED2K and this table contains results from HCD only. Dependent variables include the five most mentioned reasons, which were coded into dummy variables. For example, non-attendees who ever mentioned the reason of work issues were coded "1" and non-attendees who mentioned other reasons were coded "0". Independent variables included the demographic variables and the standard control variables used in any other regression analyses. The second column is a measure of response, showing that whether a non-attendee answered the open-ended question when asked for reasons. Column 3 to 7 each presents the five most mentioned reasons, ordering from the first most to the fifth most.

Table 4.5. *Logistic regressions predicting reasons for non-attendance (HCD)*

	Response	Technological problems	Work issues	Family issues	No time	Out of town
(Constant)	1.613***	-.829+	-.796	-.768	-3.875***	-2.250**
Education	-.055*	.029	.020	-.070*	.076*	-.093*
Male	.002	-.285*	.400*	-.366+	.081	.264
Age	.001	.020***	-.025***	-.008	-.002	.016+
Income	.020	-.057**	-.005	-.003	.092**	.015
Whites	-.078	-.243	-.138	.342	-.188	.271
Married	-.094	-.193	.099	.469*	-.052	-.182
Schedule flexibility	-.003	.003	-.002	.006	-.002	-.007
Children under 18	-.011	-.007	-.109	.123	-.008	.185
Fulltime job	-.019	-.195	.718***	-.214	.026	.377
Student	.336	-.484	.507	-.981	.770	.932
N	1388	965	965	965	965	965
R-Square	.01	.05	.06	.04	.03	.01

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

The model fits are low, ranging from 1 to 6%, indicating that a large amount of variance remains un-explained. Results show that 12 out of 30 comparisons between the disempowered and others are significantly different. Better educated people were less likely to let us know their reasons for non-attendance than were less educated people. Females, older people, and lower incomes people reported a higher tendency than males, younger people, and higher incomes people in having technical problems. Not surprisingly, males and younger people were more often involved in work than females and older people. Females and less educated people were more often occupied by family issues than were males and better educated people. Both better educated people and those with higher incomes cited no time as the reason more often than did less educated and lower-income people. Lastly, males and older people were more likely to be out of town than females and younger people. The control block shows findings that are consistent

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with common sense. Married people were more likely to have family issues than were unmarried people. Respondents who have a fulltime job were more likely to have work issues than were those who did not have fulltime jobs.

<center>Online Deliberation as Political Participation</center>

Measurement of civic engagement

      Political participation. To assess political participation, respondents were asked whether or not they had participated in a variety of political activities in the past 12 months. These activities included: contacting a public official, attending a public hearing or town hall meeting, trying to convince some to vote for or against a political candidate, attending political meetings or rallies, doing work for a candidate, donating money to a candidate, wearing a candidate's campaign button or applying a candidate's bumper sticker, contacting a newspaper or TV station about an issue of concern, or trying to get someone to sign a petition. All positive responses were coded as "1" and summed to form a scale (ED2K baseline: Cronbach's *alpha* = .62; *M* = .98, *SD* = 1.38; HCD Baseline: *M*=1.81, *SD*=1.65, Cronbach's *alpha* =.75).

      Community activities. An index of community participation was obtained on the second baseline questionnaire in ED2K. Respondents were asked whether or not they had participated in a variety of neighborhood activities in the past 12 months. These activities included adult education classes, exercising at a work out club, self-help group, reading/religious group, organized recreation league, church related activity, neighborhood association, and youth development program. A scale was created by

scoring each membership as "1" and adding them up (Cronbach's *alpha* = .53; *M* = 2.26; *SD* = 1.72). In HCD, an index including nine items was created (Baseline: Mean=1.82, SD=1.65, Cronbach's *alpha* = .56). The activities included most of those asked in ED2K baseline except for self-help groups. In addition, serving a jury was included in the HCD measure.

News exposure. In ED2K, exposure to mass-mediated current events content was measured by five different items inquiring about the respondents' self-reported media use in days during the past week (0 to 7). Newspaper reading, political talk radio exposure, exposure to television national network news, cable news, and local news were scaled together (Cronbach's *alpha* = .61; *M* =15.50, *SD* =7.84). In HCD, two more items were added, which were Internet news use and exposure to NPR. Thus the scale in HCD has a larger range (Cronbach's *alpha* = .59; *M* =17.82, *SD* =9.49).

Political discussions. ED2K included a comprehensive measure of everyday political discussions and their features. Respondents were asked to name (by giving initials) up to two close friends or family members with whom they discussed public affairs. They were then asked to identify several features of these discussions, including their relationship to the named person, the typical number of days per week they talked with the person about politics, the extent to which they tended to disagree and the extent to which they directly expressed their opinions. A second battery asked respondents to name (again by giving initials) two acquaintances, such as "people at work or simply people you see going about your day," with whom they discussed public affairs. The same follow-up questions were used for these named discussants as well. An additive

scale was constructed as a count of the potential 0 to 4 discussion partners. Slightly less than 11% did not name any discussion partners, and about 56% named four discussion partners.

Frequency of discussion. The respondents reported how many days in the past week (0 to 7) they discussed political issues with each of the four named discussion partners. An additive scale of the respondents' answers to the four questions was computed (Cronbach's *alpha* = .74; *M* = 5.94, *SD* = 4.93), with those who did not name any discussants coded as 0. *Disagreement*. For each of the four discussion partners, the respondents reported the extent to which the named discussant tended to disagree with the respondents' own views. Disagreement was measured on a 5-point ordinal scale ranging from "never" to "almost all the time." I computed an average scale since otherwise this measure would be highly correlated with the frequency of discussion measure (Cronbach's *alpha* = .49; *M* = 2.49, *SD* = .71). Those who did not name any discussants were coded as 0. In addition, following the distinction between discussion within and across cohesive networks, I computed two subscales—the extent of disagreement with family/friends and the extent of disagreement with acquaintances. *Direct opinions*. For each of the four discussion partners, the respondents reported the extent to which they directly expressed their opinions when discussing with the named discussant. It was also measured on a 5-point ordinal scale ranging from "never" to "almost all the time." Similarly, an additive scale was computed (Cronbach's *alpha* = .82, *M* = 4.19, *SD* = .85).

A simpler version of political discussion was used in HCD. Respondents were asked to report how many days in the past week (0 to 7) they discussed politics with either family/friends or acquaintances/people at work. The items were aggregated to create a scale (HCD baseline: Cronbach's *alpha* = .68, *M* = 4.28, *SD* = 3.73).

Measurement of political psychology

Argument repertoire. This is a measure of opinion quality, referring to the relevant reasons that one has for one's own opinions and the relevant reasons that others with opposite opinions might have. The validity and reliability of this measure has been demonstrated (see Cappella, Price, & Nir, 2002). The variables used here are measures of total number of arguments obtained in the baseline surveys (ED2K baseline: *M* = 6.60, *SD* = 5.44; HCD baseline: *M* = 4.89, *SD* = 4.92).

Political knowledge. In ED2K, items included 10 general political and civic knowledge questions (e.g., who has the final responsibility to decide if a law is constitutional or not), 7 questions about the personal backgrounds of the presidential candidates (e.g., which one of the Democratic candidates was a professional basketball player), and an additional 7 questions about issue positions of candidates in the Democratic and Republican presidential primaries (e.g., which of the Republican candidates supports vouchers). All 24 items were scored 1 for correct answers and 0 for incorrect answers. The items were averaged to create a scale (*M* = .62; *SD* = .19, Cronbach's *alpha* = .82). The baseline survey in HCD used a shorter version of such

questions, which each contained five items (HCD baseline: M = 3.85, SD=1.30, Cronbach's *alpha* =.62).

Political interest. In ED2K, two questionnaire items comprised a political interest scale. The questions, measured on a 4-point ordinal scale, inquired about habitual following of public affairs and caring which party wins in the 2000 elections. The majority of respondents (79%) reported that they followed public affairs either "most" or "some" of the time. About 50% of the respondents replied that they cared "a great deal" which party wins the elections. A scale averaging the two responses was computed (M = 3.20, SD = .71, Cronbach's *alpha* = .62). In HCD, two similar items were used, including habitual following of politics (measured in the recruitment survey) and caring which party wins in the 2004 elections. Eighty one percent of respondents reported that they followed public affairs either "most" or "some" of the time. Sixty six percent of respondents replied that they cared "a great deal" which party wins the elections. Averaging them leads to a scale (M = 3.22, SD = .84, Cronbach's *alpha* = .50).

Political efficacy. Efficacy was assessed by asking respondents to register their agreement with the following three items: "People like me don't have any say about what the government does;" "I don't think public officials care much about what people like me think;" and "sometimes politics and government are so complicated that a person like me can't understand what's going on." Responses ranged from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree, where higher disagreement corresponds with a stronger sense of efficacy. Items were averaged to form a scale (ED2K baseline: M = 2.52, SD=.98, Cronbach's *alpha* =.66; HCD baseline: M=2.74, SD=1.00, Cronbach's *alpha* =.71).

Interpersonal trust. In both projects, three forced-choice items commonly used in the General Social Survey tapped trust in other people (e.g., "Generally speaking, most people can be trusted" versus "You can't be too careful in dealing with people"). Trustful selections were coded "1," and mistrustful selections were coded "0." The scale was the average of the three items (ED2K baseline: Cronbach's *alpha* = .74; *M* = .60; *SD* = .39; HCD Baseline: *M*=.57, *SD*=.40, Cronbach's *alpha* =.74).

Party-ideology index. Participants were asked about their party identification and its strength. They were also asked about their overall ideological leanings, on a continuum from strong liberal to strong conservative. The two components, which were highly correlated, were combined to form an 11-point scale with "strong liberals–strong Democrats" coded as 5, "strong conservatives–strong Republicans" coded as –5, and "moderates-Independents" coded as 0 (ED2K baseline: *M* = –0.26; *SD* = 3.18; HCD baseline: *M* = .06, *SD* = 3.29).

Analytical strategy

Correlations were run between number of online deliberations attended and each single political and community activity including voting, donating money to candidates, neighborhood watching, political discussion, and the like. The OLS regression models typically used to predict political participation were run for attendance in online deliberation. The models of political participation, community activities, political discussions, and online deliberation attendance were compared to each other. The models included (1) five variables that were used to define the disempowered; (2) control variables; (3) political psychology variables (i.e., argument repertoire, political

knowledge, interest, efficacy, interpersonal trust, and party-ideology index); and (4) political and civic engagement variables (i.e., the political participation index, the community activities index, news exposure, and political discussions).

Results

Table 4.6 presents zero-order correlations between number of online deliberations attended and other political and community activities. The first column contains the details of each activity. The second column shows results in ED2K and the third shows findings in HCD. Table 4.6 indicates that attendance relates to both the voting behavior and the political participation index regardless of the topics of online deliberation. The community activities index only significantly relates to attendance in HCD. The non-significant correlation between the same index and attendance in ED2K is different from the significant correlation found in HCD ($u = 1.67$, $p < .05$). Unexpectedly, attendance does not relate to frequency of political discussions in general but positively relates to discussion frequency with family members. In ED2K, perceived disagreement with discussants has a negative correlation while directly-expressed opinions have a positive correlation with attendance.

If looking at individual activities, we see some differences between ED2K and HCD. The differences summarized here only include those that show significance between the ED2K and the HCD correlations. Persuading another person about voting is found to be positively correlated with ED2K attendance but has no correlation with HCD attendance ($u = 1.93$, $p < .05$). It might be explained by the discussion topics in ED2K, which are all presidential election-related. ED2K attendance does not significantly relate

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Table 4.6. *Correlations between number of online deliberations attended and other political and community activities*

	ED2K	HCD
Voting		
How often one votes	.216***	.109***
Index of participation in political activities	.071*	.079**
Contacted or written a public official about an issue	.089**	.032
Attended a public hearing or town meeting	.055+	.007
Talked to anyone about voting for or against a political candidate	.083**	-.003
Attended any political meetings, rallies, speeches, or events	.028	.062*
Did any other work for a candidate	-.036	.033
Gave money to a candidate	.097**	.072*
Worn a candidate's campaign button, put a campaign sticker, etc	-.016	.019
Contacted a newspaper or television station about an issue	.013	-.009
Tried to get another person to sign a petition	-.047	-.012
Index of participation in community activities	.035	.103***
Took continuing or adult education classes	.001	.009
Exercised or worked out at a club or recreation center	-.065*	-.002
Participated in a reading group, religious study group, etc	.061+	.065*
Participated in organized recreational leagues, such as bowling	-.044	-.002
Participated in some group activity associated with your church	.098**	.009
Participated in a neighborhood association or neighborhood watch	.088**	.068*
Helped out with a child or youth program, such as Little League	-.024	-.001
Attended a self-help or self-improvement group	.027	--
Participated in a community meeting to discuss some local issue	--	.050+
Served on a jury	--	-.037
Political discussion—number of days last week	.048	.016
Your family or friends	.066+	.053*
Acquaintances or people at work	-.056	-.036
Political discussion—perceived disagreement	-.074*	--
Your family or friends	-.025	--
Acquaintances or people at work	-.093	--
Political discussion—directly expressed your opinions	.076*	--
Your family or friends	.095**	--
Acquaintances or people at work	.068+	--

+ p< .10, *p < .05, ** p< .01; ***p < .001

to the community activity index but HCD attendance does (u = 1.67, p < .05). Specifically, ED2K attendance is positively correlated to church activities but HCD attendance is not (u = 2.05, p < .05).

As more rigorous tests of the differences between attending online deliberation and other civic activities, Table 4.7 and 4.8 each contains a series of OLS regressions based on either ED2K or HCD data. The first block of predictors has the five demographic variables and the standard control variables used in previous analyses. The second block of predictors represents various political-psychological factors. The third and last block of predictors includes the major types of political and community activities. The sample sizes for each variable vary slightly due to missing values. In Table 4.7, some of the variables, including income, marriage status, political efficacy, political discussions, perceived disagreement and directly-expressed opinions, have a large amount of missing values and mean imputations were thus used.

Table 4.7 shows that the regression models account for around 20% of the variance in each of the dependent variables, namely, political participation, community activities, political discussions, and online attendance. However, when reading the R-square changes we can see that, demographic and control variables account for most of (14%) the variance explained by the model for online attendance. In contrast, these variables account for no more than 10% of the variance in explaining political participation, community activities, and political discussions. While adding in other types of civic activities often increases the model fits of a traditional type of civic activity, the

Table 4.7. *OLS regressions predicting political participation, community activities, political discussions and number of online attendance (ED2K)*

	Political participation	Community activities	Political discussions	Online attendance
	B	B	B	B
(Constant)	-1.340***	-.462	3.704***	-.226
Education	-.011	.152***	-.205**	.014
Male	.091	-.276**	-.015	-.023
Age	.005+	-.005	-.031**	.035***
Income	-7.409E-5	-0.000344+	.000	-.002+
White	-.044	-.292*	-.285	.314
Married	-.193*	.065	.810**	-.164
Schedule flexibility	.011	.028	.009	.086*
Children under 18	-.071*	.158***	.137	-.042
Fulltime job	-.050	-.145	-.034	.388*
Student	-.006	.780***	.381	-.857*
R-square change	**.04***	**.07***	**.02**	**.14***
Argument repertoire	.033***	.018+	.079**	.077***
Political knowledge	.060	-.483+	.514	1.002*
Political interest	.210***	.023	.923***	-.142
Political efficacy	.135***	.026	-.021	-.077
Interpersonal trust	-.004	.214+	-.126	.222
Party-ideology index	-.007	-.052***	.026	-.008
R-square change	**.11***	**.03***	**.09***	**.04***
Political participation	--	.230***	.641***	-.045
Community activities	.133***	--	.218**	.078+
News exposure	.008+	.012+	.119***	-.009
Political discussions frequency (sum)	.061***	.027*	--	.004
Political discussions perceived disagreement (mean)	-.029	.104+	--	-.159
Political discussions directly-expressed opinions (mean)	.090+	.034	--	.019
R-square change	**.08***	**.06***	**.09***	**.01**
N	1,538	1,538	1,393	909
R-square	.22	.15	.20	.19

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

R-square change is found to be small and not significant when such activities are input as a third block of predictors to explain online deliberation.

When comparing the significance of coefficients, it is showed that online attendance has different predictors than other political engagement variables. Coefficients that do not overlap on their confidence intervals are reported here. While the political participation index can successfully predict both community activities and political discussions, it fails to predict online attendance. Political interest and news exposure can predict political discussions but not online attendance. Political discussions can predict political participation but not online attendance. Argument repertoire is the only political psychology predictor that is shared by political participation, community activities, political discussions and online attendance.

Table 4.8 has the same layout as Table 4.7 except that data reported in this table are from HCD. Compared to ED2K, the model fits for civic activities are generally better (ranging from 30% to 40%) but the fit for online attendance is much lower (6%). Half of the variance in online attendance can be accounted by the demographic and control variables (3%). Similar to the findings in Table 4.7, political psychology and other activities have weak contributions in increasing the model fit of online attendance. However, the predictors work pretty well in explaining political participation, community activities, and political discussions. Each block of predictors account for almost the same amount of variance (either 13% or 14%) when predicting political participation and political discussions. Community activities are explained better by the demographic and control variables (17%) than by political psychology (5%) and other activities (8%).

Table 4.8. *OLS regressions predicting political participation, community activities, political discussions and number of online attendance (HCD)*

	Political participation	Community activities	Political discussions	Online attendance
	B	B	B	B
(Constant)	-2.539***	-1.210***	-3.268***	-.677*
Education	-.002	.125***	.073*	.034*
Male	.104	-.556***	.502**	-.086
Age	.012***	-.002	-.014*	.006+
Income	.014	.013	-.030	-.005
Whites	.184+	-.157+	-.160	.199*
Married	-.064	-.015	.424**	.063
Schedule flexibility	.002	.003	.006	.001
Children under 18	-.045	.282***	-.113	-.028
Fulltime job	-.075	.027	.336*	.015
Student	.244	.309	.959*	-.039
R-square change	**.14***	**.17***	**.13***	**.03***
Argument repertoire	.047***	.009	.031*	.032***
Political knowledge	.032	.062+	.027	.108**
Political interest	.323***	.065	.892***	.057
Political efficacy	.216***	.020	.126	.035
Interpersonal trust	.054	.002	.113	-.110
Party-ideology index	.027*	-.080***	.117***	.002
R-square change	**.13***	**.05***	**.13***	**.02***
Political participation		.251***	.515***	-.013
Community activities	.325***		.046	.034
News exposure	.008	.010*	.110***	.001
Political discussions frequency (sum)	.156***	.011		-.032*
R-square change	**.14***	**.08***	**.14***	**.01+**
N	1,748	1,748	1,748	1,340
R-Square	.40	.31	.40	.06

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

When comparing the significance of coefficients, it is, again, showed that online attendance has different predictors than other political engagement variables. Coefficients that do not overlap on their confidence intervals are reported here. While the political participation index can successfully predict both community activities and political discussions, it fails to predict online attendance. Political interest and party ideology can predict political discussions but not online attendance. Political efficacy and community activities can predict political participation but not online attendance. Political discussion frequency, surprisingly, is found to be a significant negative predictor of online attendance while it is a significant positive predictor of political participation. Argument repertoire, again, is the only political psychology predictor that is shared by political participation, political discussions and online attendance.

Both the correlation analyses and the regression model comparisons show that one the one hand, there are similarities between attending online deliberation and traditional forms of political participation, community activities, and political discussions. These similarities lie in the common predictors they share, including resource measures (e.g., education and income) and ability measures (e.g., argument repertoire and political knowledge). On the other hand, it should be noted that political psychology measures such as interest and efficacy have almost no explanatory power in predicting online attendance. In addition, other types of political activities cannot help to increase the predictability of the models of online attendance. These findings suggest that online deliberation could be considered as a form of political participation due to its correlation with resources and ability. However, it is distinct from other forms of civic activities, and

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its predictors have yet to be fully discovered. The results here support the argument that, except for the basic resources and ability variables, citizens get involved in deliberative democracy for different reasons than those in participatory democracy.

Conclusions and Discussions

The analyses of enrollment and attendance generally support Hypothesis 1, which suggests that most disempowered groups (except for females) are less likely than other groups to enroll in and to attend online deliberation. This finding is consistent with the unequal participation in politics that scholars have observed for years. It also supports the critiques of the Habermasian public sphere, showing that an open sphere does not guarantee equal participation. Attendance is not only determined by the openness of that discursive space, but also the availability of the potential participants. Content analysis of the reasons for non-attendance suggests that the availability of citizens is constrained by time and location in spite of the online nature of deliberative discussions.

What is more interesting is that technological problems are considered to be the primary reason for non-attendance. This specific feature of online deliberation actually has some negative implications for some of the disempowered groups. Lower-income people, older people and females were more likely to fail to participate due to technological problems than were higher-income people, younger people and males. This finding supports the digital divide concept, which claims that information technology and related skills to take full advantage of it might discriminate against the disempowered.

Online deliberation is a relatively new civic practice in that it both embraces a deliberative concept of democracy and utilizes the Internet as the locale for this practice. A comparison between online deliberation vs. political participation, community activities, and political discussions indicates that online deliberation could be considered as a form of political participation if we focus on the common influence of resource (such as time and income) and ability factors (i.e., argument repertoire and political knowledge). But other than that, there are limited similarities between online deliberation and traditional forms of civic engagement. This was due first to a lack of explanatory power of political psychology variables; and secondly, due to a lack of predictability of traditional forms of civic engagement on attending online discussions.

Another observation is that the ED2K findings sometimes differ from the HCD findings. The variance of ED2K attendance is fairly accounted for by the model (19%), but the variance of HCD attendance is hardly explained by the predictors (6%). ED2K attendance, but not HCD attendance, is correlated with individual civic activities. Females were less likely to enroll in ED2K but more likely in HCD than males. These differences between the two projects suggest that the topics to be discussed in online deliberation might shape attendance in different ways. This observation will be further explained when discussing experience.

CHAPTER 5: THE DISEMPOWERED AND EXPERIENCE

The purpose of this chapter is to look at the experience of eDeliberation, especially that of the disempowered. As reviewed in Chapter 2, experience with online deliberation matters because it significantly influences subsequent engagement and the intention to attend future discussions. However, this concern has not been fully explored in previous research and the analyses are expected to provide preliminary evidence. It is hypothesized that experience has significant effects in influencing intention and future behaviors.

Hypothesis 2.1: Experience (i.e., enjoyment, perceived disagreement, and opinion expression) can influence *dropouts* and the *intention to participate* in the future.

Chapter 4 shows that the disempowered are disadvantaged at the point of entry, consistent with previous findings of the unequal political participation among Americans. However, this is a problem of pre-existing structural inequalities rather than particular weaknesses affecting the ability to participate in deliberation. In order to know whether deliberation itself disadvantages the disempowered, it becomes necessary to look at those disempowered group members who attended the discussions and examine how they evaluated their experience with online deliberation. The second section of this chapter deals with the unequal experience of online deliberation. Consistent with the hypothesis about attendance, the disempowered are expected to have more unfaborable experience than others.

Hypothesis 2.2: Disempowered group members are less likely than other group members to *enjoy* online deliberation and to *express their opinions*, but they are more likely than other group members to *perceive disagreements* in online deliberation.

The Role of Experience in Predicting Intention and Future Behaviors

Measurement of experience

Enjoyment. In ED2K, enjoyment was measured only in the post-discussion 3 and 4 surveys. The items that make up the enjoyment scale included (a) the discussion was interesting; (b) the moderator was helpful; (c) the discussion was enjoyable, each measured by a five-point scale from "1" totally disagree to "5" totally agree and averaged (ED2K D3: Cronbach's *alpha* = .79, M = 4.25, SD = .76; ED2K D4: Cronbach's *alpha* = .83, M = 4.20, SD = .75). An aggregated enjoyment measure was computed in ED2K by combining D3 and D4 measures (M = 4.19, SD = .74) and this aggregated measure was used to predict intention and behavior. When it comes to analyses that treat enjoyment as dependent variables, individual measures were used (i.e., D3 and D4 enjoyment).

In HCD, measures of enjoyment were available in each post-discussion survey and based on four items: (a) the discussion was interesting; (b) the moderator was helpful; (c) the discussion was enjoyable; (d) satisfaction with the group decisions, each measured by a five-point scale from "1" totally disagree to "5" totally agree and averaged. Reliability of the individual scales (i.e., Cronbach's *alpha*) ranged from .73 to .78. The aggregated measure of D1 and D2 enjoyment was used to predict dropout (HCD D1-D2: M = 3.86, SD = .63) because dropout in HCD is defined as those who attended both D1

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and D2 but did not show up in any of D3 and D4. The aggregated measure of HCD enjoyment was used to predict intention (HCD total: M = 3.92, SD = .55) because intention was measured in the end-of-project survey after all discussions ended. The end-of-project enjoyment had more items, including (e) there was enough time spent on each topic; (f) I learned a lot from the discussions; (g) I liked the people in my discussion groups (HCD EOP: Cronbach's $alpha$ = .89; M = 3.77, SD = .67). When enjoyment is treated as a dependent variable, the aggregated measure and the end-of-project measure were submitted to analyses.

Perceived disagreement. In ED2K, post-discussion 3 and 4 surveys asked for the extent to which group peers tended to disagree with the respondents' own views. Disagreement was measured on a 5-point ordinal scale ranging from "never" to "almost all the time." Such a measure was available in each post-discussion survey in HCD. Different measures were used for different analyses. The aggregated measure of ED2K D3 and D4 disagreement was used to predict dropouts (ED2K D3-D4: M = 2.54, SD = .72) whereas the aggregated measure of HCD D1 and D2 was used to predict dropouts (HCD D1-D2: M = 2.43, SD = .77). When it comes to analyses that treat perceived disagreement as dependent measures, individual measures in ED2K (ED2K D3: M = 2.58, SD = .81; ED2K D4: M = 2.52, SD = .71) whereas the aggregated measure and the end-of-project measure in HCD (HCD total: M = 2.40, SD = .60; HCD EOP: M = 60, SD = .74) were used.

Opinion expression. In ED2K, post-discussion 3 and 4 surveys asked for the extent to which attendees directly expressed their opinions when discussing within the

groups. It was also measured on a 5-point ordinal scale ranging from "never" to "almost all the time." Similarly, such a measure was available in each post-discussion survey in HCD. The aggregated measure of ED2K D3 and D4 opinion expression was used to predict dropouts (ED2K D3-D4: M = 4.17, SD = 1.08) whereas the aggregated measure of HCD D1 and D2 opinion expression was used to predict dropouts (HCD D1-D2: M = 3.80, SD = 1.02). When it comes to analyses that treat opinion expression as dependent measures, individual measures in ED2K (ED2K D3: M = 4.09, SD = 1.15; ED2K D4: M = 4.40, SD = .92) whereas the aggregated measure and the end-of-project measure in HCD (HCD total: M = 3.84, SD = .97; HCD EOP: M = 3.95, SD = .98) were used.

Measurement of intention and future behaviors

Intention to participate. In the ED2K post-discussion 9 survey, respondents who attended discussion 9 were asked one question: "If you were offered the opportunity to participate again in a series of online political discussions, how likely would you be to accept?" The question has four response categories, from "not at all likely" to "very likely." In the HCD end-of-project survey, a same question was asked and respondents who attended at least one discussion answered it. The analyses in this paper treat the intention measure as an interval variable (ED2K: M=3.40, SD=.85; HCD: M=3.31, SD=.86).

Dropouts. In ED2K, dropout is defined through three steps. First, people who attended less than three discussions were excluded from the analyses since they were considered as not showing a serious attempt to join in all the discussions. Secondly,

people who attended less than three out of the first four rounds of discussions (i.e., discussion 2 to 5) were excluded from the analyses since they did not consistently show up in the beginning part of discussions. Thirdly, among the eligible attendees ($N = 254$), those who did not attend any of the later three rounds of discussions (i.e., discussion 6 to 8) were defined as dropouts (13%) since they did show a consistent pattern of attending early in the project and then not showing up in the later part of discussions. For example, a person who attended discussion 2, 3, 4, 5 but did not attend any one of discussion 6 to 8 was considered as a dropout. Since HCD involved two rounds of invitation, people who attended both discussions in the first round ($N = 261$) but did not show up in any discussions of the second round were thus defined as dropouts (19%).

Analytical strategy

OLS regressions were conducted if the dependent variables were continuous, and logistic regressions were used for dichotomous variables. In addition to the predictors used in the earlier attendance analyses, (i.e., demographics and control variables), experience variables were added as the last block of predictors in order to see whether they have significant effects on intention and future behaviors.

Results

Table 5.1 includes regression findings on the relationship between the experience variables and the intention and future behaviors variables. The first two blocks of predictors are demographics and controls, same as those used in Chapter 4. The three

Table 5.1. *Regressions predicting dropouts and intention to participate*

	Dropouts		Intention to participate	
	ED2K	HCD	ED2K	HCD
(Constant)	4.176	4.057+	.902+	.568
Education	.0004	.136+	-.002	-.010
Male	.235	.265	.018	.139+
Age	-.032***	-.032*	.009*	-.003
Income	.003	-.056	.000	.019+
Whites	-.464	.121	-.035	-.071
Married	-.184	-.763+	-.046	-.134
Schedule flexibility	-.032	.003	-.026	.009***
Children under 18	-.108	-.253	.021	.019
Fulltime job	-.050	.057	.066	-.250**
Student	.811	-.597	-.029	.011
Enjoyment	-.320*	-.973**	.257***	.581***
Perceived disagreement	.112	-.766*	.088	.151*
Opinion expression	-.223+	.047	.200***	.042
N	479	245	276	374
R-Square	.10	.11	.15	.22

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

experience variables were added as the last block of predictors. Column 2 and 3 present

the dropout analyses, each representing one of the projects. Column 4 and 5 present

findings for intention. Table 5.1 shows that after controlling for the demographic and

control variables, the experience variables have significant influence on dropouts and

intention of future participation. ED2K data show that the more one felt that he or she

enjoyed the discussions and expressed opinions in the discussions, the less likely one

would drop out of following discussions. Both enjoyment and opinion expression

increased attendees' intention to participate in future discussions in ED2K. In HCD, the

more one enjoyed the discussions, the less likely he or she would drop out of the

following discussions. Surprisingly, the more attendees perceived disagreement with group peers, the less likely they would drop out. Both enjoyment and perceived disagreement show positive effects on HCD intention to participate in the future. The findings confirm that experience is worth studying because it influences intention and future behaviors. Hypothesis 2.1 is thus supported.

<div align="center">Unequal Experience</div>

Given the significant roles of experience in predicting intention and future behaviors, the next examination is to see whether demographics explain the experience of participating in online deliberation. Content analysis was then used to better understand the reasons for any differences between the disempowered and others.

Method

Regressions. OLS regressions were conducted if the dependent variable was continuous and logistic regressions were used for dichotomous variables. The same groups of predictors and the same sequence were followed as in the attendance analyses.

Open-ended questions. Content analyses of the open-ended questions regarding enjoyment of online deliberation were conducted. The wording of this question in ED2K was: "What have you liked most about the discussions?" and in HCD was: "What did you like most about the discussions?" Among those 533 participants who attended at least one discussion in ED2K, there were 469 people who gave us at least one response about what

they liked most about the discussions; among the 635 respondents who participated at least once in HCD, 577 of them provided at least one response.

Coding scheme. The coding scheme is similar to that of Undem (2001) and includes participants' evaluation regarding aspects of discussions such as opinion exchange, other participants, the technology, the procedure, learning, the structure of discussions, the topics, general comments, problem-solving, and others. The frequency and percentage of each category in either ED2K or HCD are presented in Table 5.6.

Inter-coder reliability: The second coder was a graduate student at Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania. She was trained in the coding procedure and asked to try to code 50 responses to see whether she had any questions. After the training finished, the second coder coded another 100 responses and the inter-coder reliability was calculated based on these 100 answers. Responses were coded into multiple reasons if necessary. The average Krippendorff's *alpha* between two coders equals.82.

Results

Table 5.2 contains regression findings bearing on the relationship between the disempowered and the enjoyment variables. The first block of predictors is demographics and controls. The second block includes political psychology variables and the third block includes political activities variables. These independent variables are consistent with the models used in the latter part in Chapter 4. Column 2 and 3 present findings from ED2K while column 4 and 5 show results from HCD. Both ED2K enjoyment

variables refer to enjoyment of one single discussion, either D3 or D4. In contrast, HCD

variables are either aggregated across all the four discussions or measured in the end-of-

project survey. Therefore, tests of enjoyment cover both evaluations about one discussion

and a whole project.

Table 5.2. *Regressions predicting enjoyment*

	ED2K		HCD	
	D3	D4	D1-D4 Total	EOP
(Constant)	4.652***	4.184***	4.480***	3.967***
Education	-.007	-.017	-.037***	-.030**
Male	.052	.023	-.080	-.114+
Age	.001	.008**	.004+	.010**
Income	-.002*	-.003***	-.010	-.017+
Whites	-.177	.103	-.080	-.104
Married	-.082	-.172+	-.004	-.034
Schedule flexibility	-.010	.025	.001	.005**
Children under 18	-.067	-.046	.013	.021
Fulltime job	-.026	.075	.063	.055
Student	-.734*	-.318	-.075	.004
R-square change	**.03+**	**.09*****	**.08*****	**.10*****
Argument repertoire	.011	.011**	-.009+	-.006
Political knowledge	-.653*	-.757	-.102**	-.055
Political interest	-.190*	-.057	.009	-.001
Political efficacy	-.036	.002	.016	-.009
Interpersonal trust	-.205+	-.020	-.068	.009
Party-ideology index	-.007	.002	-.008	-.002
R-square change	**.02**	**.03***	**.05****	**.01**
Political participation	.068*	.030	-.015	-.002
Community activities	-.006	.016	.022	.012
News exposure	.004	.000	.007*	.008*
Political discussions (PD) frequency	.025*	.017+	-.004	-.009
PD perceived disagreement	.120	.048	--	--
PD opinion expression	-.028	-.022	--	--
R-square change	**.09***	**.04**	**.02**	**.01**
N	300	447	400	469
R-Square	.15	.15	.15	.12

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Regression models explained 12 to 15% of the variance, indicating that many explanatory factors remain unknown. But among those factors included in this model, Table 5.2 shows that in most circumstances, the disempowered enjoyed online deliberation more than others. The less educated attendees liked the discussions more than the better educated participants. Coefficients for education are significantly negative in HCD while in ED2K, they are not significant but the directions are consistent. Females enjoyed HCD more than males did. People with lower incomes enjoyed the discussions more than people with higher incomes. The exception is that younger people consistently liked the discussions less than did older people.

Table 5.3 utilizes the same regression models to predict perceived disagreement. ED2K variables are perceived disagreement measured about one single discussion, either D3 or D4. In contrast, HCD variables are either aggregated across the four discussions or measured in the end-of-project survey. Therefore, tests of perceived disagreement cover both evaluations about one discussion and a whole project. Regression models explained about 7 to 12% of the variance. Among those factors included in the models, Table 5.3 shows that the less educated participants consistently perceived less disagreement than the better educated attendees. Again, younger people showed unfavorable experience with online deliberation – they consistently perceived more disagreement than did older people in both projects. No other significant findings were observed.

Table 5.4 utilizes the same regression models and follows the same layout as used in the previous two tables to predict opinion expression. Regression models explained about 8 to 16% of the variance. Among those factors included, Table 5.4 show that the

Table 5.3. *Regressions predicting perceived disagreement*

	ED2K		HCD	
	D3	D4	D1-D4 Total	EOP
(Constant)	.868*	1.432**	1.737***	2.196***
Education	.042+	.013	.027*	.010
Male	.071	.071	.020	.077
Age	-.006+	-.003	-.004+	-.012***
Income	-.001	.000	-.014	.007
Whites	.058	.108	.120	.030
Married	.182+	.097	.004	.009
Schedule flexibility	-.010	-.017	.001	-.002
Children under 18	.042	.026	-.038	-.036
Fulltime job	-.025	.009	-.035	-.074
Student	.078	.271	.161	.243
R-square change	**.02+**	**.02**	**.06****	**.06****
Argument repertoire	-.018*	-.018*	.016**	.004
Political knowledge	.612*	.544*	.126***	.099*
Political interest	.147*	.120+	-.027	.079
Political efficacy	-.003	.026	.017	-.008
Interpersonal trust	.188+	.072	-.009	.053
Party-ideology index	.039**	.013	-.001	-.018+
R-square change	**.01**	**.01**	**.05****	**.04****
Political participation	-.016	.008	-.012	.029
Community activities	.003	.011	.015	-.030
News exposure	-.001	-.003	.000	.001
Political discussions (PD) frequency	.012	-.003	-.012	.007
PD perceived disagreement	.161**	.131*	--	--
PD opinion expression	-.005	-.034	--	--
R-square change	**.08*****	**.05***	**.01**	**.01**
N	506	449	404	471
R-Square	.12	.07	.12	.10

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 5.4. *Regressions predicting opinion expression*

	ED2K		HCD	
	D3	D4	D1-D4 Total	EOP
(Constant)	1.985***	2.685***	2.936***	3.625***
Education	.018	.046+	.008	.022
Male	.078	.002	.017	-.006
Age	-.001	-.001	-.005	-.007+
Income	.002	.001	.017	.007
Whites	.225	.366***	.140	-.130
Married	-.069	-.231*	-.059	.019
Schedule flexibility	.029	.002	-.004+	-.004
Children under 18	-.023	-.001	-.019	-.046
Fulltime job	.086	.178+	.013	.010
Student	-.809**	-.039	.156	.184
R-square change	**.06***	**.06***	**.07***	**.05**
Argument repertoire	.012	.010	.020**	.014+
Political knowledge	.415	-.075	.122**	.053
Political interest	-.113	-.095	-.011	-.031
Political efficacy	.077	.073	.057	.060
Interpersonal trust	.171	.014	-.099	-.067
Party-ideology index	.004	-.003	.011	.019
R-square change	**.03**	**.02+**	**.05***	**.02**
Political participation	-.024	-.003	-.021	-.011
Community activities	.072**	.015	.047+	.023
News exposure	.003	.014*	.003	.004
Political discussions (PD) frequency	.006	-.002	.017	.011
PD perceived disagreement	-.031	-.037	--	--
PD opinion expression	.272***	.181**	--	--
R-square change	**.07***	**.04***	**.01**	**.001**
N	515	449	590	470
R-Square	.16	.12	.13	.08

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

less educated attendees expressed their opinions less than did better educated participants in ED2K. Although the coefficients are not significant in HCD, the direction is consistent. Non-whites were less likely to express their opinions than whites in ED2K. However, younger people expressed their opinions more than older people did in both projects, although the coefficients are only significant in HCD. No other significant findings were observed.

Table 5.5 summarizes the regression findings reported in tables 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4. "Negative" refers to the significant negative relationships between disempowered status and the experience variables. "Positive" means that the relationships between disempowered status and the experience variables are significantly positive. Blank spaces refer to coefficients that are not significant. Both more enjoyment and more opinion expression are considered as more favorable experience, whereas less perceived disagreement is treated as more favorable experience.

Table 5.5. *Unequal experience*

	Enjoyment		Perceived disagreement		Opinion expression	
	ED2K	HCD	ED2K	HCD	ED2K	HCD
Younger people	negative	negative	positive	positive		positive
Lower education		positive	negative	negative	negative	
Lower incomes	positive	positive				
Non-Whites					negative	
Females		positive				

The table shows that the disempowered reported more favorable experiences than did others in more than half of the significant findings (7 out of 13). People with less education enjoyed the HCD discussions more and perceived less disagreement in both

projects than people with better education. People with lower incomes enjoyed both projects more than those with higher incomes. Females enjoyed the HCD discussions more than did males. Non-Whites and people with less education expressed their opinions less so than did Whites and those with better education. Finally, compared to older citizens, younger people were less likely to enjoy online deliberation and often perceived more disagreement with group peers, but they expressed their opinions more often. H3.2 is partially rejected then, because favorable experiences were found in all disempowered groups.

Content analyses were carried out to investigate the reasons for enjoying online deliberation. Table 5.6 includes the full coding scheme in which 10 first-level categories and 38 sub-categories are identified. Frequencies and percentages of each sub-category are reported in the last two columns. The five most mentioned reasons in both ED2K and HCD are the same, although the order varies a bit. They include: the chance to express of one's own opinions, exposure to others' opinions, the diversity of participants, the diversity of opinions, and opportunities for interaction. These five reasons are in bold in the table. These categories indicate that people enjoy online deliberation mainly because of its specific features, namely, a broad range of opinions and participants and the possibility that participants can interact with each other.

Table 5.6. *Frequencies and percentages of reasons for enjoyment*

		ED2K	HCD
Opinion exchange	**exposure to others' opinions**	**249(22%)**	**298(19%)**
	expression of one's own opinions / influence others	**125(11%)**	**123(8%)**
	diversity of opinions	**122(11%)**	**165(10%)**
	quality of ideas	6(.5%)	16(1%)
	Reasons for opinions	4(.4%)	8(.5%)
	interaction	**107(10%)**	**219(14%)**
	seeking for agreement	45(4%)	42(3%)
	seeking for disagreement	7(.6%)	12(.8%)
	reaching agreement	7(.6%)	21(1%)
Other participants	general	10(.9%)	5(.3%)
	diversity	**164(15%)**	**130(8%)**
	candid / frank / sincere	18(2%)	13(.8%)
	knowledgeable / intelligent	6(.5%)	23(1%)
	open-minded / non-judgmental	8(.7%)	4(.3%)
	interested / motivated / passionate	5(.4%)	15(1%)
	serious / opinionated	3(.3%)	4(.3%)
	easygoing / courteous / friendly / polite	16(1%)	7(.4%)
Technology	general	4(.4%)	25(2%)
	fast	3(.3%)	13(.8%)
	enough time	1(0%)	3(.2%)
	anonymity	4(.4%)	14(.9%)
	live/real-time / first-hand	12(%)	38(2%)
	privacy of setting / comfortable home	7(.6%)	19(1%)
	text / writing	4(.4%)	9(.5%)
	convenient / easy to use	2(.2%)	9(.5%)
	transcend physical boundary	1(0%)	2(.1%)
	Get into the chat-room	1(0%)	5(.3%)
Procedure	free	13(1%)	14(.9%)
	Open	10(.9%)	29(2%)
	equal	10(.9%)	16(1%)
	In-depth	6(.5%)	18(1%)
	polite	4(.4%)	3(.2%)
Learning		28(2%)	55(3%)
Regulation / structure		23(2%)	56(4%)
Topics		36(3%)	60(4%)
general comments		26(2%)	43(3%)
Problem solving		12(1%)	25(2%)
others		12(1%)	18(1%)
Total		1121(100%)	1579(100%)

Logistic regressions were run to test whether the disempowered liked the discussions for reasons different from others. Table 5.7 and Table 5.8 include regression findings from either ED2K or HCD. Dependent variables include the five most mentioned reasons, which were coded into dummy variables. For example, attendees who ever mentioned the reason of interaction were coded "1" and attendees who mentioned other reasons were coded "0". Independent variables included the demographic variables and the standard control variables used in any other regression analyses. The second column is a measure of response, showing that whether attendees answered the open-ended question when asked for reasons. Column 3 to 7 each presents the five most mentioned reasons, ordering from the first most to the fifth most. The model fits are low, ranging from 2 to 6%. The results in Table 5.7 show that no differences were found in the response rate to the open-ended questions in ED2K. Males enjoyed the diversity of opinions more so than did females. Younger people liked the interaction in the discussions more so than did older people. People with lower incomes valued the opportunity to express their own opinions more so than people with higher incomes. Non-Whites, however, were less likely to cite the exposure to others' opinions in online deliberation compared to Whites.

Table 5.7. *Logistic regressions predicting reasons for enjoyment (ED2K)*

	Response	Expression of own opinions	Exposure to others' opinions	Diversity of participants	Diversity of opinions	Interac -tion
(Constant)	1.278	.565	-.634	-1.813+	-1.003	-1.260
Education	.001	-.081	-.014	.075	-.026	.057
Male	.140	-.039	-.226	-.076	.702**	.004
Age	.014	-.003	-.009	-.007	.005	-.018+
Income	-.001	-.017**	-.003	.003	.003	.003
Whites	.174	-.294	1.336***	.395	-.416	-.091
Married	.003	.659+	.365	-.241	-.139	-.035
Schedule flexibility	.083	.036	-.026	-.051	-.071	.010
Children under 18	-.133	-.240	-.160	-.040	.102	-.106
Fulltime job	-.318	.467	.173	-.013	-.446	.061
Student	.159	.155	-.613	-1.808+	-1.738	-.562
N	444	393	393	393	393	393
R-Square	.02	.06	.06	.03	.04	.02

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 5.8 presents findings from HCD. Again, no differences were found in whether one gave responses. People with less education were found to cite the exposure to others' opinions more so than did people with better education. However, they mentioned the diversity of opinions and interaction less often than better educated people did. Females mentioned exposure to others' opinions and the diversity of participants more so than did males. People with lower incomes valued the interaction in discussions more so than did people with higher incomes.

Table 5.8. *Logistic regressions predicting reasons for enjoyment (HCD)*

	Response	Expression of own opinions	Exposure to others' opinions	Diversity of participants	Diversity of opinions	Interac -tion
(Constant)	2.246*	-.413	.420	-2.565**	-2.130**	-1.573*
Education	-.015	-.010	-.061+	.107*	-.039	.088*
Male	-.266	.170	-.394*	-.440+	.237	-.297
Age	.002	-.007	.001	-.005	.008	.008
Income	.028	-.038	-.005	-.021	-.015	-.074*
Whites	-.520	.031	.098	.224	.606+	-.289
Married	-.010	-.088	.119	.074	.421+	.116
Schedule flexibility	.007	.003	-.003	-.004	.009	.001
Children under 18	.266	-.058	.121	-.175	-.034	-.044
Fulltime job	.065	-.301	.151	.071	.326	.387+
Student	.658	-1.140	-.069	-.576	.550	-.005
N	594	541	541	541	541	541
R-Square	.01	.01	.02	.02	.03	.03

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 5.9 summarizes the reasons for enjoyment analyses reported in Table 5.7 and 5.8. Response was not included in the table because there were no significant findings. The table shows that 11 out of 60 comparisons between the disempowered and others manifested significant differences. The positive relationships suggest that the disempowered were often more likely to cite opinion expression, opinion exposure and interaction as reasons for enjoying the discussions than did others. The two anomalies are that non-Whites were less often to mention opinion exposure than were Whites, and people with less education mentioned the interaction less often than did people with better education. The negative relationships suggest that the disempowered were often

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less likely to cite the diversity of participants and opinions as reasons for enjoying the discussions than did others. The exception is women, who mentioned diversity of participants more often than did males.

Table 5.9. *Effects of disempowered status on reasons for enjoyment*

		Expression of own opinions	Exposure to others' opinions	Diversity of participants	Diversity of opinions	Interac -tion
Lower education	ED2K					
	HCD		positive		negative	negativ e
Younger age	ED2K					positive
	HCD					
Lower incomes	ED2K	positive				
	HCD					positive
Non- Whites	ED2K		negative			
	HCD			negative		
Females	ED2K				negative	
	HCD		positive	positive		

Conclusions and Discussions

This chapter confirms the significance of experience in explaining participation in online deliberation. It was found that both enjoyment and perceived disagreement in online deliberation can influence one's intention to participate in future discussions and the likelihood of dropping out. How the disempowered experienced online deliberation was further examined in detail. The results tell a different story than that in Chapter 4: Contrary to the expectation that the disempowered would be further disadvantaged in experiencing deliberation, all disempowered groups showed some favorable reactions to online deliberation and usually enjoyed the experience more, not less, than their peers.

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Content analyses indicate that the disempowered particularly valued the chances to express their own opinions, to listen to others' opinions, and to interact with other citizens on public issues. Although opinion expression and exposure are important dimensions of deliberation, the degree of diversity of those opinions and the diversity of opinion-holders is equally important, if not more, in the idea of deliberate opinions. However, the disempowered often enjoyed diversity of opinions and participants less so than did others. The failure for the disempowered to fully appreciate this important dimension (i.e., diversity) suggests that what they like most about deliberation do not perfectly match every dimension of the normative model of deliberation.

The most complex findings relate to younger citizens. Although they expressed their opinions more than older people during discussions, they did not enjoy the discussions as much as older participants. They liked the interaction in discussions more so than their elders but perceived more disagreement than did older participants. Future research should put emphasis on young citizens and how they perceive and engage in deliberate encounters.

Differences across the two projects were found. Females enjoyed HCD more than males, but not ED2K. Content analyses indicate that females in HCD were more attracted to exposure to others' opinions and the diversity of participants than were males. In contrast, females in ED2K were less likely to cite the diversity of opinions as something they liked than were males. Females might be more concerned by health care topics due to their roles in family and feel less interested by election topics. A follow-up analysis partially confirms this explanation (see Table A.1 and Table A.2 for detailed statistics).

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OLS regressions on the health discussion scale (Cronbach's *alpha* = .75; M = 6.35; SD = 5.56) and the attention to health news scale (Cronbach's *alpha* = .92; M = 3.44; SD = .89) demonstrate that after controlling for the four other demographic and the five control variables, females were more likely to discuss health issues and pay attention to health news than males. When including both scales in logistic regressions as the third block of predictors of favoring the diversity of participants in HCD, the coefficient of gender became non-significant. However, including the two scales in the model of favoring exposure to others' opinions in HCD did not dismiss the significant role of gender. The different findings in the two projects are thus partially due to the topics they covered.

CHAPTER 6: THE DISEMPOWERED AND INFLUENCE

After the examination of both attendance in and experience of online deliberation among the disempowered, the current chapter moves a step forward and asks how influence is achieved in online deliberation and whether the disempowered can influence others through discursive exchange of reasons. The questions raised are based on three threads of previous research: (1) the group-influence literatures, which suggest that the disempowered might not be able to influence others' opinions due to their inferior position in the discussion hierarchy in a group setting; (2) critiques of the Habermasian public sphere, which point out that rationality itself is a covariant of social economic status, and that a focus on argument-type of influence marginalizes the discursive practices that are amenable to the disempowered (e.g., story-telling); (3) digital inequality theories, which suggest that inequality that is observed at the access and the experience stage will be further carried into the usage of the Internet to achieve goals. Based on these theoretical projections, the disempowered are expected to have less influence than others. Influence in deliberation is assumed to be achieved through talking and arguing, considering that deliberation is by nature a communication procedure that highlights rationality.

Hypothesis 3: Disempowered group members are less likely than other group members to *talk* and to *argue* during online deliberation.

Method

Measurement of influence

Amount of talk is included as one indicator of influence given the idea that deliberation is by nature a communication procedure. Sheer talking is an important means of persuasion according to many communication theories. For instance, agenda-setting theory suggests that the sheer amount of coverage of certain topics in mass media changes the priorities that audiences assign to issues. In other words, the more certain topics are talked about in mass media, the more important audiences think they are. Group influence theory argues that dominance by a few group members can affect group decisions. Social learning theory, from another perspective, suggests that repetitive exposure to messages can reinforce one's attitudes and knowledge. The three examples of theories point out the importance of amount of talk as a means of potential influence. It is presumed that the more one talks, the more likely it is that one can persuade other group members.

Amount of talk. For the respondents who attended at least one discussion event, the number of words entered into each discussion was tallied electronically (only for substantive sections of the discussion, omitting casual interchanges at the beginning and ending of each event). A total word count was summed, for each participant, across all discussions events included in the analyses (ED2K: $M = 828.74$, $SD = 671.95$; HCD: $M = 766.83$, $SD = 583.75$).

Influence in general is a norm-free concept, but influence in deliberation emphasizes a type of communication that has to be rational or reason-centered. Empirically, we see various means of communicative influence, such as narratives, emotional appeals, or sheer repetitions. Normatively, deliberate influence has to build upon the exchange of arguments supported by reasons. Influence is achieved when participants are persuaded by better arguments. It has been a challenging task for scholars to come up with reliable and valid measures of arguments. Argument repertoire, derived from Kuhn's (1991) work, was developed by Cappella, Price & Nir (2002) in order to measure the quality of opinions. Kuhn's original framework differentiates three levels of argumentative complexity: Arguments, counterarguments, and refutations. It is important to count number of both arguments and counterarguments because counterarguments "suggest that people can envision the conditions that would falsify their explanations. This level of reasoning, especially if accompanied by genuine counterevidence, suggests a sophisticated knowledge of the topic well beyond that represented by reasons and evidence for one's own position." (Cappella, Price & Nir, 2002) The measure of number of arguments used in this chapter is different from argument repertoire in the fact that all arguments, not only those supported with relevant reasons, are counted. But the distinction between arguments and counterarguments is kept. The more arguments and counterarguments one can provide, the more likely it is that one can persuade other group members.

Number of arguments. Teams of one to three trained graduate and college students coded discussion transcripts into pro-arguments and con-arguments. In ED2K,

the average inter-coder reliability (*Kappa*) of both pro- and con-arguments is .79. The total number of arguments (ED2K: $M = 25.12$, $SD = 17.95$) is the sum of pro- (ED2K: $M = 10.58$, $SD = 8.21$) and con-arguments (ED2K: $M = 14.53$, $SD = 11.17$). These measures in HCD are only available in discussion 4. Pro-arguments (HCD D4: $M = 11.24$, $SD = 10.24$) and con-arguments (HCD D4: $M = 11.22$, $SD = 9.53$) are summed to get the total number of arguments (HCD D4: $M = 22.63$, $SD = 16.85$). In HCD, the average inter-coder reliability (Krippendorff's *alpha*) of pro-arguments is .67 and that of con-arguments is .66.

Analytical strategy

OLS regressions including the five variables that define the disempowered and a set of control variables were estimated to predict each of the influence measures.

Results

Table 6.1 presents regression findings for amount of talk and number of arguments. The first block of predictors contains the demographic variables and the second block of predictors contains the control variables. The first two columns show results of amount of talk, each representing findings from either ED2K or HCD. The second two columns include results for the total number of arguments (i.e., pro- and con-arguments), which contain one aggregated measure in ED2K and one individual measure in HCD. The third two columns present findings of the number of pro-arguments and the last two columns present con-arguments.

Table 6.1 shows that the unequal influence exists in social groups, according to participants' gender, education and racial identities. In both projects, discussants who have less education and who are non-Whites consistently speak less than people who have higher education and who are Whites. Results for the number of arguments in ED2K show that education and race are again two significant predictors of both total arguments and pro-arguments. People who have lower incomes were less likely to provide as many con-arguments as those who have higher incomes in ED2K. In HCD, females are consistently less likely to provide as many reasons as males and non-Whites score lower than Whites on the total number of arguments and the number of con-arguments. H4 is thus partially supported.

Table 6.1. *OLS regressions predicting amount of talk and number of arguments*

	Amount of talk		Number of total arguments		Number of pro-arguments		Number of con-arguments	
	ED2K total	HCD total	ED2K total	HCD D4	ED2K total	HCD D4	ED2K total	HCD D4
(Constant)	-133.046	214.761	-.231	11.916	-.622	9.671+	.391	2.245
Education	48.048**	23.774**	1.286**	.378	.572**	.067	.714**	.312
Male	-28.620	44.209	-.449	5.050*	.319	2.739+	-.769	2.312+
Age	1.258	-.502	.000	-.077	.001	-.031	.000	-.046
Income	.735	10.784	.021	.326	.002	.117	.019+	.210
Whites	236.959**	150.403*	4.760*	5.195+	2.397*	1.343	2.363+	3.852*
Married	-82.742	21.092	2.662	-.136	1.409	-.805	1.253	.669
Schedule flexibility	15.634	2.846+	.679+	.032	.179	.001	.499*	.034
Children under 18	22.686	32.305	-.487	1.689	.063	.657	-.551	1.031
Fulltime job	52.272	-30.318	-.143	-3.105	-.506	-2.241	.363	-.864
Student	-173.099	262.941	-1.949	6.508	-1.446	-.494	-.502	7.002+
N	644	557	571	254	571	254	571	254
R-Square	.06	.05	.05	.06	.04	.03	.05	.10

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 6.2 includes civic engagement variables as additional predictors for amount of talk and both civic engagement and amount of talk as additional predictors for number of arguments. The first two columns in this table show that after controlling for civic engagement, education is no longer a significant predictor of amount of talk. However, Whites still tended to talk more than did non-Whites. Argument repertoire and political knowledge are significant predictors of amount of talk across two projects. Political interest shows negative coefficients, although only the one in HCD is statistically significant. Both interpersonal trust and the political participation index show positive coefficients but again, only the ones in HCD are significant. In general, demographics continue to contribute to the model fits, although the contribution is small (no higher than .10). Further, a contrast was found between the two projects: Political psychology variables did not contribute much to the ED2K model fits and political behavior variables did not contribute much to the HCD model fits.

Table 6.2 shows that amount of talk is the primary predictor of number of arguments, which suggests that how many arguments one can provide depends on how much one talks. The significant coefficients for education and race disappear in ED2K. In HCD, education's effects became negative and two of them are marginally significant. People who have less education had higher total number of arguments and pro-arguments than did those who have better education, when amount of talk and civic engagement was controlled. Two other coefficients became significant in HCD: Older people provided more arguments than did younger people; Whites were more likely to provide counterarguments than non-Whites. Argument repertoire is a significant predictor of

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Table 6.2. *OLS regressions predicting number of arguments, controlling for amount of talk and civic engagement*

	Amount of talk		Number of total arguments		Number of pro arguments		Number of con-arguments	
	ED2K total	HCD total	ED2K total	HCD D4	ED2K total	HCD D4	ED2K total	HCD D4
(Constant)	104.443	131.816	4.406	-3.046	3.493	5.834	.913	-8.880+
Education	25.047	4.946	-.059	-.389+	-.057	-.313+	-.002	-.076
Male	-90.788+	41.642	.313	.351	.532	.528	-.219	-.177
Age	-.630	2.062	-.033	.090+	-.004	.053	-.028	.037
Income	.383	4.051	-.004	-.275	-.009	-.235	.005	-.040
Whites	134.866*	136.354*	.631	.639	.253	-1.458	.378	2.097+
Married	-90.248	18.213	3.761*	.720	1.920*	-.652	1.840	1.371
Schedule flexibility	8.862	-1.330	.490	.005	.096	.028	.393*	-.023
Children under 18	21.693	46.350	-.891	.821	-.122	.115	-.769+	.706
Fulltime job	26.346	6.450	-1.235	1.627	-.998	.137	-.236	1.490
Student	-230.237	94.277	-.895	5.610	-1.511	-1.553	.616	7.164*
R-square change	**.05*****	**.05****	**.03****	**.07+**	**.03***	**.03**	**.03****	**.11****
Argument repertoire	22.358***	26.422***	.380***	.274**	.166*	.290**	.214*	-.016
Political knowledge	440.504*	53.286+	-3.907	-.313	-.017	-.725	-3.890	.412
Political interest	-35.007	-120.863*	-.609	-1.111	-.544	-.858	-.064	-.253
Political efficacy	-36.342	21.964	.746	1.812**	.711*	.614	.034	1.198*
Interpersonal trust	70.607	157.448*	-.334	2.623+	-.337	.751	.003	1.871
Party-ideology index	-8.397	19.709**	-.257	.014	-.210*	.059	-.047	-.045
R-square change	**.01**	**.11*****	**.01**	**.22*****	**.01**	**.21*****	**.01**	**.12****
Political participation	5.039	31.625*	-1.243**	-.226	-.587**	-.250	-.657*	.025
Community activities	24.639	.533	.026	-.040	-.100	.182	.126	-.222
News exposure	1.304	-2.425	.222*	-.029	.066	.001	.155*	-.030
Political discussions (PD) frequency	-.279	4.584	.025	.294+	-.015	.203	.040	.091
PD perceived disagreement	-80.463*	--	.773	--	-.007	--	.780	--
PD directly-expressed opinions	39.922	--	.614	--	.136	--	.477	--
R-square change	**.07*****	**.01**	**.07*****	**.01**	**.07*****	**.02**	**.06****	**.01**
Amount of talk	--	--	.015***	.074***	.006***	.039***	.009***	.035***
R-square change	**--**	**--**	**.25*****	**.51*****	**.20*****	**.37*****	**.22*****	**.37*****
N	612	541	539	242	539	242	539	242
R-Square	.37	.41	.60	.90	.56	.79	.57	.78

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

number of arguments in most cases. The exception is that it fails to predict number of

con-arguments in HCD. The coefficients for political efficacy are consistently positive,

although only half of them show statistical significance. In ED2K, political participation

index was negatively correlated with all the number of arguments measures whereas

news exposure was positively correlated with most of the number of arguments measures.

R-square changes show that demographics slightly contribute to the variance of number

of arguments. The same contrast was found in argument analyses: Political psychology

variables did not contribute much to the ED2K model fits and political behavior variables

did not contribute much to the HCD model fits.

Conclusions and Discussions

Using the amount of talk and the number of arguments as measurements of

communicative influence in deliberation, it is found that the disempowered, again, were

disadvantaged at the influence stage. People with less education or lower income, those

who are non-Whites and females showed unfavorable patterns. The findings are mostly

consistent with those generated from self-reported measures of opinion expressions in

Chapter 5, except that females did not perceive themselves as less likely to express their

opinions than did males. However, when using civic engagement variables and amount of

talk as controls, the generally unfavorable pattern is revised. Coefficients became non-

significant in ED2K except that Whites still talked more than did non-Whites. In HCD,

while younger people and racial minorities still showed negative relationships with the

number of arguments, people with less education were found to provide more arguments than did people with better education. The findings pose challenges regarding the influence of the disempowered, considering that they do not talk quite as much as others do. However, it should be noted that in general, the effects are small even when significant.

In addition to the general results for the disempowered, it is found that differences exist between the two projects. Political psychology variables contributed only a very small portion to the model fits in ED2K (.01, ns) whereas the same variables accounted for 11 to 22 percent of the variance in HCD. In contrast, political behavior variables accounted for 6 or 7 percent of the variance in ED2K, but the same variables had a very small contribution to model fits (.01 or .02, ns) in HCD.

This chapter, along with chapters 4 and 5, compromises a full examination of the disempowered and their involvement in online deliberation. Chapter 4 confirms that despite the fact that both Internet access and equipment were provided to participants for free, a digital divide at the attendance stage still exists. Chapter 5, in contrast, shows that among those disempowered group members who participated, there were actually favorable reactions from them toward their experience of online deliberation. This chapter confirms that the disempowered tend to talk less and use fewer arguments, suggesting that they were less influential than others, assuming deliberation is defined as a persuasive communication procedure that relies mainly on exchanging arguments.

The following two chapters try to address the potential political consequences of these inequalities observed in chapters 4, 5, and 6. Chapter 7 addresses the relationship

between descriptive and opinion under-representation by comparing the observed findings with imputed findings. Chapter 8 simulates an ideal situation in which deliberation is inclusive, equal and argumentative and then compares opinion distributions obtained from this ideal simulation to those observed in post-discussion surveys.

CHAPTER 7: DESCRIPTIVE REPRESENTATION, OPINION REPRESENTATION, AND THE DISEMPOWERED

Participatory inequalities persisting in attending deliberation, as Chapter 4 suggests, call our attention to potential under-representation of the disempowered in deliberation practices. Under-representation is problematic because first, those who do not participate in politics risk having their interests under-represented in collective decisions; and secondly, they miss the opportunity to learn and practice citizenship, so critical to the political system and its sustainability.

However, both the political participation literature and deliberative democracy theories suggest that under-representation of disempowered groups does not necessarily lead to a collapse of the legitimacy of political decisions, such as those generated from deliberation. Political participation scholars sometimes argue that election results and policy outcomes would not be different even if all citizens equally participate in politics, because political activists adequately represent the whole population in terms of interests, opinions, and policy preferences. For their part, deliberative democracy theorists emphasize the openness and the fairness inherent in deliberative discussions, which guarantee that any opinions, no matter whether they are held by a majority or a minority, would be fully expressed and given full consideration when making decisions. The analyses in this chapter mainly address the first counter-argument. The second will be discussed in Chapter 8.

We can see that the debate centers on one question: Does descriptive under-representation necessarily lead to opinion under-representation? Scholars suggest that we

can examine political representation in at least two different aspects (Althaus, 2003:244):

Descriptive representation means that a sample accurately represents the demographic

characteristics of a population; *Opinion representation* refers to the case that

participants/respondents as a group are fairly representative of the opinions that the

population holds. Random sampling does not necessarily lead to a descriptively

representative sample because ordinary citizens might opt out deliberation due to the

burden of time, money, and ability. Chapter 4 has already demonstrated this point. The

present chapter, in contrast, examines whether the decision-making process incorporates

all kinds of opinions to an equal extent. In other words, under the condition that full

descriptive representation is not attained, is opinion representation adequate or not? One

hypothesis and one research question are proposed to examine opinion representation in

online deliberation.

Hypothesis 4: Demographics (i.e., education, income, age, gender, and race) can

influence opinions and policy preferences.

RQ2: Do pre-discussion imputed opinion distributions, estimating what would be

observed under full descriptive representation, differ from those among attendees and

actively-talking attendees?

This chapter starts with a discussion of representation and how it is studied in

public opinion research. In other words, how public opinion researchers see the problem

of representation through a methodological lens. After showing the connection between

theoretical and methodological concerns, the analytical strategy is described. The

analyses are used to empirically examine the relationship between descriptive and

opinion representation (from a theoretical perspective), or the relationship between

nonresponse rate and nonresponse bias (from a methodological perspective). This

strategy, combining multivariate regression and imputation, is used first to show the

causal relationships between demographics and opinion placements, and then to manifest

the possible consequences for collective opinion distributions. Research findings indicate

that descriptive under-representation in the current deliberation practices does lead to

interest under-representation in some of the measures, but not others.

Nonresponse and Representation

Representation is not only a theoretical but also a methodological concern. Since

the early stages of public opinion research, nonresponse has been identified as an

important threat to the degree to which our sample can represent the population we are

interested in (Smith, 2002: 27-28), both in descriptive and interest/opinion terms.

Nonresponse means that no information is gathered about the selected units either on the

entire survey or on items of interest (Dillman et al, 2002). Missing on the entire survey is

named as unit nonresponse while missing on particular items in the survey is called item

nonresponse. In survey research, unit nonresponse is often caused by noncontacts, sample

units that could not be reached; and noncooperation, units that refuse to participate in the

research (Dillman et al, 2002). Noncontact is not very much a concern here because the

sample used is a group of respondents who have been recruited into a survey panel. The

reasons for noncooperation are multi-faceted, including lack of resources, an

unsupportive environment, unmotivated respondents, uncomfortable interactions between

respondents and interviewers, and so on (Lavrakas, 1993). Item nonresponse often takes the form of missing values on particular items. In other words, while we have some information about the surveyed respondents, we are missing data for the variable of interest (Berinsky, 2004). Item nonresponse includes don't knows and other missing values for unspecified reasons. Opinion/policy preference variables nowadays increasingly involve don't know options in order to enhance the quality of measures (Berinsky, 2004).

Researchers have documented a trend of declining response rate over the years (Singer, 2006). However, the nonresponse rate becomes a concern only when it introduces error or bias into survey results. Groves (2006) argues that the nonresponse rate does not always lead to nonresponse bias. A key parameter determining the nexus between nonresponse rate and nonresponse bias is how strongly correlated the variable of interest is with response propensity, the likelihood of responding. Nonresponse bias in this dissertation is hypothesized based on a combination of Groves' (2006) two causality models of nonresponse bias. Figure 7.1 illustrates the theoretical model of nonresponse bias used in this dissertation. Y means the survey variable of interest in this dissertation, i.e. an opinion measure. P is the response propensity to answer the question Y. Z refers to a set of causes that influence both Y and P. The model shows three causal relationships: One is from Z to Y, one from Z to P, and the third from Y to P.

The Z$\rightarrow$P relationship exists because response propensity could be explained by individual resources: Socioeconomic status, gender, race, urbanicity, and children at home were found to have ubiquitous main effects on response propensity (Groves, 2006).

Previous research shows that these resource variables can affect opinion placements as well (e.g., Berinsky & Tucker, 2006), which means the Z→Y relationship is highly plausible. Therefore, response propensity correlates with opinion variables because they share a series of common causes Z, i.e., demographics. Bias would thus exist due to this common-cause covariance. On the other hand, response propensity might also be directly influenced by opinion placements, i.e., the Y→P relationship. Whether to express one's opinions depends on one's placement on that opinion measure. For example, anti-gay marriage opinion holders might choose not to answer the question about gay marriage favorability in order to avoid possible social sanction. Therefore, the covariance between response propensity and opinion variables can also come from a direct causal relation. However, nonrespondents' true opinions are not measurable and the causal relationship from Y to P is not testable in a study like the current one. It becomes necessary to use the partial model to guide the hypotheses testing and data analyses. Figure 7.2 only includes the possibility of common-cause covariance and tries to test this possibility by examining the causal relationship between Z and Y, and Z and P.

Figure 7.1. *The theoretical model of nonresponse bias*
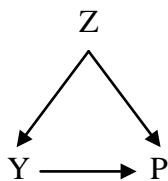
Z = A series of common causes
Y = The variable of interest
P = Response propensity

Figure 7.2. *The tested model of nonresponse bias*
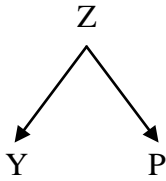
Z = A series of common causes
Y = The variable of interest
P = Response propensity

Integrating theoretical and methodological discussions, we can see that representation is crucial in either aspect. The claimed legitimacy of deliberation is undermined when representation is not adequate: Without enough descriptive representation, certain groups of people are excluded from the deliberation procedure. Furthermore, opinion representation becomes problematic when certain kinds of opinions are not fully articulated in deliberation. Methodologically, Chapter 4 shows that demographics are often related to descriptive representation. Specifically, certain disempowered groups are less likely to show up in deliberation compared to other groups. The analyses in this chapter address the problem of opinion (mis)representation: First, the significant relationship between demographics and opinion placements is manifested; secondly, political consequences of such misrepresentation is aligned by calculating the effects of nonresponse bias on collective opinion distributions.

Method

Measurements of opinions

A large number of opinions and policy preferences were analyzed – 43 in the ED2K project and 44 in the HCD project, and they can be grouped into several categories. The ED2K baseline surveys first asked for respondents' perceived problems facing the country. Policy preferences in ED2K referred to things that one thinks the federal government in Washington should do. ED2K baseline surveys also asked respondents how much either effort or money one thinks the federal government should put into addressing certain issues. Candidate evaluations were asked in ED2K and so were attitudes toward various social organizations and movements. HCD included a slightly different battery of problems facing the country. General policy preferences were measured as favoring or opposing the federal government putting into effort into certain activities, e.g., making it harder for a woman to get an abortion. Since HCD focused on health care reform, opinions and policy preferences specific to health issues were asked as well. This group of variables included the importance of certain issues for the President and Congress to address, perceived causes of high health care costs, government regulation regarding certain health issues, favoring or opposing certain proposals that are made to keep the Medicare program financially sound, satisfaction with the health care system, and the like. Tables A.3 and A.4 include the wordings of each of the 87 questions that were examined.

Multivariate regressions

Regressions were used to test the relationship between demographics and opinion placements. OLS regressions were run for continuous variables whereas logistic regressions were for dichotomous variables. In order to increase the model fits as much as possible, I also included all the variables that were available to everybody we contacted. **Number of children at home** is a continuous variable (ED2K: M = .29, SD = .78; HCD: M = .65, SD = 1.03). Whether one is **employed** (ED2K: 75% is; HCD: 74% is) and whether one is **retired** (ED2K: 5% is; HCD: 12% is) were coded as dummies. **Married** is available for everybody only in HCD (64% married) and so is **following government and public affairs** (50% said they followed most of the time). Similarly, whether one is a **student** is obtained from everybody only in ED2K (3%) and so are region (18% live in the **northeast**) and being **parents** (15%).

Imputation

All opinion and policy preference questions were recoded into dummies: "1" means supporting while "0" means non-supporting. Means of these variables thus refer to percentage of respondents who support certain opinions or policies. Imputations were done by running logistic regressions on these policy preference variables and saving predicted probabilities for everybody who was contacted to participate in the experimental section (ED2K: N = 2,327; HCD: N = 3,134). Then the means of the imputed opinions were taken and compared to those among attendees (ED2K: N = 599; HCD: N = 594), and actively-talking attendees (ED2K: N = 299; HCD: N = 297).

Actively-talking attendees are defined as attendees whose total amount of talk is higher than the median.

This imputation procedure involves some important assumptions that need to be clarified. First, it is assumed that cases are missing at random or nonresponse and the interested variables share common causes (see Figure 7.2). Therefore, other causality models of nonresponse bias (such as the Y$\rightarrow$P relationship described in Figure 7.1) are not considered here (see Groves, 2006 for a full range of models of nonresponse bias). Secondly, it is assumed that the common causes we identified in our imputation models are sufficient. In other words, the model specification is accurate in terms of explaining both nonresponse and the opinion measures. Otherwise we'll have selection bias, which means that the unobserved factors predicting nonresponse are correlated with the unobserved factors predicting opinion direction (Berinsky, 1999). Thirdly, it is assumed that nonrespondents and respondents share distributional properties on survey measures. Statistically, it means that the coefficients that generated from valid cases won't change much if, presumably, all sample units are used to calculate the statistics. Lastly, we assume that no essential differences in terms of the common causes exist between different types of nonresponses, such as unit vs. item nonresponses. The models we use should be efficient for all the sub-groups.

Results

Chapter 4 shows that demographics such as education, age, income, gender, and race have significant influences on the attendance variables even after controlling for the

variables about available time. The direction of effects is generally consistent: Education, age, income, and Whites are positively related to enrollment. Females, on the other hand, show a higher enrollment rate than males in HCD but have a lower rate in ED2K.

This chapter takes a step further and examine whether these demographic variables can significantly affect policy favorability. Table 7.1 is an example of the logistic regression models used to test such relationships. The table examines the support for putting more effort into restricting immigration, and the model includes the five demographic variables and other variables that are available for everybody as the predictors. The table shows that while people who have less education tend to support the statement more than people with better education, both females and younger people manifest a lower level of support than males and older people. Among all the 87 opinion measures that are included in the analyses, only one measure from HCD did not show any significant effects of any of the demographic variables. Hypothesis 4 is thus supported here. Now we have legitimate reasons to suspect that non-attendance changes the representation of opinion distributions because people with low response propensity hold different policy preferences compared to those with high propensity. However, the model fits of the models are far from perfect. R-squares of the 87 models range from .01 to .14. Seventy-two percent of the R-squares are equal to or lower than .05. The mean value of the R-squares is .04[2]. Also, the effects of demographic variables on opinions, even when significant, are often small in magnitude.

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[2] Eighty-one out of 87 (93%) of imputation models are significantly (p < .10) different from the restricted model.

Table 7.1. *Effects of disempowered status on policy favorability, an example from HCD*

How much effort do you think the federal government should put into restricting immigration to the US? (1 = more, 0 = same and less and nothing)	
	B
Constant	3.033***
Year of education	-.218***
Male	.187*
Age	.012**
Income	-.012
Married	.177+
Employed	-.029
Retired	.271
Number of kids at home	.037
Following governmental and public affairs	-.056
N	1,916
Cox & Snell R-square	.11

+ p <.10, * p <.05, ** p < .01, *** p <.001.

To better gauge the impact of these differences of opinions, imputations based on the same group of variables (demographics + other available variables) were conducted. Predicted probabilities were averaged among nonrespondents and compared to the means of observed values among attendees and actively-talking attendees. Table A.3 contains the 43 comparisons in ED2K and Table A.4 has the 44 comparisons in HCD. Tables A.3 and A.4 show that although imputed values are rarely identical with observed values, statistically significant differences occur only in roughly half of the opinion items that were examined. Specifically, 45 out of 87 opinion items demonstrate significant differences between the imputed values among nonrespondents and the observed values among attendees. Forty out of 87 opinions items show significant differences between the imputed nonrespondents and the observed actively-talking attendees.

Figures 7.1 and 7.2 summarize patterns that emerge from the significant differences reported in Table A.3 and A.4. Findings summarized here are those that show consistent patterns across the two projects, such as tax issues, social welfare, abortion, anti-terrorism, immigration, the federal budget, illegal drug use, stem cell research, and so on. Figure 7.3 contains the significant differences between the imputed opinions of nonrespondents and the measured opinions of attendees, including both ED2K and HCD; Figure 7.4 has the significant differences between the imputed opinions of nonrespondents and the measured opinions of actively-talking attendees, for both projects. Four charts are included in each of the figures, representing the four groups of issues. The X axes list policy issues. The Y axes refer to the differences in percentages of support listed in Table A.3 and A.4. Taking the first bar in Figure 7.3 as an example, taxes as a problem in ED2K shows a difference of 2 percent. This means that the proportion of nonrespondents who treat taxes as a problem is 2% higher than the proportion of attendees who do so.

Figure 7.3 shows that nonrespondents are consistently less favorable toward any policies that might increase their taxes, compared to attendees. At the same time, they are more concerned than attendees by social welfare issues such as income differences, unemployment and issues facing senior citizens. They hold generally less favorable attitudes toward abortion, anti-terrorism, and immigration, and are less attentive to illegal drug use and the federal budget deficit.

Figure 7.3. *Differences between the imputed opinions of nonrespondents and the measured opinions of attendees (% of support)*
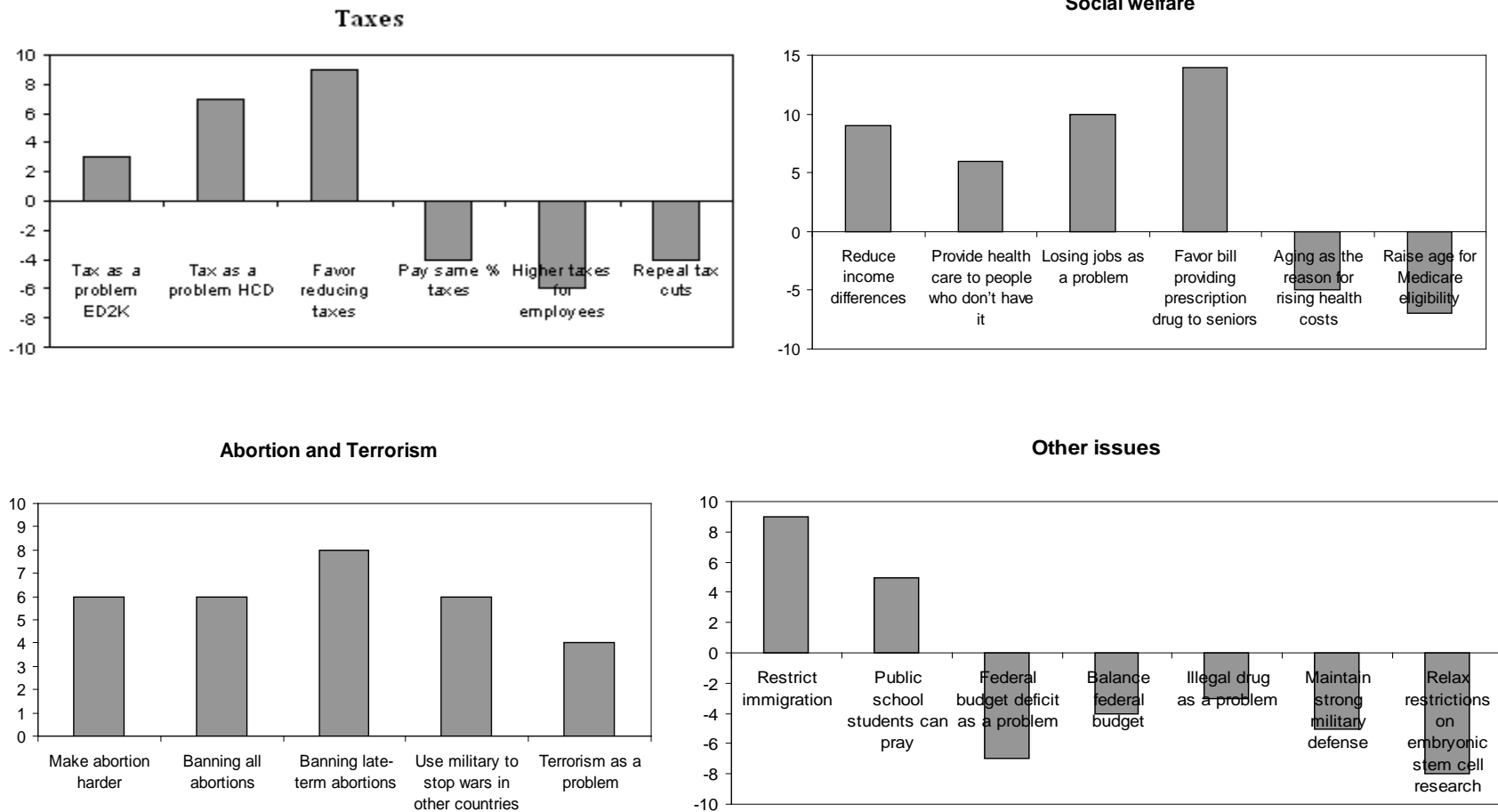

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Figure 7.4. *Differences between the imputed opinions of nonrespondents and the measured opinions of actively-talking attendees (% of support)*

Taxes

Social welfare

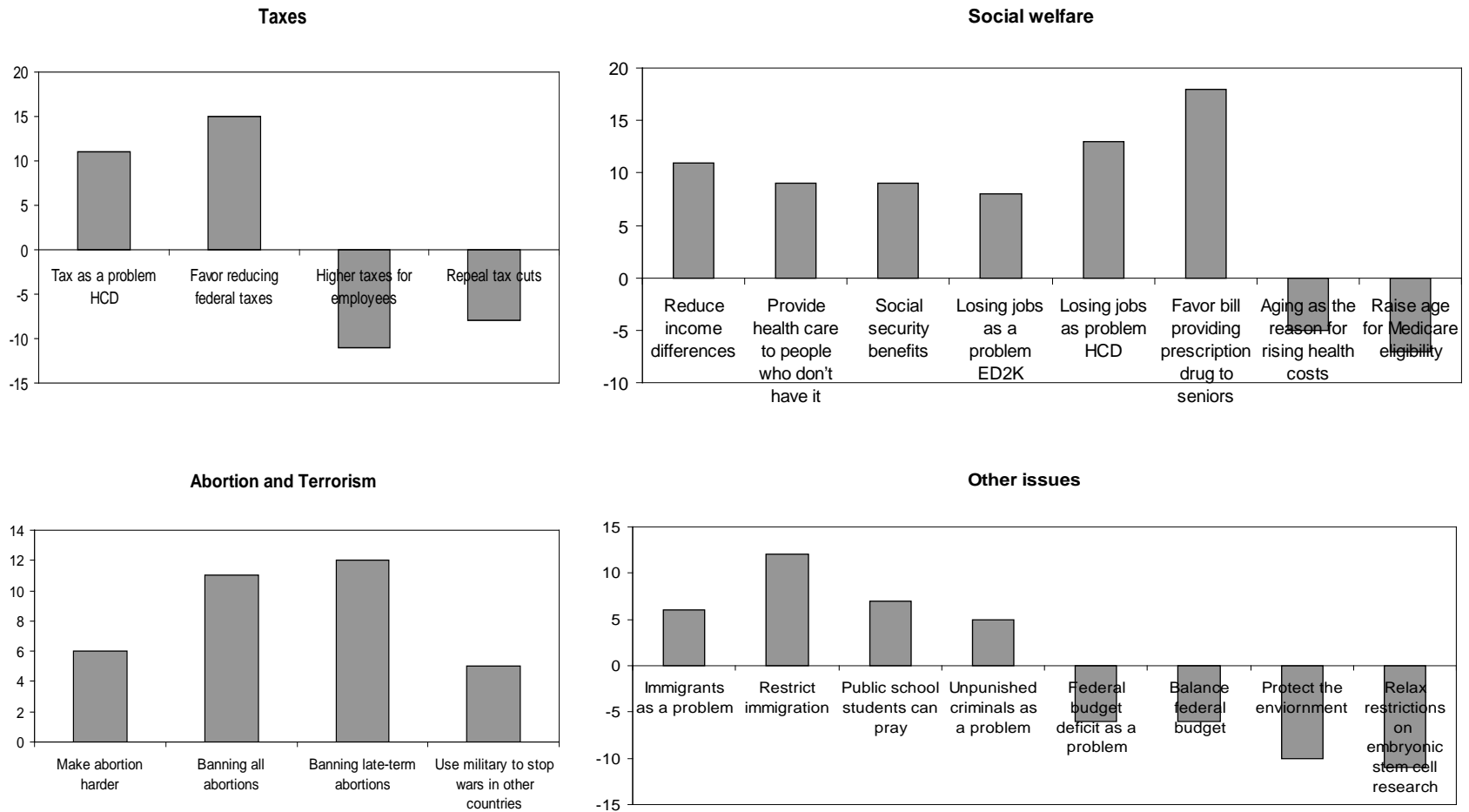**Abortion and Terrorism**

Other issues

Figure 7.4 shows results for actively-talking attendees. The pattern is generally consistent with that between imputed nonrespondents and observed attendees. Nonrepondents are more concerned by taxes and social welfare issues than actively-talking attendees. They hold more negative views on abortion and immigration than actively-talking attendees. Nonrespodents are less attentive to the federal budget deficit and environmental issues than actively-talking attendees.

Although significant differences are observed between nonrespondents and attendees/actively-talking attendees, whether the differences are important enough to change the collective distributions of policy preferences remains unknown. Table 7.2 reports the collective opinion distributions based on the observed values among actively-talking attendees, the observed values among all attendees, and the imputed values among all potential respondents. Please note that the imputed distribution in the last column is not the same as the imputed values in Figure 7.3 and 7.4 because the two figures only contain imputations for nonrespondents whereas the current table includes imputations for both respondents and nonrespondents. The table presents only the opinions exhibiting reversed majority support. In other words, the imputed opinion distributions show a reversal in which side of the issue enjoys majority support, when compared to the observed data.

Fifteen out of 87 opinion measures examined show reversed majority support in opinion distributions. Among these 15, 13 show a pattern where minority opinions in the measured distributions become majority opinions in the imputed distributions. Taking the

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Table 7.2. *Differences between the imputed and the observed collective opinion distributions (% of support)*

Projects	Opinion measures	Observed distribution among actively-talking attendees	Observed distribution among attendees	Imputed distribution of all potential respondents
ED2K	Number of Americans losing jobs to foreign competition is a serious problem in our country today	.49	.55	.56
	Federal government should make all Americans pay the same percentage of their income in taxes	.52	.53	.50
	Federal government should try to reduce the income differences between the rich and poor Americans	.43	.45	.53
	Federal government should spend more money in social security benefits	.48	.55	.56
	Federal government should spend more money in programs designed to reduce the flow of illegal drugs	.44	.52	.54
	George. W. Bush really cares about people like me	.47	.48	.50
	George. W. Bush is inspiring	.42	.45	.50
	George. W. Bush made me feel proud	.50	.49	.55
HCD	Number of Americans losing jobs to foreign competition is a serious problem in our country today	.50	.53	.62
	Federal government should put effort into restricting immigration to the US	.47	.50	.58
	Federal government can take actions on banning the late-term abortions	.49	.53	.60
	There should be more government regulation in the quality of doctors and hospitals	.50	.49	.55
	There should be more government regulation in the safety of prescription drugs	.37	.41	.51
	Favor the proposal to implement higher payroll taxes for employers in order to keep the Medicare program financially sound	.50	.49	.47
	Favor President Bush's Medicare bill which provides prescription drug coverage for senior citizens, etc	.46	.52	.64

opinion measure used in Table 7.1 as an example, imputed opinions indicate that about 58% of imputed all *potential* respondents favored putting more effort into restricting immigration to the US and in contrast, whereas 50% of attendees favored and only 46% of actively-talking attendees did so. The other two of the 15 meaningful discrepancies show a pattern where majority opinions in the measured distributions become minority opinions in the imputed distributions. For instance, imputed opinion shows that 47% favored implementing higher payroll taxes for employers in order to keep the Medicare program financially sound for the future. The percentage increases to 49% among attendees and to 50% among actively-talking attendees.

Generally speaking, both ED2K and HCD show that the majority opinions would shift to supporting many social welfare policies and opposing some tax policies if all potential respondents expressed their opinions. In ED2K, favorable evaluations of George W. Bush would have become the majority opinions were all potential respondents included. In HCD, majority opinion would have supported many government regulations on health care issues if had full descriptive representation been achieved. The imputations confirm that, at least on some of the opinion measures, nonresponse biases have consequential effects. Estimates of the collective opinion distributions are especially under threat when nonresponse biases occur in measuring those opinions which divide closely. For example, in a tight election such as the presidential race in 2000, opinion measures might not be able to catch the slim majority support for Bush at the time.

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Conclusions and Discussions

The representation issue discussed extensively in both political participation and public opinion literatures is applicable to deliberation studies. Chapter 4 shows that, descriptively, the often under-represented sub-populations (such as people who have less education) are also under-represented in the deliberation projects examined here. The findings are interpreted as lack of necessary resources to support engaging in deliberation. For example, rational-critical discussions are the focus in deliberation; thus, the ability to argue, which is correlated with years of education, plays a crucial role in affecting people's decisions to join in deliberation. In addition, previous findings that opinions are influenced by demographics are replicated in this chapter, and Hypothesis 4 is thus supported. People in different social positions have different concerns and opinions. The identified common predictors of both response propensity and opinion placements introduce potential biases into the survey results. In other words, disempowered social groups are less likely to be involved in deliberation and at the same time, they hold different opinions than other group members.

It has to be noted that the discrepancies are not ubiquitous. Indeed half of the opinion measures do not suffer from nonresponse bias, and among those that do, the differences are subtle. Still, when the imputed values differ from the observed values among attendees, it suggests that opinions are disproportionately brought into the deliberation procedure. In other words, misrepresented opinion distributions due to non-attendance emerge even before the deliberation procedure actually starts. The differences are also evident between the imputed values and the observed values among actively-

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talking attendees. In a political institution which puts discursive arguments or articulation of reasons in the center, the loud voice disagreeing with the potentially representative voice is problematic. It means that inequality might be further reinforced during the deliberation procedure through differentiated rates of participation.

The degree of precision of the imputation findings is limited by both the assumptions underlying imputation analyses and the available datasets. Therefore, rather than treating the imputed values as accurate descriptions of opinion distributions in the population, it is appropriate to consider them as demonstrating a trend. The trend, as discussed above, is that non-attendance and low participation rate can influence estimates of opinion distributions, which places deliberation under the threat of misrepresentation of citizens' opinions.

Although under-representation at the attendance stage is problematic, it can be attributed to the unequal distribution of resources, which is the barrier that almost every single political activity has to face and thus has no special relevance to deliberation. What is still unknown is whether online deliberation itself – namely, its focus on reason-giving – would further discriminate against the disempowered. Does the relatively weak influence that the disempowered exert (see Chapter 6) undercut the legitimacy of collective decision-making? Chapter 8 addresses this question.

CHAPTER 8: POLTICAL CONSEQUENCES OF IMPERFECT
DELIBERATIONS

This last chapter of data analysis builds upon all the previous chapters. Whereas chapters 4, 5, and 6 respectively address the attendance, the experience, and the possible influence of disempowered groups in deliberation, Chapter 7 answered one of the two important counter-arguments regarding the lack of political consequences of under-representation of the disempowered in deliberation. It shows that although the disempowered are under-represented in deliberation descriptively, their opinions are only under-represented in some occasions and not in others. The current chapter tries to examine a second counter-argument, which is that an open, fair and reason-centered procedure of deliberation can successfully incorporate any minority opinions into collective decisions and give them full consideration regardless of their lack of representation. If this is the case, it is expected that opinions observed after discussions should match opinions obtained from an ideal deliberation, in spite of the unequal attendance and influence we've seen in previous chapters.

In order to test whether the deliberation practices reach the criteria of an ideal communication procedure, simulation modeling was used to create a situation in which (1) all people who were invited actually attended the discussions and (2) all people equally expressed their opinions and supported their opinions with reasons. By comparing the observed outcomes with these simulation results, we can see how far the final product is from an ideally inclusive and egalitarian procedure of deliberation. In addition, the analyses are able to suggest which component of the deliberative procedure, i.e.,

openness or fairness, has the stronger effect on the final opinion results. One research question is used to summarize the purpose of the analyses.

RQ3: Do post-discussion simulated opinion distributions differ from opinion distributions actually observed?

Simulation modeling is the principal methodology employed in this chapter. It is different from the imputation method used in Chapter 7, because simulation allows artificial manipulation of independent variables and generates predictions based on such manipulation. In contrast, imputation analyses simply impute missing values based on cases we have, leaving the distributions of independent variables unchanged. After introducing this method in detail, the research findings can be interpreted with a clear knowledge of limitations.

Deliberation as an Idealized Communication Procedure

Deliberation is a communication procedure that is open, fair, and reason-centered. Obviously, most of our day-to-day communication does not fit these criteria. Taking discursive participation as the example, everyday political talk between family members and friends is not open enough to include diverse opinions; call-in radio discussions are open but not always reason-centered, along with a dominant role of the host; opinion polls may be open (if the randomness of samples is achieved), fair (when questions make the same sense to every respondent), but not necessarily reason-centered (because respondents do not have to appeal to their rationality to give an answer).

Deliberation practices are confronted by the complex social conditions in which they have to operate. These social conditions, such as structural inequalities and passive citizenship, might render practices unable to fulfill the ideal of deliberative communication. An open procedure might not be able to lead to universal participation due to the lack of resource or ability to support such participation. Giving participants equal opportunity to voice their opinions does not necessarily mean that everyone will take the chance, because there exist various motivation and resource concerns. Although rationality is central to deliberation, the questions that are supposed to elicit reasonable arguments do not always obtain rational responses. Personal tangents and emotional expressions also appear in deliberate discussions. The persistence of realistic social conditions raises a doubt about the deliberation practices: Are the results of deliberation legitimate when the procedure does not fit the ideal perfectly?

Empirical examination can help us to answer this question by comparing the results of deliberative practices to those which might have been generated in an idealized situation, namely, a fully inclusive and absolutely fair procedure. By the aid of simulation modeling, the consequences of an idealized procedure can be simulated. Through the comparison between what is observed and what is simulated, differences can be seen and judgment regarding the legitimacy of deliberate decisions can be made. The following section presents an introduction to the simulation modeling method, including both its strengths and its limitations.

Simulation Modeling[3]

Simulation here refers to the methodology of creating an artificial representation of a real world system in order to manipulate and explore the properties of that system (Pepinsky, 2005). Simulation as a methodology has not been fully recognized in communication research. The majority of simulation studies we can see in communication research are actually either computer or statistical simulations, which are distinct from the modeling method discussed here. However, simulation actually fits the need of communication research and opens up the possibility of predicting complicated communication trends. Compared to other disciplines of social sciences, communication research studies communication actions, such as those by mass media, those going on between individuals, or those in organizations. Communication actions, as Habermas defined (1984: 95), are those actions through which "speakers and hearers, out of the context of their preinterpreted lifeworld, refer simultaneously to things in the objective, social and subjective worlds in order to negotiate common definitions of the situation." How we communicate with each other can have an impact on how we act collectively. However, communicative actions, like all other actions, are constrained by the conditions from which they emerge and within which they function. Not all modes of communicative actions can be readily observed and analyzed in the reality. Simulation methods provide us a tool that can test even the most idealist modes of communication and their influence.

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[3] Please see Appendix 7 for a detailed description of the concept of simulation and its usage as a methodology.

The fundamental question that simulation modeling tries to answer could be described as – *What if*? What if group members interact with each other in a perfectly fair situation? Challenges about the preciseness of these answers are always legitimate because simulation is highly constrained by the modeling assumptions. However, a significant strength of simulation is that everything is open to adjustment. For example, if one thinks that group members should not be equally talkative and rather randomly eloquent, we can definitely change the distribution of the amount of talk variable and then simulate the products. What might be more fruitful is to first determine which products we want to see first and then go back to change possible functioning variables. If we want to see a consensus among group members, we can change either the demographic composition of groups, or the communicative procedure, or the initial opinion distributions. We can compare all these possible controls and choose those that are most promising in current situations as guidelines for intervention.

Simulation shares with imputation of a set of important assumptions (see Chapter 7). In addition to the assumptions of data missing at random, accurate model specification, and accurate coefficients, simulation assumes that changing the distributions of certain predictor variables (i.e. amount of talk and number of arguments) does not change their relationships with other variables in the model. Specifically, both the coefficients and the distributions of other variables remain the same, despite the fact that the distributions of particular variables in concern have been altered.

Method

Following the logic discussed above, simulations in this chapter went through steps that are very similar to those used by Althaus (2003). In the first step, all opinion and policy preference questions were recoded into dummies: "1" means supporting while "0" means not supporting. Surveyed post-discussion opinions were regressed on the demographic variables, along with one influence variable (either amount of talk or number of arguments), the pre-discussion measure corresponding to the dependent variable (missing values were imputed), and additional variables used in imputation models in Chapter 7. Table 8.1 is an example of the logistic regressions used to test whether the influence variables significantly affect post-discussion opinions. The model predicts the perceived importance of expanding the size of government in weighting policy proposals. The table shows that after controlling for the pre-discussion measure, demographics and the other variables available to everybody, the number of arguments a person made in the discussion is a significant predictor of one's belief that expanding the size of government would be important. These regression models show that the influence variables sometimes predict individual level post-discussion opinions (Amount of talk: 4 out of 30 ED2K measures and 3 out of 15 HCD measures; Number of reasons: 2 out of 30 ED2K measures and 3 out of 15 HCD measures). They provide support for the expectation that simulation findings might be different from observed findings. In addition, by estimating the relationships between post-discussion opinions and each of the predictors, this step provided a set of regression coefficients that can be used to simulate each person's post-discussion opinions. These coefficients were used to model

the probability that a particular individual would choose certain response alternatives to questions posed after discussions. Similar to the imputation models reported earlier, the simulation models often have modest model fits, ranging from .02 to .14. Thirty-eight percent of the model fits were equal to or lower than .05. The mean model fit is .07[4].

Table 8.1. *Effects of the influence variables on policy favorability, an example from HCD*

Post-D4 Which one of the following would you say is the most important consideration to you personally as you weigh these policy proposals? (1=more than moderately important, 0 = less than moderately important): Whether it expands the size of government	
	B
Constant	-18.508
Pre-D4 same measure imputed	25.180
Year of education	.418
Male	-1.190
Age	-.030
Income	-.031
Married	.358
Employed	.816
Retired	-1.995
Number of kids at home	.100
Following governmental and public affairs	-.286
D4 number of arguments	-.016*
N	255
Cox & Snell R-Square	.05

+ p <.10, * p <.05, ** p < .01, *** p <.001.

After obtaining the coefficients for each predictor, the second step, the key step of simulation modeling, was taken. In this second stage, the *what if* question emerges: What if we change the distributive pattern of the influence variables? Which kind of

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[4] Fifty-nine out of 90 simulation models (66%) are significantly (p < .10) different from the restricted model.

consequences would we see in terms of post-discussion collective opinion distributions? Alternatively, the question could be posed this way: If we want to change the collective distributions of certain opinions, which deliberation component should we focus on? Inclusion or equalization?

This second step opens up many possible manipulations of communication procedure. This chapter examines three possibilities (see Table 8.2): First, the *openness-inclusion* scenario includes every potential participant in the deliberation regardless of their different backgrounds, assigns these potential participants the mean values of influence variables, and examines the difference between the simulated all's and the simulated attendees' opinions. Secondly, the *fairness-equalization* scenario relies on actual attendees, but uses the means of influence variables rather than the observed values for each attendee who did voice his or her opinions and compares the simulated attendees' opinions to those actually observed. Thirdly, the *integrated* scenario includes every potential participant, gives them an equal value of influence (means), and compares the simulated all's to the observed attendees' opinions.

In each of these scenarios, step two involves changing each potential respondent's score on amount of talk or number of arguments to the mean value by either replacing (if measured values are available) or imputing (if measured values are not available). Each potential respondent's predicted opinions are calculated by plugging the coefficient values obtained from step one into the new models, substituting only the new values of the altered amount of talk or number of arguments variable. This step produces, for each individual, a new set of probabilities for each response alternative that simulate the

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opinions every person might report, were she or he to talk or argue at a mean level. This step relies on the 45 regression models (30 in ED2K and 15 in HCD) obtained in the first step and uses 270 simulation comparisons (45 opinion measures * 2 influence variables * 3 scenarios) to exhibit the differences between simulated opinions and observed opinions.

Table 8.2. *Theoretical models to compare simulated and comparison opinions*

	Simulated Opinions	**Comparison Opinions**
Openness-Inclusion	• Everybody • Mean imputation of influence variables for everybody	• Attendees only • Mean imputation of influence variables for attendees
Fairness-Equalization	• Attendees only • Mean imputation of influence variables for attendees	• Attendees only • Observed values for attendees
Integrated-Scenario	• Everybody • Mean imputation of influence variables for everybody	• Attendees only • Observed values for attendees

The final step aggregates all of the individual simulated opinions together, including those of people who originally were missing of the responses and those who did not attend the discussions, by taking the mean of the individual probabilities for each of the alternative responses. These average probabilities, which represent collective post-discussion opinions controlling for individual differences in either amount of talk or number of arguments, will be then compared to the actual percentage supporting certain policies to reveal the differences. Statistical tests of significance of these differences are not applicable here, because simulated data involve alteration of the distributions of the predictor variables. The intent is to compare changes across a large set of opinion measures to identify some general tendencies.

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Results

Table A.5 and A.6 present the observed findings and the simulation findings. Table A.5 includes the 30 end-of-project opinions measured in ED2K, whereas Table A.6 has the 15 post-Discussion-4 opinions measured in HCD. HCD measures only involve Discussion 4 because arguments data are only available for Discussion 4. Both appendixes show the details of opinion measures that are used in the comparisons, along with the observed findings among attendees. In general, 50 (22 in HCD and 28 in ED2K) out of 270 (45 opinion measures * 2 influence variables * 3 scenarios) comparisons do not show any differences. Comparisons under different scenarios differ from one another.

Figures 8.1 to 8.6 summarize those opinion changes that are equal to or higher than 5% reported in Table A.5 and A.6. Different issue opinions are arranged along the X axes, while the Y axes plot the changes in percentages of support. Positive values indicate increases in support in the simulated opinions as against the comparison opinions, while negative values indicate decreases in support. Bars in light grey are changes based on the simulations using number of arguments and bars in heavy grey are changes based on the simulations using amount of talk. Taking the first set of bars in Figure 8.1 as an example, support for making abortion harder to obtain shows a difference of 5 in both the heavy grey bar and the light grey bar. This means that the proportion of support for making abortion harder would be 5% higher if we have included all potential participants in the discussions.

Openness-inclusion. Figures 8.1 and 8.2 show the differences between the simulated opinion distributions among attendees and the simulated opinion distributions

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in an ideal scenario in which everybody we contacted actually attended the discussions. In both simulated opinion distributions, subjects either talked or argued at a mean level of amount. In ED2K, 10 out of 30 opinion measures examined show changes, for at least one version of the scenario, that are equal to or higher than 5%. The changes preferentially go toward more governmental interventions, such as spending more money on health care or social security, and toward more conservative views on social issues, such as making abortion harder or making public school students pray. Some of the changes are as high as 10%. For instance, if we had all our potential participants join the discussions and be typically active, we would see that at the end of ED2K, more than half of participants (53% based on amount of talk and 55% based on number of arguments) would favor the government actions on making sure that public school students can pray as part of the official school activity, compared to a minority support (41% based on talk and 42% based on arguments) among attendees. Despite somewhat socially conservative tilt, when it comes to evaluations of presidential candidates, there is a consistent pattern showing that if we could gather full attendance, we would see significant decreases in Bush's evaluations after discussions. One of the evaluation items, viewing Bush as honest, would decrease as much as 10 percent (10% based on amount of talk and 11% based on number of arguments). In contrast, Gore's evaluation on two items, being honest and making the respondent feel enthusiastic, would increase about 8%.

In HCD, opinion measures are mainly confined to health-related policies. Here, only 1 out of 15 measures show a change of preference that is equal to or higher than 5%. If we had all our potential participants join the discussions and be typically active, we

would see that at the end of HCD, the total percent of people who considered tax increases as important when evaluating health policies would increase about 5% (5% based on talk and 6% based on arguments).

Figure 8.1. *The openness-inclusion scenario, policy preferences*
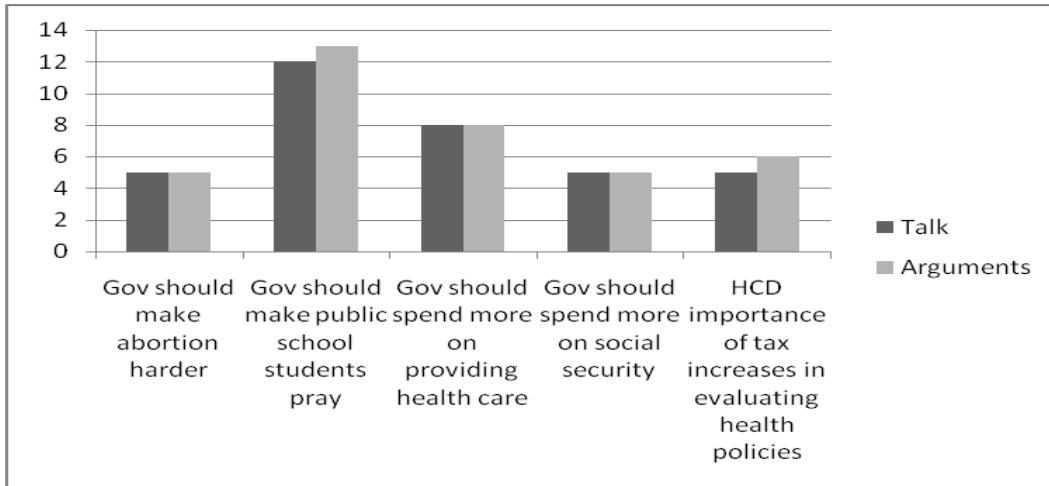
Figure 8.2. *The openness-inclusion scenario, candidate evaluation*
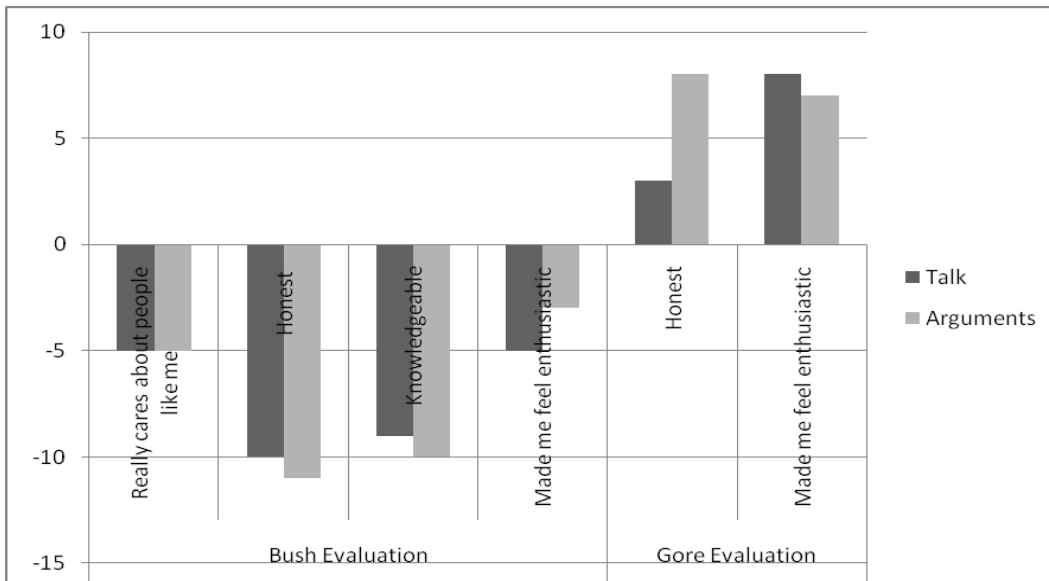
Fairness-equalization. Figures 8.3 shows the differences between the observed opinion distributions and the simulated opinion distributions in a second scenario, in which everybody who actually attended our discussions were equally active—either spoke an equal amount of words or provided an equal number of arguments. This scenario only produced a few changes in opinion distributions. Two out of 30 ED2K measures and 2 out of 15 HCD measures show differences that are equal to or higher than 5%. The patterns generally mirror those obtained in the first scenario. The ED2K measures show an increased positive evaluation on Gore and the HCD measures show an increased preference on limiting drug manufacturing costs and perceived importance of tax increases in drugs policy making after discussions.

Figure 8.3. *The fairness-equalization scenario*
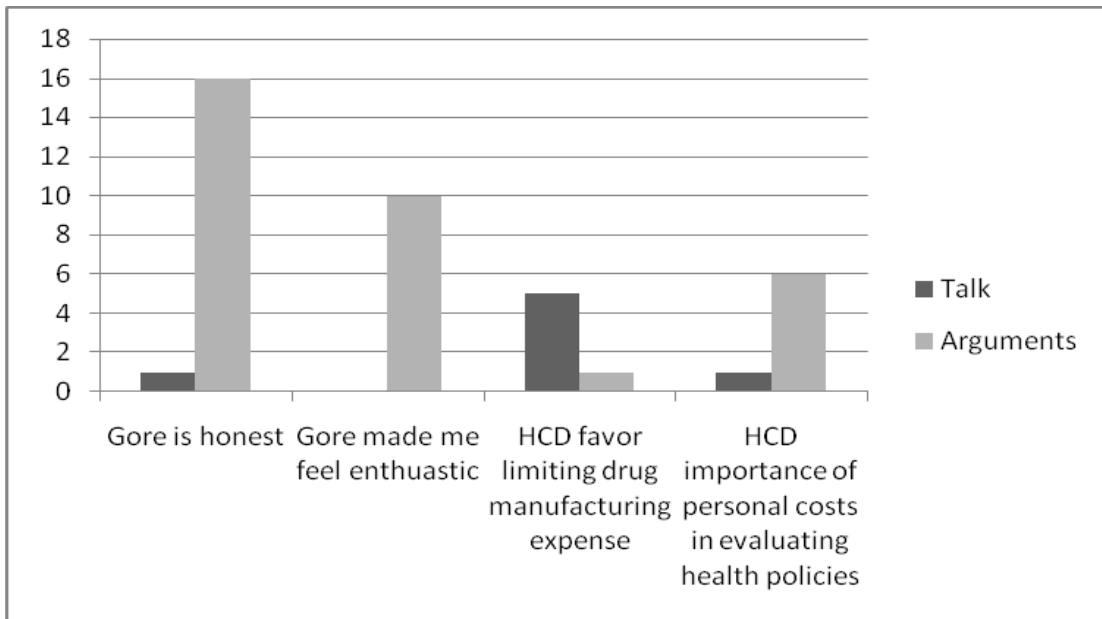
Integrated scenario. An integrated scenario that combines the two scenarios discussed above shows a general effect that takes account of the influences of each scenario (see Figures 8.4, 8.5 and 8.6). As a result, 13 out of 30 ED2K measures and 4 out of 15 HCD measures show changes that are equal to or higher than 5%. Consistent with the openness-inclusion scenario, the changes preferentially go toward more governmental interventions and toward more conservative views on social issues. In terms of health policies estimated in HCD, the changes show the increases in considering government size, personal cost, and tax increases as important. The changes in candidate evaluations, again, are consistent with previous scenarios. Favorable evaluations of Bush would go lower and favorable evaluations of Gore would go higher. Some opinion distributions, such as viewing Gore as honest and feeling enthusiastic about Gore, would increase at an exceptionally high rate (more than 15%).

Figure 8.4. *The integrated scenario, policy preferences in ED2K*
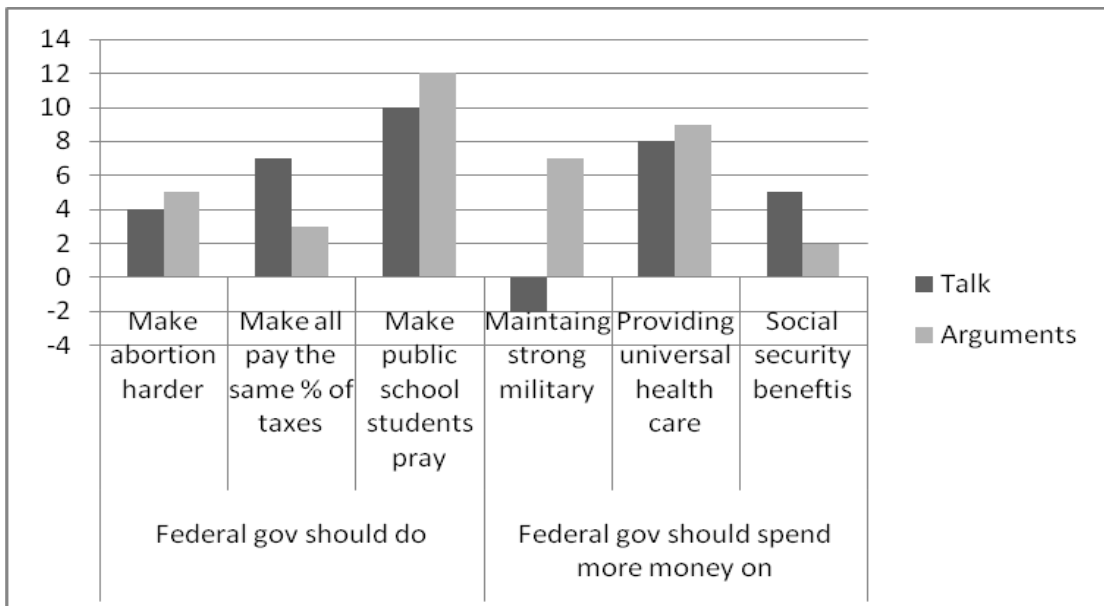
Figure 8.5. *The integrated scenario, policy preferences in HCD*
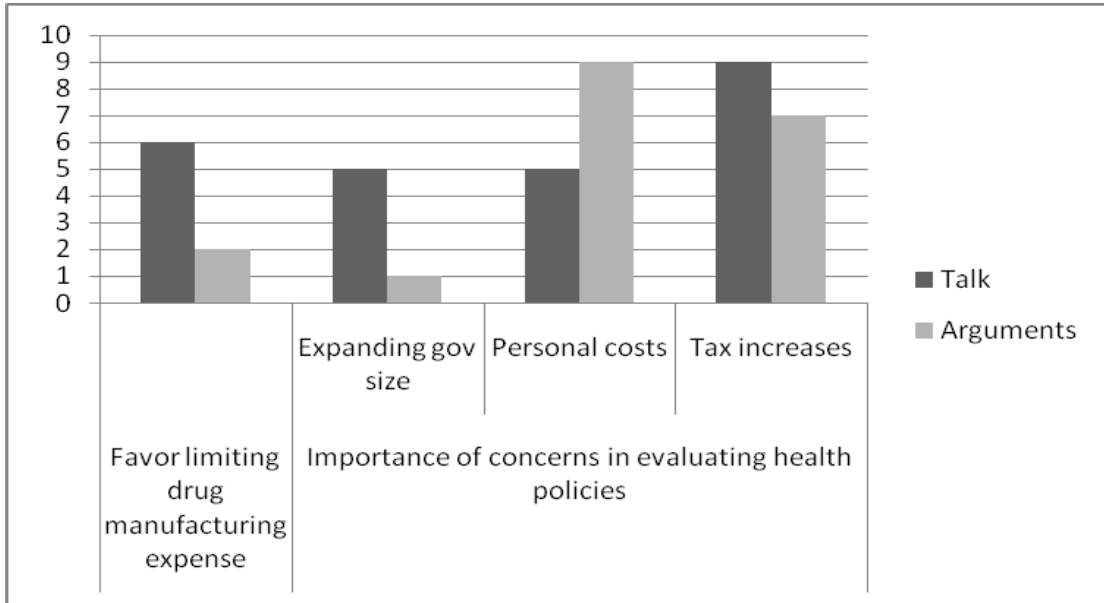
Figure 8.6. *The integrated scenario, candidate evaluation*
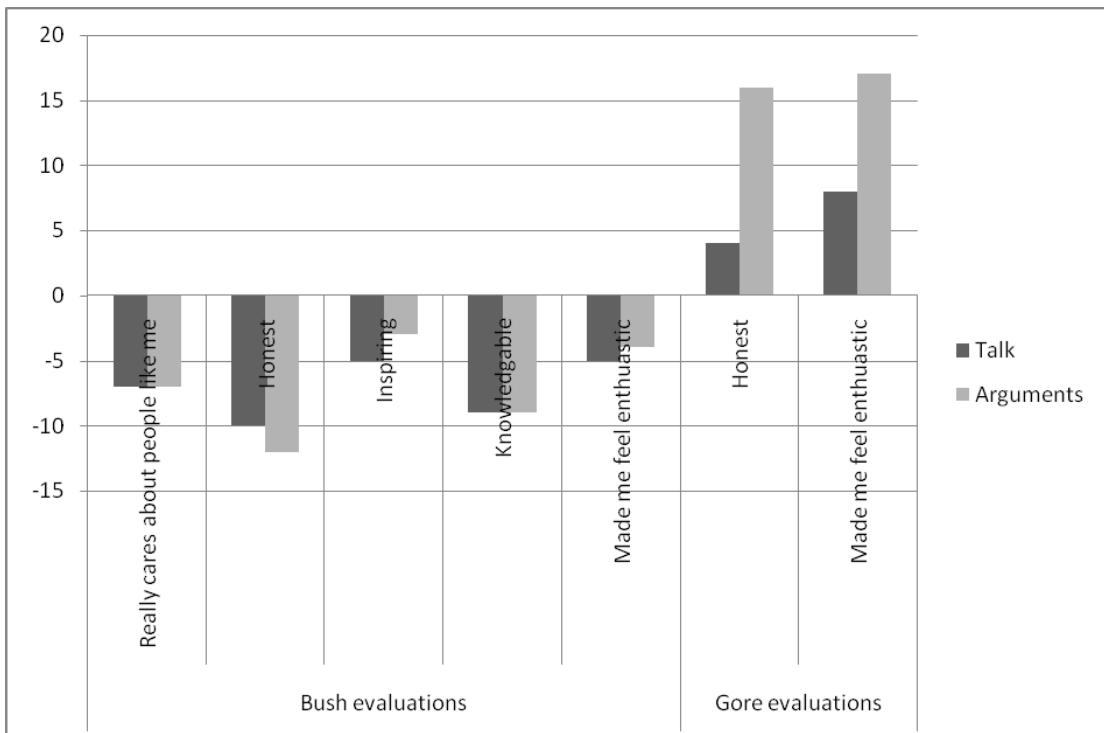
Talk vs. Arguments. The last comparison is between simulations based on amount of talk vs. number of arguments. People who are most talkative do not necessarily have to be the most argumentative. Although amount of talk is often correlated with number of arguments (ED2K total Pearson correlation = .57, p < .001; HCD D4 Pearson correlation = .88, p < .001) and thus most of time the simulation findings based on the two influence variables are consistent in directions, we can see some interesting instances in which different influence variables influence outcomes in different directions. One example is found in the integrated scenario when people answer whether they think federal government should spend more money on maintaining strong military (see Figure 8.4): If we look at the simulation based on amount of talk, we find that about 7% *more* people would have supported the policy had everyone attended the discussions and used the mean number of words. In contrast, if we set the number of arguments at the mean value for all, 2% *fewer* people would have thought so. A contrast like this is rare; but in most cases, simulations based on talk and arguments are not identical.

Conclusions and Discussions

Simulation findings suggest that 81% of comparisons show differences and 19% of them show differences that are equal to or higher than 5%. In other words, if our deliberation practices were able to reach a normally ideal situation in which deliberation is fully inclusive and absolutely equal, we would see opinion results that are different from those observed. This general finding introduces a potential threat to the legitimacy of deliberate decision-making in the real world, because unequal attendance and

influence in deliberation have political consequences. If realistic constraints prevent practices from being ideally deliberate, how much should we rely on decisions that are generated from deliberation to inform policy-making? The suggestion would be that we should treat deliberation findings as only one indicator of deliberate opinions, subject to various errors. Therefore, when we try to utilize deliberation findings to inform policy-making, we should always make clear the sources of these errors (e.g., representation of participants) and the potential size of these errors.

The comparison analyses separate the impact from each of the two components of deliberation: namely, openness and fairness. Both of them have relatively modest influences on final opinion changes. Equalization, unexpectedly, has almost no influence on most opinion measures. It suggests that making everybody produce the same amount of words or the same number of arguments does not necessarily change opinion distributions. We might conclude that the opinion results from the two deliberation projects would not be much different were the attendees equally argumentative. The significant changes that inclusion makes, again, suggest that descriptive under-representation of the disempowered has consequences, though they are modest. In addition to the opinion under-representation at the beginning of deliberation, findings from this chapter show that descriptive under-representation can sometimes threaten the representation of opinions measured *after* deliberation.

The last finding is regarding the discrepancy between predictions based on talk vs. arguments. The discrepancy only occasionally exists, which suggests that the effect of the amount of talk is often the same as the effect of the number of arguments. It seems that in

the current deliberation practices, when people talk more, they often argue more. However, the few instances of large differences suggest that talk and argument do not always lead opinions toward the same conclusion. The explanation might be that in these instances, people do not necessarily argue more when they talk more. They might spend their eloquence on emotional expression or personal tangents, which are supposed to function differently in influencing opinion distributions. Whether this interpretation is correct is unclear, however, and cannot be resolved with the data at hand.

All the findings above should be interpreted along with the awareness of the limitations of the simulation modeling method. The accuracy of the opinion changes predicted by the simulation models is limited by the explanatory power of the models (i.e., the model fits). Most of the simulation models in this chapter have R-square values that are low to modest in size. This is mainly because there are only a few predictor variables available for analyses. We should expect that as the number of predictors increase, we will see better model fits. A second methodological issue that is worth mentioning is that the two influence variables, amount of talk (15% significant) and number of arguments (11% significant), are not always significant when used to predict individual-level post-discussion opinions. However, results are presented at the collective-level, and thus, those opinion changes that are equal to or higher than 5% do not necessarily mean that the two influence variables significantly predict individual opinions in those models. On the other hand, if we have significant influence variables at the individual level, it is certain that collective-opinion changes are relatively large ($> = 5\%$). A third issue is that, in order to control for pre-discussion opinions, imputed pre-discussion opinion variables

were used in the models because many cases are missing on pre-discussion measures as well. This kind of two-step modeling (the first is to impute pre-discussion opinions based on demographics and other variables, and the second is to simulate post-discussion opinions based on demographics and other variables) introduces more uncertainty into the final findings. However, since the conclusions are all about general patterns rather than specific changes, the tolerance of inaccuracy is relatively high in this set of analyses.

In summary, simulation modeling in this chapter helps to provide some general predictions regarding the consequences of an imperfect deliberation. To answer research question 3, the simulated opinion distributions do differ from the observed opinion distributions. An ideal deliberation does probably generate collective opinions that are different from the ones observed. The relatively more significant findings in the openness-inclusion scenario suggest that future deliberation practices should address the issues of unequal attendance. However, the lack of consequences of fairness-equalization implies that unequal influence might not be as harmful as we might expect.

CHAPTER 9: GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

The disempowered perform differently from others in online deliberation. The data generally support the hypothesis that the disempowered are less likely than others to attend online deliberation and to influence through talking and arguing. These findings are consistent with previous studies on political participation and the digital divide. They also confirm the critiques of deliberative democracy, which state that procedural rationality alone cannot solve the problem of possible injustice in deliberation. The data, however, generally reject the hypothesis that the disempowered have less favorable experience with online deliberation than do others.

Unequal attendance and influence bear significant political consequences at a collective level. Imputations of pre-discussion opinion distributions support the conclusion that descriptive under-representation of the disempowered leads to opinion under-representation in about half of the opinion measures examined. Simulations of an ideal deliberation show that more than two thirds of observed opinion distributions examined would have been different if our deliberation practices fulfilled complete inclusion and absolute equalization.

Critical assessment, however, is needed in order to make sure bias or confounding does not account for the findings. Limitations of the datasets, shortcomings in measurements, lack of explanatory power, and validity of assumptions of the analytical strategies (i.e., imputation and simulation) should all be considered.

Limitations

The two projects (namely, Electronic Dialogue 2000 and Health Care Dialogue) were conducted in an online chat-room, rather than in a face-to-face situation. Some of the findings can be attributed to the online nature of the deliberation practices. Respondents listed technological problems as the primary reason for non-attendance, accounting for 28% of the total number of reasons. Technological problems would not be prevalent if face-to-face political discussions are considered. Diversity of opinions and participants were listed as one of the five most mentioned reasons of enjoying online deliberation. Diversity is often hard to achieve in face-to-face situations, in which discussants share close social relations. Future research, nevertheless, should examine the disempowered and their performance in face-to-face deliberations in order to test the generalizations of the results found here.

Another shortcoming of this dissertation is the operation of influence measures. Rather than measuring actual effects such as opinion changes, *potential* influence was instead assessed by counting words and arguments. The focus on talk as the means of influence is legitimate considering that online deliberations involve minimal information other than what one "says" (actually, types). Tallying arguments, however, might be an inadequate measurement of rational influence. First, any arguments were counted no matter whether they were supported by relevant or irrelevant reasons. Thus, this measure is weaker in tapping into the concept of rational influence compared to other measures, such as argument repertoire (Cappella, Price, & Nir, 2002). Secondly, counting numbers

of arguments has little to do with the quality of these arguments. It does not distinguish arguments supported by true or false evidence. As a result, the influence measures should be considered more as prompts of potential influence in deliberation than as indicators of rationality. Developing reliable and valid measures of rational influence is definitely a challenge to researchers.

Although demographics consistently show significant effects on the attendance, experience, and influence variables, they rarely provide sufficient explanation of the variance. Most of the model fits are lower than .10 and even the highest model fit does not exceed .20. This suggests that a large part of the variance in most variables examined here remains unexplained, and many significant predictors have not yet been discovered. Therefore, it can be concluded that demographic variables do matter, but they might not be the most important factors shaping online deliberation. However, this dissertation mainly focuses on testing the significant roles of demographics. Discovering a theoretical model that can explain most of the variance is, at best, a periphery concern.

The assumptions of imputation and simulation analyses introduce cautions when interpreting the collective-level findings. The first assumption of data missing at random excludes the possibility that where respondents place themselves on an opinion measure influences their propensity to answer the opinion question. This assumption has to be made because the datasets contain no data to support an analysis. The second assumption is that model specification is accurate or selection bias does not exist[5]. Although model fits are far from perfect, the accuracy of model specification might not be undermined by

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[5] An initial test of selection bias was operated by the following steps: (1) run logistic regressions on response propensity and save the residues; (2) run logistic regressions on opinion placements and save the residues; (3) run correlation analyses of the two sets of residues. All of the correlations are not significant.

the lack of explanatory power. As long as the undiscovered predictors of nonresponse are not correlated with the undiscovered predictors of opinion placement, the model specification could be considered accurate. The third assumption presumes that nonrespondents and respondents share distributional properties. The relationships between the predictor and the predicted variables are not essentially different among nonrespondents compared to respondents. An additional assumption of simulation states that changing distributions of certain predictor variables does not influence the relationships between other predictor variables and the predicted variables. These assumptions introduce uncertainties into the precision of individual imputed or simulated outcomes. This dissertation tries to reduce the uncertainties through (1) summarizing trends rather than interpreting individual findings, and (2) setting criteria for inclusion in the summaries. Imputation summaries include only those changes that reach statistical significance and show consistent patterns across the two projects. Statistical tests are not applicable in simulations and thus, simulation summaries include changes that are equal to or higher than 5%. Future research should try to test the validity of these assumptions if data permit.

Lastly, a large number of statistical tests were conducted throughout this dissertation. The danger in doing many tests is that one will, simply by chance, obtain a significant result (Type I errors). However, considering that the analysis was replicated in two different datasets and that only general patterns are interpreted, this possibility is greatly reduced.

These limitations aside, this project has a number of key strengths. First, the dissertation employed nationally representative samples to evaluate the disempowered and their performance in online deliberation. The findings are thus applicable to the population at large. Furthermore, the dissertation utilized many methodologies in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the disempowered and online deliberation. Specifically, survey analyses confirmed the significant relationships between demographics and the attendance, experience, and influence variables. Content analyses of follow-up open-ended questions clarified the paths through which demographics influence deliberation. Imputation and simulation provided collective-level analyses to illustrate the political consequences of individual-level inequalities. In addition, the breadth of both the projects and the measures allowed for analysis of the disempowered in different contexts and with multiple indicators. Instead of results pertaining to a single study, these findings documented patterns that consistently emerge from two large-scale projects. Instead of relying on a single measure, this dissertation included multiple measures to examine the hypotheses and to answer the research questions. For instance, a total of 87 opinion measures were examined in the imputation chapter.

Deliberation as a Political Institution

Gutmann and Thompson (2004: 43) claim that deliberative democracy is "less directly tied to the existing distribution of power, and therefore has the potential to challenge it." Similarly, theorists (e.g., Benhabib, 1996) argue that the primary advantage of deliberation is that it produces more legitimate governance than alternatives.

Aggregate mechanisms such as voting and polling advantage the majority no matter how irrational their opinions might be. Bargaining mechanisms such as interest groups take private interests as they are and promote the maximization of those interests without sincerely considering others' interests. Rational decision-making among elites is often problematic because citizens might not grant elitist decisions' legitimacy if they do not understand the conflicting interests that need to be accommodated. Furthermore, whether elites can fully represent collective interests becomes problematic if the interests themselves are not fixed and are open to revision when deliberation is available. Deliberation as a political institution is considered by proponents as superior to other institutions because it can empower the disenfranchised, enlighten private interests, and represent the enlightened interests directly.

Empowerment of the disenfranchised. An open, just and reason-centered procedure is no guarantee that the disenfranchised are empowered. Empirical findings show that disenfranchised groups were still less likely than others to be included even if opportunities were extended to them. When they were included, in addition, the disenfranchised were less likely to attempt to influence, through talking and arguing, than were others. However, the disempowered did tend to rate deliberation more favorably than others. Deliberation still appears to be tied to the unequal distribution of power, then, but shows the promise of empowerment if the entry barriers can be surpassed.

Enlightenment of private interests. An open, just and reason-centered procedure is no guarantee that deliberation generates quality opinions. This is so because deliberation practices are not ideal. Openness is not equal to complete inclusion; fairness does not

automatically lead to equalization; and reason-giving does not necessarily mean rationality. Although the data did not allow direct tests of the quality of opinions, simulations of an ideal deliberation indicated that these scenarios produced opinion distributions different from those actually observed, despite the fact that both projects studied were open (using probability sampling), fair (within online constraints), and encouraged reasonable give-and-take.

Direct representation of interests. An open, just and reason-centered procedure is no guarantee that deliberation is descriptively representative. *Descriptive representation* is treated as a representation in demographic terms in this dissertation. Random sampling does not necessarily lead to a representative sample because deliberation imposes a heavy burden of time and ability on ordinary citizens. The findings confirm that descriptive representation in deliberation is not adequate because the disempowered were disproportionably under-represented. As political participation scholars have pointed out (e.g., Bennett, 2006), descriptive under-representation has symbolic meanings for the part of the public that is under-represented. Still, it does not overthrow the legitimacy of collective decisions so long as the decision-making process incorporates all kinds of opinions. Such an argument leads to the examination of opinion representation.

An open, just and reason-centered procedure is no guarantee that deliberation results in adequate opinion representation. *Opinion representation* refers to a representation of different opinions held by the whole cross-section of public. This dissertation found that certain opinions were less likely to be introduced into the deliberations due to the under-representation of their holders. Furthermore, certain

opinions were less likely to be expressed and argued for in deliberation because the disempowered did not have as much influence as others. Opinion representation is thus under threat due to two facts: first, the opinions expressed differed from the opinions not expressed; and secondly, the active voice differed from the passive voice.

The empirical evidence, questioning deliberative democracy's potential to transcend structural inequalities, has important implications. The political system in the United States is often considered as dependent on both governmental and civil institutions (Zukin, et al., 2006). Deliberation among citizens can inform decision-makers in local, state and federal governments about various perspectives and encourage creative solutions. Thus deliberation, similar to public opinion polling, could function as an important input which informs governmental decisions. However, we should be very careful if we want to give deliberation the priority in the decision-making system. Deliberation, just like polls, is merely one way to provide information about the people and their interests. Whether the information gathered via deliberation is "true" or "false," "good" or "bad," needs to be investigated rather than being assumed. Deliberation can tell us what people think when they are exposed to a broad range of opinions and forced to back up their own opinions with reasons. There is no guarantee, however, that people will form quality opinions afterward. Therefore, the extent to which suggestions made through deliberation should be taken as solutions needs to be thoroughly scrutinized, with respect to descriptive representation, opinion representation, and the performance of the disempowered.

Deliberation could be considered as a form of political participation when it provides citizens another mode to engage in the institutions of civil society. Empirical findings suggest that, on the one hand, deliberation shares with other forms of political participation the same set of demographic predictors; on the other hand, conventional political psychology and behavior predictors work poorly in explaining deliberation. The failure of political engagement predictors suggests that deliberation is dissimilar to other forms of political participation. In deliberation, citizenship is practiced through discourse rather than action, through reasonable rather than emotional discourse, and through discourse made in a heterogeneous rather than a homogeneous setting. However, these differences do not mean that deliberation is always superior to other forms of political participation. Deliberation has its own limitations. It is demanding of resources, especially the time and the ability to argue, rendering deliberation harder to conduct than participation modes such as voting. Deliberation also has a special need for facilitators and their appropriate participation, to achieve procedural fairness. Locating good facilitators and determining the proper manner of facilitation introduces further difficulties when practicing deliberation. Deliberation involves the unpleasant experience of being challenged and even offended, which is less a problem in participation modes such as political talk between instant social contacts. All these features determine that deliberation will not be either an easy or frequent activity among citizens.

Treating deliberation as either a way to elicit public opinion or a form of political participation allows us to take a realistic view of deliberative democracy. The claimed superiority of the legitimacy of deliberative democracy is not fully supported by

empirical evidence. Instead, the data show that deliberation might be best treated as one of the multiple avenues that are accessible for citizens to get involved in political decision-making, or to policy-makers seeking to be informed about public opinion. How different avenues contribute to or limit the practice of certain aspects of citizenship should be examined rather than being assumed. How deliberation provides similar or dissimilar representation of public opinion compared to other opinion expression mechanisms needs to be explored in future studies.

This dissertation also provides some suggestions regarding deliberative practices. The fundamental limitation of structural inequalities does not mean that all deliberative practices are equally valid. The challenge of deliberation's normative status does not deny its usefulness under certain circumstances. What this dissertation found is that the very first step of deliberation (i.e. including all parties that are affected) is critical. Random sampling, financial compensation and free information might not be enough to mobilize the disempowered to become involved in deliberation. An intentional over-sampling of certain groups (e.g., single mothers in discussions of health care reform) might be necessary, especially when the topics to be discussed address broad interests. If descriptive representation is out of reach and perhaps even when it is attained, extra efforts should be made during the deliberative process in order to avoid further under-representation of opinions of the disempowered. Giving everyone an equal opportunity to talk is not enough to achieve opinion representation, and facilitators need to purposely elicit diverse opinions. When all these efforts are too much to achieve, given limited conditions, practitioners at least can make the problems explicit. They can report both the

descriptive and the opinion representation of their deliberative body so that political decision-makers and the wider public can treat its suggestions appropriately.

In addition, this study suggests that the experience with deliberation is an important predictor of future intention and later behaviors. New practices should be experimented with in order to improve experience with deliberation, especially that of the disempowered. For example, the HCD project employed a design which allowed ordinary citizens to exchange opinions within themselves first and then mixed citizens with experts. Similarly, instead of directly confronting the disempowered and the empowered, deliberation can be initiated within the disempowered, introducing disagreements through facilitators and allowing both rational and emotional reactions to those disagreements. After a thorough discussion/expression within the rather homogeneous body, a mixed group is set up for a further exchange of reasons. People can go back to their homogeneous groups to re-discuss their interests after being exposed to more diverse opinions. Such practices constitute a circle of communication across differently empowered groups in a stratified society without silencing the disempowered.

This dissertation, as one of the attempts to empirically examine practices that are guided by principles of deliberative democracy, offers two main messages. First, deliberation practices are subject to structural inequalities as much as, if not more than, the other modes of political practices. Future deliberation practices have to recognize these inequalities and try to address them through structural arrangements. Secondly, deliberative democracy has to be evaluated along with other ideas of democracy such as participatory democracy. The political system is a web of institutions and actions that

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have to be considered within particular contexts. Deliberative democracy should be treated as a parallel to other components in this system rather than a superior component to others. This view opens up an area of research that examines the relationships between deliberation and other mechanisms of political decision-making.

APPENDIX

Table A.1. *Regressions predicting health discussion and attention to health news (HCD)*

	Health Discussion	Attention to Health News
(Constant)	-3.542***	1.606***
Education	.346***	.057***
Male	-1.468***	-.090*
Age	.068	.019***
Income	.060	-.002
Whites	-.440	-.071
Married	.543+	.051
Schedule flexibility	.026**	.005***
Children under 18	-.085	-.019
Fulltime job	1.386***	.102*
Student	1.341+	.035
N	1,802	1,816
R-Square	.11	.17

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Table A.2. *Logistic regressions predicting exposure to others' opinions and diversity of participants (HCD)*

	Exposure to others' opinions		Diversity of Participants	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
(Constant)	.426	.718	-2.565**	-2.605***
Education	-.062+	-.051	.105*	.097*
Male	-.390*	-.451*	-.446+	-.401
Age	.001	.004	-.005	-.007
Income	-.003	.001	-.020	-.024
Whites	.097	.066	.225	.251
Married	.111	.144	.082	.061
Schedule flexibility	-.003	.000	-.004	-.005
Children under 18	.120	.113	-.176	-.170
Fulltime job	.146	.216	.068	.024
Student	-.074	.039	-.571	-.632
Health discussion		-.040*		.024
Attention to health news		-.055		.056
N	539	539	539	539
R-Square	.02	.03	.02	.02

+p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

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Table A.3. *Differences between the imputed opinions of nonrespondents and the measured opinions of attendees and actively-talking attendees (ED2K)*

	Nonrespondents imputed (N = 1,700)	Attendees measured (N = 599)	Differences	Active-talking Attendees measured (N = 297)	Differences
How much a problem do you think each of the following is in our country today (1 = serious problem and extremely serious, 0 = not so serious and not a problem at all)?					
Amount of poverty in the United States	.81	.80	.01	.78	.03
Number of criminals who are not punished	.83	.81	.02	.78	.05*
Amount of money Americans pay in taxes	.73	.70	.03+	.69	.04
Amount of illegal drug use	.85	.88	-.03**	.86	-.01
Number of Americans losing jobs to foreign competition	.67	.64	.03	.59	.08**
Number of immigrants coming into the US	.55	.55	.00	.49	.06**
Number of people who cant afford health insurance	.89	.89	.00	.87	.02
Please check which of the following you think the federal government in Washington should do (percentage who checked)					
Give tax credits of vouchers to help parents send their children to private schools	.37	.37	.00	.39	-.02
Limit the amount of money that can be given to political parties	.76	.76	.00	.75	.01
Make it harder for a woman to get an abortion	.32	.26	.06**	.26	.06*
Make all Americans pay the same percentage of their income in taxes	.49	.53	-.04*	.52	-.03
Make sure public school students can pray as part of some official school activity	.46	.41	.05*	.39	.07*

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Try to reduce the income differences between rich and poor Americans	.54	.45	.09***	.43	.11***
Use American military forces to stop civil wars in other countries	.12	.06	.06***	.07	.05**

How much effort do you think the federal government should put into each of the following? (1=Do nothing at all and, 0 = should do more and)

Trying to stop discrimination against homosexuals	.31	.32	-.01	.30	.01
Eliminating many of the regulations that businesses have to follow	.38	.35	.03	.35	.03
Restricting the kinds of guns that people can buy	.60	.62	-.02	.62	-.02
Protecting patients rights in the health care system	.77	.80	-.03+	.78	-.01

How much money do you think the federal government should spend on each of the following? (1 = no money at all and , 0 = spend more money and)

Maintaining a strong military defense	.44	.49	-.05**	.47	-.03
Providing health care for people who don't have it	.72	.66	.06**	.63	.09**
Social Security benefits	.57	.55	.02	.48	.09**
Programs designed to reduce the flow of illegal drugs	.54	.52	.02	.44	.10**

How well does each of the following traits describe George W. Bush? (1 = very well and , 0 =)

Really cares about people like me	.51	.48	.03	.47	.04
Honest	.57	.59	-.02	.60	-.03
Inspiring	.51	.45	.06**	.42	.09**
Knowledgeable	.70	.62	.08***	.63	.07*

How well does each of the following traits describe Al Gore?

Really cares about people like me	.48	.46	.02	.42	.06*
Honest	.48	.49	-.01	.47	.01
Inspiring	.39	.29	.10***	.26	.13***

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Knowledgeable	.72	.73	-.01	.71	.01
Has George W. Bush, because of something he said or did, ever made you feel					
Proud	.56	.49	.07**	.50	.06*
Anxious	.57	.57	.00	.59	-.02
Enthusiastic	.55	.51	.04+	.51	.04
Worried	.57	.60	-.03	.60	-.03
Has Al Gore, because of something he said or did, ever made you feel					
Proud	.46	.43	.03+	.40	.06*
Anxious	.56	.53	.03	.56	.00
Enthusiastic	.45	.42	.03+	.42	.03
Worried	.63	.62	.01	.65	-.02
For each…favorable or unfavorable using a scale from 0 to 100					
Labor unions	56	52	4**	51	5**
Large corporations	53	54	-1	53	0
The feminist movement	49	47	2*	48	1
Homosexuals	38	35	3*	37	1
Christian fundamentalists	42	41	1	40	2

+ p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Note: Each of the second and third columns present the imputed opinions among nonrespondents and the measured opinions among attendees. The differences are listed in the fourth column. The differences were calculated by subtracting the percent of support among attendees from the percent of support among nonrespondents. Positive values mean that nonrespondents generally support the issue more than attendees whereas negative values mean that nonrespondents generally support the issue less than attendees. For instance, -5 means that the proportion of nonrespondents who support the issue is 5% lower than the proportion of attendees who support the issue. These differences were submitted to t-tests to see whether they are significant. The fifth column presents the measured opinions among active-talking attendees. The differences between these opinions and the imputed opinions are listed in the last column, calculated in the same way derived above, and submitted to significance tests.

Table A.4. *Differences between the imputed opinions of nonrespondents and the measured opinions of attendees and actively-talking attendees (HCD)*

	Question nonrespondents imputed (N = 2,380)	Question respondents measured (N = 585)	Differences	Active-talking respondents measured (N = 297)	Differences
How serious a problem do you think each of the following is in our country today? (1= not serious at all and not too serious and somewhat serious, 5 = most and very serious)					
Amount of money Americans pay in taxes	.46	.39	.07**	.35	.11***
The federal budget deficit	.58	.65	-.07**	.64	-.06+
Number of Americans losing jobs to foreign competition	.63	.53	.10***	.50	.13***
Number of people who cant afford health insurance	.82	.80	.02	.81	.01
Threat of terrorism in the US	.76	.72	.04*	.74	.02
Financial soundness of the Social Security system	.73	.71	.02	.73	.00
Financial soundness of the Medicare system	.70	.69	.01	.73	-.03
How much effort do you think the federal government should put into each of the following? (1 = more, 0 = same and less and nothing)					
Protecting the environment	.53	.56	-.03	.63	-.10**
Balancing the federal budget	.70	.74	-.04*	.76	-.06*
Controlling the rising cost of health insurance	.85	.83	.02	.84	.01
Restricting immigration to the US	.59	.50	.09***	.47	.12***
Following are some actions that federal government in Washington can take on a variety of issues. For each, please tell us whether you favor or oppose the federal government doing it					
Reducing federal taxes	.81	.72	.09***	.66	.15***
Banning all abortions	.33	.27	.06**	.22	.11***

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Banning the late-term abortion	.61	.53	.08***	.49	.12***
Relaxing restrictions on federal funding of embryonic stem cell research	.65	.73	-.08***	.76	-.11***

A number of factors have been suggested as possible reasons for rising health care costs. For each of the following, please indicate how important you think it is in causing higher health care costs (1 = very and somewhat important, 0 = not very and not at all important)

Expenditures on research and development of new drug	.80	.79	.01	.79	.01
Use of expensive, high-technology medical equipment	.83	.84	-.01	.83	.00
People with health insurance having no incentive to	.57	.56	.01	.54	.03
The number of medical malpractice lawsuits	.85	.83	.02	.82	.03
Expenditures on advertising by drug companies	.77	.82	-.05**	.84	-.07***
The aging of the population	.83	.88	-.05**	.88	-.05***
Salaries for doctors	.71	.66	.05*	.62	.09***
Profits by drug companies	.88	.90	-.02*	.91	-.03*

Some people say that competition in the market place will do a better job of keeping health care costs down, while others say that government regulation will do a better job of controlling costs. Which do you think, in most circumstances, would do a better job?

1 = Regulation by the federal government	.56	.54	.02	.57	-.01

Please tell us if you think there should be more or less government regulation in each of the following areas (1=much and somewhat more, 0 = same and somewhat and much less)

The cost of health insurance	.79	.76	.03*	.76	.03
The cost of prescription drugs (see Note 2)	.79	.75	.04*	.76	.03
HMOs and managed care	.69	.64	.05*	.66	.03
The quality of doctors and hospitals	.56	.49	.07**	.50	.06+

The safety of prescription medicines.	.52	.41	.11***	.37	.15***

Do you think it is the responsibility of the federal government to make sure that all Americans have health insurance coverage, or is that not the responsibility of the federal government?

1 = Yes, it is the federal government's responsibility	.67	.65	.02	.68	-.01

In general, who do you think is best suited to providing health insurance benefits?

1 = The government	.52	.50	.02	.53	-.01

Do you favor or oppose a universal, single-payer system of national health insurance, paid for by the federal government (that is, a publicly financed, but privately delivered heath care system)?

1 = favor strongly and somewhat	.71	.68	.03	.70	.01

A number of proposals have been made to keep the Medicare program financially sound for the future. Please indicate whether you would favor or oppose the following proposals (1 = favor strongly and somewhat, 0 = oppose strongly and somewhat).

Implement higher payroll taxes for employers	.47	.49	-.02	.50	-.03
Implement higher payroll taxes for employees	.25	.31	-.06**	.36	-.11***
Expand enrollment in private care options (see Note 2)	.65	.71	-.06**	.72	-.07***
Shift to a system of premiums for supplemental medical insurance	.66	.65	.01	.67	-.01
Shift generally to a need-based program	.56	.55	.01	.56	.00
Raise age requirements for Medicare eligibility	.31	.38	-.07**	.38	-.07*
Repeal the Bush Administration's recent tax cuts	.50	.54	-.04*	.58	-.08**

President Bush has signed a Medicare bill which provides prescription drug coverage for senior citizens. It also allows private companies to provide some Medicare services. From what you have heard or read, do you favor or oppose

this bill?

1 = favor strongly and somewhat	.66	.52	.14***	.48	.18***

Some have argued that our present system of medical records is outdated and puts patients at risk. They have proposed a national system of computerized medical records to improve the ability of providers to diagnose efficiently and properly treat patient

1 = favor strongly and somewhat	.56	.59	-.03	.62	-.06*

Some have proposed a law that would cap non-economic damages - that is, damages for pain and suffering - to $250,000 in jury awards in medical malpractice cases. Would you say you favor or oppose such a limit?

1 = favor strongly and somewhat	.67	.67	.00	.63	.04

Do you think patients bring too many, too few, or the right number of lawsuits against doctors?

1 = too many lawsuits	.82	.81	.01	.81	.01

When African Americans, Hispanics, and other minority groups go to a doctor or health clinic, do you think they receive the same quality of health care as White Americans?

1 = lower quality	.38	.45	-.07**	.47	-.09***

+ p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Note: Each of the second and third columns present the imputed opinions among nonrespondents and the measured opinions among attendees. The differences are listed in the fourth column. The differences were calculated by subtracting the percent of support among attendees from the percent of support among nonrespondents. Positive values mean that nonrespondents generally support the issue more than attendees whereas negative values mean that nonrespondents generally support the issue less than attendees. For instance, -5 means that the proportion of nonrespondents who support the issue is 5% lower than the proportion of attendees who support the issue. These differences were submitted to t-tests to see whether they are significant. The fifth column presents the measured opinions among active-talking attendees. The differences between these opinions and the imputed opinions are listed in the last column, calculated in the same way derived above, and submitted to significance tests.

Note 2: The regression model predicting this opinion measure does not have a significant chi-square and thus the significant differences should be read with a caution.

Table A.5. *Differences between the simulated opinions of all potential respondents and the observed opinions of attendees (ED2K EOP)*

	EOP Observed attendees (N = 415)	EOP simulated attendees mean talk/reasons (N = 477)	EOP simulated all mean talk/reasons (N = 2245)
Please check which of the following you think the federal government in Washington should do (percentage who checked)			
Limit the amount of money that can be given to political parties	.84	.83/.83	.84/.84
Make it harder for a woman to get an abortion	.27	.26/.27	.31/.32
Make all Americans pay the same percentage of their income in taxes	.49	.52/.50	.56/.52
Make sure public school students can pray as part of some official school activity	.43	.41/.42	.53/.55
Try to reduce the income differences between rich and poor Americans	.39	.41/.40	.43/.43
Use American military forces to stop civil wars in other countries	.08	.08/.08	.12/.12
How much effort do you think the federal government should put into each of the following? (1=Do nothing at all and, 0 = should do more and)			
Trying to stop discrimination against homosexuals	.27	.26/.26	.26/.25
Eliminating many of the regulations that businesses have to follow	.34	.41/.35	.37/.31
Restricting the kinds of guns that people can buy	.55	.55/.55	.53/.52
Protecting patients rights in the health care system	.77	.78/.78	.76/.77
How much money do you think the federal government should spend on each of the following? (1 = no money at all and , 0 = spend more money and)			
Maintaining a strong military defense	.54	.55/.65	.52/.61

Providing health care for people who don't have it	.62	.62/.63	.70/.71
Social Security benefits	.57	.57/.54	.62/.59
Programs designed to reduce the flow of illegal drugs	.48	.50/.50	.50/.51

How well does each of the following traits describe George W. Bush? (1 = very well and , 0 =)

Really cares about people like me	.49	.47/.47	.42/.42
Honest	.62	.62/.61	.52/.50
Inspiring	.44	.43/.44	.39/.41
Knowledgeable	.55	.55/.56	.46/.46

How well does each of the following traits describe Al Gore?

Really cares about people like me	.45	.45/.45	.45/.44
Honest	.47	.48/.55	.51/.63
Inspiring	.29	.30/.31	.32/.33
Knowledgeable	.82	.83/.83	.82/.81

Has George W. Bush, because of something he said or did, ever made you feel

Proud	.59	.58/.57	.55/.55
Anxious	.63	.62/.61	.65/.65
Enthusiastic	.59	.59/.58	.54/.55
Worried	.67	.66/.66	.70/.70

Has Al Gore, because of something he said or did, ever made you feel

Proud	.50	.51/.50	.51/.50
Anxious	.67	.66/.66	.67/.67
Enthusiastic	.49	.49/.59	.57/.66
Worried	.69	.70/.69	.68/.68

Note: The first columns show the details of opinion measures that are used in the comparisons; the second columns contain the observed findings among attendees. Each of the last four columns presents simulated opinions based on one of the four scenarios, ordering from inclusion, equalization, rationalization, to the integrated scenario.

Table A.6. *Differences between the simulated opinions of all potential respondents and the observed opinions of attendees (HCD post-Discussion-4)*

	Post-D4 observed attendees (N = 229)	Post-D4 simulated attendees mean talk/reasons (N = 263)	Post-D4 simulated all mean talk/reasons (N = 2933)
Favor or oppose the general approach (1= favor strongly or somewhat; 0 = oppose strongly or somewhat)			
Limit the expense of drug manufacturing	.65	.70/.66	.71/.67
Change the system of drug distribution	.82	.82/.81	.83/.83
Reform the sale and marketing of prescriptive drugs	.84	.84/.85	.85/.86
Effective or not (1=most, very and somewhat effective, 0 = not very and not at all effective)			
Limit the expense of drug manufacturing	.82	.84/.82	.85/.84
Change the system of drug distribution	.86	.85/.88	.84/.87
Reform the sale and marketing of prescriptive drugs	.92	.92/.92	.92/.93
Importance of concerns (1=more than moderately important; 0=less than moderately important)			
Whether it expands the size of government	.62	.65/.62	.67/.63
How much it costs to you personally	.84	.85/.90	.89/.93
How much it increases your taxes	.75	.79/.76	.84/.82
How feasible it is to implement	.94	.94/.94	.93/.94
Whether the two political parties can agree on it	.60	.61/.60	.60/.58
The impact it would have on the quality of care	.96	.96/.97	.96/.96
The impact it would have on the economy	.87	.88/.87	.90/.89
How much freedom you have over health decisions	.94	.95/.96	.96/.96
Whether it reduces disparities in health care between rich and poor	.81	.81/.81	.79/.80

Note: The first columns show the details of opinion measures that are used in the comparisons; the second columns contain the observed findings among attendees. Each of the last four columns presents simulated opinions based on one of the four scenarios, ordering from inclusion, equalization, rationalization, to the integrated scenario.

Appendix 7. *The concept of simulation and its usage as a methodology*

Most communication scholars get familiar with the concept of simulation through Baudrillard (1988) and his article "Simulacra and Simulations". Baudrillard's simulation is the creation of the real through conceptual models that have no connection or origin in reality. We should distinguish Baudrillard's simulation from the simulation on focus now. Simulation here refers to the methodology of creating an artificial representation of a real world system in order to manipulate and explore the properties of that system (Pepinsky, 2005). This definition is very different from Baudrillard's simulation because ontologically, Baudrillard thinks simulation bears no relation to any reality at all. Simulation as a methodology presupposes that there does exist reality, which could be represented through artificial models. Epistemologically, simulation as a methodology has been influenced by different traditions, including realism, empiricism, and rationalism (Pepinsky, 2005). Meanwhile, simulation differs from these traditions in significant ways. Simulation shares with realism in terms of their acceptance of structures, or explanatory mechanisms, which exist independently of our perception of them even though scientists' might not be able to uncover them. These structures (such as chaos) might not be observable but do exist. However, the lack of emphasis on empirical verification inherent in scientific realism does not hold in simulation. In other words, although simulation scholars cannot perfectly separate theory from observation, the credibility of the theory that simulators begin with can be tested by the accumulation of empirical data, especially those comparable to simulated predictions. Therefore, the tradition of empiricism is evident in simulation methods as well. But the comparability

itself is challenged by empiricist methodology because data generated by simulation are by nature different from observable experiences. Rationalism emphasizes the necessity of deductive inference (such as formal logic and mathematics) and does not trust empirical observations as much as simulation does. The similarity between rationalism and simulation lies in the fact that both involve deduction. In order to argue that simulated predictions have even partial meanings, simulators have to assume that the models adequately represent the reality they try to explain and predict. In short, simulation methods are at the same time deductive and inductive. They are deductive because they start with artificial models / theories / mechanisms that are supposed to adequately explain the reality in target. They are inductive because either the starting models are often based on empirical research findings or the validity of these models is often verified via comparisons with empirical data. Therefore, simulation as methodology is by no means immune to critical limitations of various epistemological traditions. By acknowledging the fundamental limitations of simulation, we can process simulation findings with healthy caution.

Simulation in this dissertation should not be confused with experiments through computer interfaces (e.g., game studies such as Noy, Raban, & Ravid, 2006) or simulation as a statistical technique (e.g., King, Tomz, & Wittenberg, 2000). Computer simulation is often used in experiments to construct an artificial environment in which human subjects interact with either artificial agents such as robots or other human subjects. Statistical simulation uses the logic of survey sampling to approximate complicated mathematical calculations. In contrast, simulation as methodology often

includes four main aspects: the environment, the agents, the rules, and time (Pepinsky, 2005). The process of simulation can be explained as four steps of identifying these four aspects. The first step is to make sure in which kind of environment, simulation, or artificial models, will be established. The second step is to specify all relevant agents in such an environment whereas agents refer to any entity in the simulation to which behavior attributes are ascribed. Thirdly, simulators must use their knowledge to input the rules that govern the simulation. Lastly, the whole model works over time till some patterns emerge at the collective level. For instance, when simulation was used in group communication research, researchers generate a random sample of artificial subjects (agents) with different levels of ability to influence others and apply certain rules to determine when people will be changed by influence from other people. After the model is established, they run multiple iterations of recursive influence and see the emergent group-level changes.

The idea of simulation in political science, according to Johnson (1999), can be dated back to 1962, when McPhee and Smith (1962: 124) asked: "Now, how does one proceed from such knowledge about discrete units at the microscopic level to some 'macroscopic' picture of how, when it is all put together, the aggregate system works?" As one can see from this question, simulation, which focuses on aggregative-level implications, is contrasted to political studies that try to increase the sophistication of individual-level models (e.g., regression models to explicate individual political knowledge). Applications of simulation methods range from the study of international relations to voting behavior. Johnson's (1999) overview of different applications shows

the variability of simulation methods and what this dissertation uses can be classified as microsimulation, or microanalytical simulation models (MSM, Troitzsh, 1996: 460). According to Troitzsh (1996: 460), MSM gives only first round effects and explicitly assumes that people do not react on (and do not change) the state of the macro level. Taking Althaus' (2003) study as an example, the environment of his research is the American society and the agents are the individual citizens. Some of the rules are generated from empirical findings (e.g., using demographics as the independent variables) and the others are deductive from theoretical hypotheses (e.g., assigning every agent an empirically maximum amount of political knowledge). Althaus only ran one round of simulation and checked the changes at the collective level (i.e., changes in opinion distributions). Obviously, he did not take into account of the possibility that individual opinions would respond to collective opinion climate changes as well. However, MSM is still meaningful in this case because it shows that change of individual political knowledge can lead to significant collective-level opinion changes although the parameters of political knowledge in predicting opinions are not always impressive. MSM also provides guidelines for interventions if certain collective-level changes are desired. For example, Althuas's findings imply that if minority opinions want to be transformed into majority opinions (or vice versa), changing individual political knowledge might be a promising way.

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