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0521847508 - Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy

Diana C. Mutz

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Hearing the Other Side

Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy

“Religion and politics,” as the old saying goes, “should never be discussed in mixed company.” And yet fostering discussions that cross lines of political difference has long been a central concern of political theorists. More recently, it has also become a cause célèbre for pundits and civic-minded citizens wanting to improve the health of American democracy. But only recently have scholars begun empirical investigations of where and with what consequences people interact with those whose political views differ from their own. *Hearing the Other Side* examines this theme in the context of the contemporary United States. It is unique in its effort to link political theory with empirical research. Drawing on her empirical work, Mutz concludes that it is doubtful that an extremely activist political culture can also be a heavily deliberative one.

Diana C. Mutz is Samuel A. Stouffer Professor of Political Science and Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, where she serves as Director of the Institute for the Study of Citizens and Politics at the Annenberg Public Policy Center. Mutz received her Ph.D. from Stanford University in 1988. She has published articles involving public opinion, political psychology, and political communication in a variety of academic journals, including the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Journal of Politics*, and *Journal of Communication*. She is also the author of *Impersonal Influence: How Perceptions of Mass Collectives Affect Political Attitudes* (1998), which was awarded the 1999 Robert Lane Prize for the Best Book in Political Psychology by the American Political Science Association and the 2004 Doris Graber Prize for Most Influential Book on Political Communication published in the last ten years.

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*For Walden, Maria, and Simone,
and that world I cannot visit, not even in my dreams*

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Preface

This is not the book I wanted to write. For this reason, among others, it has taken me much longer than I had anticipated to determine the real storyline. My hope is that my patience pays off, and in the end it rings truer to the world of real political experience as a result. It still does not, for better or worse, have the kind of neat and tidy ending that I originally sought. But in this case, that is probably as it should be because I believe the dilemma I describe has no easy solution. Nonetheless, it provides a distinct tension in American politics, one that remains largely neglected in both theory and empirical work.

After I gave up on my original book – a book evaluating the extent to which empirical evidence substantiates the claims of deliberative democratic theory – I remained bothered by the extent to which other scholars viewed my work on political networks as inconsistent, self-contradictory, and even schizophrenic. In particular, the empirical work featured in Chapters 3 and 4 of this book evoked this reaction. Technical details on these two studies can be found in articles published in the *American Political Science Review* and the *American Journal of Political Science*. Because these two pieces had seemingly contradictory things to say about the consequences of cross-cutting political networks for democratic well-being, many assumed that at least one of them (and maybe both) had gotten things wrong. In the end, these reactions were extremely valuable in that they prompted me to embark

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Preface

upon a broader consideration of the nature of social and political life and their frequent intersections.

In the process of writing this book, I have benefited from many wonderful colleagues at my home universities and elsewhere. These people include Andy Baker, Sigal Ben-Porath, Bob Huckfeldt, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, Shiloh Krieger, Jon Krosnick, Jocelyn Landau, Jeff Mondak, Tom Nelson, Paul Martin, Kathleen McGraw, and Paul Sniderman. The data collection for this project was originally funded by The Spencer Foundation as a study of how citizens' political educations are furthered by non-like-minded political company. The survey was fielded by the University of Wisconsin Survey Center under the direction of Bob Lee. Several years later, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences gave me time to do the additional reading and writing that eventually turned these ideas into a book. The generosity of Leonore and Walter Annenberg provided me with an especially stimulating environment in which to continue studying important issues in political communication.

In many ways an additional group of people has contributed to this book, though they are, for the most part, completely unaware of its existence. These are the committed political activists who exemplify the very tension described in this book. Beyond what my academic colleagues have taught me, I learned a great deal about the political world from growing up in the midst of political activism. My earliest instruction in politics consisted of stuffing envelopes, using a staple gun to put up yard signs, struggling to remain awake during a Lincoln Day Dinner speech (the same one, for the *n*th time), going door to door canvassing for a candidate, and enduring endless paper cuts while sealing direct mail envelopes. There were some years when I attended literally dozens of county fairs, where I learned about the latest innovations in farm equipment, admired the award-winning steer, and talked shop with people who probably shared very little with me in terms of their everyday interests and concerns. I learned that practical politics involved a certain amount of reaching out to people, at least it did if you wanted to win. Some support would come from quarters that the campaigns themselves found quite baffling. But if you wanted to win, you didn't question the basis of your supporters' ardor.

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These reminiscences from my childhood may seem quaint in an era of mass mediated politics, but versions of these same activities continue today. They may be dinners to raise money for television ad campaigns, or to pay professional direct mail companies, but they still involve activists, those who ardently support a political cause or candidate, and freely give of their time and money toward these ends.

For my lessons in real-world politics I thank Mike McDaniel (who knows why there was always a basketball in the bathroom), Dr. Fred Risk, D.D.S., and my father, John Mutz. These three know all too well the thrill of political activism, and the kind of grueling commitment involved in public life.

And finally, I thank my husband, Robin, for serving as my most constructive critic, and Walden, Maria, and Simi, for denying me the ivory tower academic life and insisting on a much fuller, more grounded existence. The many perspectives they give me on the political world as it sifts through everyday life are invaluable not only to my work, but especially to my happiness.