

## ***PUBLIC DELIBERATION IN AN AGE OF DIRECT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION***

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*Citizen participation in the decisions that affect their lives is an imperative of contemporary society. For the first half of the 20th century, citizens relied on public officials and administrators to make decisions about public policy and its implementation. The latter part of the 20th century saw a shift toward greater direct citizen involvement. This trend is expected to grow as democratic societies become more decentralized, interdependent, networked, linked by new information technologies, and challenged by "wicked problems." The purpose of this article is to summarize the past experiments in direct citizen participation—the forms they take, the challenges they raise (including the need for redefined roles for public officials and citizens), and the consequences they produce. By laying out what has been done in the past, we are better positioned to identify the critical issues and challenges that remain for researchers and practitioners to address in the future.*

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As soon as public service ceases to be the main business of the citizens, and they prefer to serve with their pocketbooks rather than with their persons, the State is already close to its ruin. Is it necessary to march to battle? They pay troops and stay home. Is it necessary to attend the council? They name deputies and stay home. By dint of laziness and money, they finally have soldiers to enslave the country and representatives to sell it.

—*Jean-Jacques Rousseau*

Citizenship participation is the cornerstone of democracy, but there is a deep ambivalence about citizens directly participating in their government. On one hand, the active role of citizens in governance is an important ideal in American life (Box, 1998; Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999). Direct democracy keeps community life vital and public institutions accountable. It resolves conflict through "a participatory process of ongoing, proximate self-legislation and the creation of a political community capable of transforming dependent private individuals into free citizens and partial and private interests into public goods" (Barber, 1984, p. 151). Proponents argue that the United States has reached a point in its development when even more direct involvement is not only desirable but feasible. Citizens have the knowledge and

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the ability to participate more fully in the political, technical, and administrative decisions that affect them. They have demonstrated this capability when they have been given the chance. Most important, it is their right to be engaged in the decisions that touch their lives (Barber, 1984; Box, 1998).

On the other hand, direct citizen participation is viewed with skepticism and even wariness. Representative democracy, or indirect citizen participation, has its advantages. It protects citizens from the dangers of direct involvement. It buffers them from uninformed public opinion, it prevents the tyranny of the majority, and it serves as a check on corruption. It also meets the needs of a complex, postindustrial society that requires technical, political, and administrative expertise to function. Unlike public officials, citizens do not have the time or the interest to deliberate for the purpose of developing informed public judgment. Given the size and complexity of the modern nation state, direct citizen participation is not a realistic or feasible expectation (Dahl, 1989).

The ongoing debate about direct versus indirect citizen participation has a bearing on administrative theory and practice (Cooper, 1984; Frederickson, 1997; King & Stivers, 1998; Rohr, 1984; Stivers, 1990; Wamsley et al., 1987; Warner, 2001). In the course of their work, public officials and administrators make decisions and take actions that land them on either side of the great divide. They can invite direct citizen participation and include citizens in developing bureau policy or they can discourage it, even prevent it, in the execution of their duties (Thomas, 1995). Administration thus becomes an important focal point, and some would say battleground, in the discussions over public involvement. As Camilla Stivers (1990) notes, "A key question in the history of the U.S. administrative state has been the extent to which the administration of a representative government can accommodate citizens actively involved in public decision making" (p. 88).

What makes this question even more intriguing for administrative theory and practice is the "social experiment" that has been under way over the course of the past century, especially in the past 50 years. Citizen participation has been mandated in many public policies and programs. Citizens have been included more directly (either by law or administrative discretion) into administrative practice (U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1979). Direct citizen participation is no longer hypothetical. It is very real and public administrators are central to the evolving story.

The first goal of this article, then, is to document and describe where we are in this social experiment and to identify some of the more notable efforts of direct citizen participation as reported in the literature. The second goal is to help the reader interpret the results of these social experiments and to build better theory about direct citizen participation. We need to understand what has succeeded and what has not, and under what conditions. This task is much more difficult than the first. There are the standard challenges of doing assessments and evaluations given value and goal conflicts, especially on such a complicated and contested concept as citizen participation (Day, 1997). This is not a trivial undertaking in and of itself. But there is more at stake. Assessments quickly land us deep into normative territory. Knowledge of results always begs the next question: Given what we know, should citizens be directly involved in government and administrative practice? Here, things get very complicated. Let us use some hypothetical examples to illustrate the point.

Suppose we find failure in some of these social experiments, either in terms of outcomes or in terms of the process. What exactly would that mean? There could be at least two interpretations. On one hand, failure could prove that critics were right in their cautions about direct citizenship participation. Citizens should not be directly participating in administration any more than they should be directly involved in setting legislative or executive policy.

Citizen involvement cannot work and does not work as predicted and the consequences for participation are not good for the long-term health of the democracy. On the other hand, failure could document the success of those who have structured a system in such a way as to limit direct citizen participation. Because the system discourages or, as some would say, to a large extent prevents substantive citizen involvement, it would be reasonable to conclude that when asked to participate, citizens either do not know how to, do not want to, or do not even care to try. Thus, failures in direct participation could be attributed to learned helplessness and the success of a system that prevents their substantive participation in the first place.

Alternatively, suppose we find some successes in direct citizen participation. People actually did participate and the consequences were positive, assuming we could achieve a consensus on what positive means. How do we interpret these results? First, we would need to establish whether the study results could be generalized to all settings. Does direct citizen participation function at all levels of government, in all sectors, for all issues, during all phases in the policy process, with all mechanisms of involvement? Or does direct citizen participation only function with certain kinds of people (both leaders and participants), in small face-to-face groups, on simple, nontechnical issues? Finding answers to these questions is an enormous undertaking given the numbers of variables, levels, and units of analysis in a federated system with three branches of government reliant on a growing involvement of business and nonprofits to operate. And the complications do not stop there. If we identify certain constraints and limitations on direct involvement, how do we interpret them? Are they the result of an institutional system that conditions behavior so that its removal or redesign would enable citizens to behave differently or are people likely to behave the same way no matter what the system's design? Sorting myths from reality becomes a major challenge under these circumstances (Buck & Stone, 1981; Reidel, 1972).

Thus, our examination of citizen participation in public administration research and practice has the potential of pushing us further into the normative debates about democratic and administrative theory. We might just end up where we started—enmeshed in the ambivalence about direct citizen participation and its expression. We will take our chances. The hope is that in more than 50 years of research, there will be something substantive to say about the status of direct citizen participation in American administrative practice. If nothing more, we can hope for better guidance on what directions we should pursue in the future.

To achieve these two goals, we divide this article into six sections. The first section, "The Challenges and Dilemmas of Direct Citizen Participation," defines the concept and provides an overview of its history, its sources of ambivalence in democratic theory, and its dilemmas for modern societies. Section two, "Administrative Theory and Direct Citizen Participation," positions the topic of direct citizen participation within public administration theory. Competing public administration models exist, each with its own assumptions and expectations concerning the roles of administrators and citizens. Because direct citizen participation most often rests on the shoulders of public administrators for successful execution, it is important to know how the citizen and his or her direct involvement are viewed within a particular framework.

Section three, "Arenas of Direct Citizen Participation," provides a broad-brush view of the major arenas where direct citizen participation has been attempted. We document examples of it in various policy sectors and through all phases of the policy process (e.g., initiation, budgeting, implementation). Section four, "Mechanisms of Direct Citizen Participation," illustrates the many ways that have been used to include citizens directly in their governance. They range from public hearings and surveys to large collaborative planning meetings and citizen panels.

Section five, "Assessment of Direct Citizen Participation," summarizes key studies that have evaluated the processes and outcomes of direct citizen involvement. Although there is little consistency in terms of research design, taken as a whole, these studies give us an important status report on the effectiveness of direct citizen participation as it has been practiced. Section six, "Building Theories of Direct Citizen Participation," summarizes three approaches that illustrate the state of theory development. Although theory about direct citizen involvement is least developed compared to the other themes in this overview, these approaches are promising avenues that could be pursued in the future. The final section, "Coming of Age of Direct Citizen Participation," concludes this overview by returning to the six major dilemmas introduced in the first section and briefly summarizes the progress that has been made in overcoming them. It also summarizes the next steps in direct citizen participation and identifies the central elements needed to fully develop a more comprehensive and substantive theory of citizen participation.

### **CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS OF DIRECT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

In section one, our first challenge is to define direct citizen participation. Because it is a contested concept, we need to be clear what is and is not included in our definition. A brief history of direct citizen participation follows. Here, we note the conflicts between administrators and citizens as they struggle over the level and amount of citizen involvement. We also summarize the debates among democratic and administrative theorists, each offering reasons to be supportive and reasons to be cautious about direct citizen participation. Finally, we identify the tensions over direct citizen participation provoked by the debates. The tensions are natural outgrowths of our competing perspectives on democratic and administrative theory and some of the contradictions inherent in modern life. We return to the tensions concerning direct citizen participation in the conclusion. They become our guideposts in determining what progress, if any, has been made and the extent to which direct citizen participation is a viable alternative in modern democratic societies to indirect representation.

#### **Definitions of Citizen Participation**

Research on citizen participation produces a complex and untidy literature (Kweit & Kweit, 1981). As a contested concept (Day, 1997), it is not surprising that it is plagued with definitional problems.<sup>1</sup> Citizen participation can refer to a range of different actions by different people (Pateman, 1970).

For some, citizenship is a legal concept. It is a political status or role conferred on people (Cooper, 1984). Legal definitions emphasize the procedural aspects of involvement—the extent to which citizenship is defined in constitutions and statutes that prescribe the qualifications, rights, and obligations within a particular government's jurisdiction (Cooper, 1984). Although the U.S. Constitution is virtually silent on the role of citizens in a democratic society, it is understood that citizens owe allegiance to the republic, must abide the laws, and must risk their lives for the national defense (Walzer, 1980). In turn, citizens are guaranteed the rights of voting, universal suffrage, and formal equality. For proponents of legal definitions such as Schumpeter (1943), democracy becomes procedural, nothing more than an institutional arrangement used to arrive at legislative and administrative decisions with no

particular goal or end in mind. Citizenship serves its purpose to the extent that there are enough citizens to choose among leaders for the purpose of policy making.

For others, citizenship is more than a legal concept. It is a substantive ethical and sociological statement. "It is like John Dewey's idea of community, Ernest Baker's concept of duty, and Walter Lippmann's emphasis on civility all rolled into one" (Dimock, 1990, p. 21). For example, the Greek philosophers viewed "citizenship as the main goal of life" (p. 23). Central to this ideal is the belief that government must be guided by a moral purpose—the realization of values in the lives of its citizens (Hart, 1984). The citizen's primary responsibility is "to know what those values are, why they should believe in them, and what the implications for action might be" (p. 114). Furthermore, "each individual should act as an independent and responsible moral agent" (p. 115). If any situation should compromise regime values, the citizen has to act with civility in defense of those values (Hart, 1984).

This perspective on citizenship requires both collective and individual virtue and moral purpose. Its scope is broader than the legal definition and it extends not only to formal governmental arrangements, but it also includes voluntary organizations and community involvement. Its focus is on building and sustaining community—political, economic, and social—and the development of the community's values, norms, and traditions (Cooper, 1984). Its requirements are a sense of responsibility and civic devotion to one's commonwealth and a dedication to human and environmental betterment throughout the world (Dimock, 1990). A natural expression has been in various social movements throughout U.S. history—abolitionist, populist, labor union, feminist, civil rights, environmental, and neighborhood movements (Cooper, 1984). Indeed, the ethical tradition of substantive citizenship has prompted changes in legal definitions. It has been credited with the democratization of the elitist form of government in the Constitution through the extension of the franchise to non-Whites and women, the abolition of slavery, the expansion of civil rights, the establishment of equal employment opportunities, and the mandates for citizen participation in public policy making (Cooper, 1984).

If we adopt Webster's definition of participation as the means to have a share in common with others, to partake with others, then direct citizen participation would alternatively mean fulfillment of one's legal rights and duties as specified in the Constitution, or alternatively, active involvement in substantive issues of government and community. Sherry Arnstein's (1969) definition is illustrative of the latter when she incorporates substantive interests of the polity, such as race, class, and gender, to define citizen participation as

a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the politics and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parceled benefits of the affluent society. (p. 216)

The preference here is to adopt a substantive definition that is more inclusive and extends to both "haves" and "have-nots." Citizens come in many different stripes and colors; focusing on one type of citizen to the exclusion of others subverts the concept. Although redistribution of power may be an intention or an outcome of citizen participation, it should not be a limiting factor in its definition. The most logical differentiation among participants is between those who hold elected and administrative government positions and those who do not. In this sense, citizen participation would refer to those members of society who serve

without pay and do not have formal governmental decision-making authority in the formulation or implementation of public policy.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Arnstein's emphasis on power and decision making are central to the concept of direct citizen participation. In her work on the "ladder of participation," she clearly distinguishes citizen participation from manipulation and tokenism (Arnstein, 1969) as others have distinguished it from cooptation (Drysek, 1990; Selznick, 1949). What is implied in her definition is a reconceptualization of power. Direct participation requires power sharing among the citizens and public officials. It is not a form of control that enables those in authority to get citizens to do what they want them to do. Shared power is power with citizens as opposed to power over citizens (Follett, 1940; Roberts, 1991). Citizens are viewed as an integral part of the governance process and their active involvement is considered essential in the substantive decisions facing a community. Substantive decisions, in this instance, are defined as those that are important and critical in community life as defined by the members of the community.

Combining the expanded view of citizen, and the concepts of shared power and decision making, citizen participation is defined as the process by which members of a society (those not holding office or administrative positions in government) share power with public officials in making substantive decisions and in taking actions related to the community. The focus is on direct participation (when citizens are personally involved and actively engaged) as opposed to indirect participation (when citizens elect others to represent them) in the decision process. Although participation inside organizations is considered to be an important component of the overall participatory process (Vigoda & Golembiewski, 2001), especially as it has a direct bearing on how citizens treat one another and interact with public officials, space considerations preclude its coverage in this review.

### **Brief History of Direct Citizen Participation**

The concept of citizen participation has a long lineage. The first written record of direct citizen participation came from the Greek city-states and one of its earliest expressions was in the *Ecclesia* of Athens. During the Middle Ages, after the decay and fragmentation of the Roman Empire, urban artisans formed associations to control public matters central to their work. Virginia and New England colonial settlements launched their own variants of citizen participation built on the Magna Carta in 1215, which guaranteed due process for all citizens and the self-rule of church congregations. The New England colonists also held town meetings, a latter-day successor to the *Ecclesia*, which enabled free, White, property-owning, adult male citizens to jointly hold certain decision-making powers. Although dominated by elite citizens, town government was democratic in form and neighborhood-oriented in practice.

Beginning with the presidency of Andrew Jackson, the 19th century saw a broadening of democratic practice both at state and national levels. Property qualifications were dropped and self-educated citizens, rather than elites, became part of the civil service. The first three decades of the 20th century witnessed the growth of other expressions of direct participation. They included voluntary city and regional planning, attempts to improve the environment through the City Beautiful Movement, and slum eradication (Day, 1997). By the end of WWII, when the federal government returned to its preeminent role in social and economic life that had been established in the 1930s, direct citizen participation received a growing number of endorsements, at least on paper. The Housing Act of 1949 required participation in urban renewal through public hearings. The Housing Act of 1954 (The Workable Program

for Community Improvement) and Juvenile Delinquency Demonstration Projects involved citizen participation through citywide advisory committees made up of leading citizens (Hallman, 1972). The Urban Renewal Act of 1954 mandated citizen participation and called for the formation of advisory boards to be made up of citizen leaders, such as contractors, bankers, and developers, who could make development work (Day, 1997). However, these participation efforts involved “non-indigenous, blue-ribbon citizens” in an advisory capacity with little or no direct participation by residents of affected areas (Stenberg, 1972).

The War on Poverty in the 1960s changed the requirements of citizen participation. The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 established the Community Action Program that contained the very controversial “maximum feasible participation” clause. Although the actual origin of this clause has not been identified, the support for direct citizen participation emerged from a number of sources: the civil rights movement and its push for participatory democracy; the strategy of those working on a National Service Corps who believed the poor should have a voice in planning and administering local programs; and the political force of Robert Kennedy and the young people in the Kennedy administration who championed maximum involvement of the poor (Boone, 1972). The clause sought to include “residents of the areas and members of the groups served” in decision making. The vehicle of their participation became the nonprofit Community Action Agency (Stenberg, 1972). The national demonstration projects of Head Start and Legal Aid also attracted citizen participation in that local poor people were recruited to develop and manage the programs. In all of these programs, the type of participating citizen changed from affluent White to poor minority member. In the case of the Community Action Program, administrative guidelines decreed that a third of those on the Community Action Program board of directors should be representatives of the poor.

The face of participation began to shift yet again with the Model Cities Program, established by the Demonstrations Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 that combined urban renewal with the war on poverty. In an effort to avoid the political conflicts engendered by the 1964 act, it only provided for “widespread citizen participation” (Day, 1997). The ultimate authority was to rest with local governments that were given control so as to tailor the program to their needs (Hallman, 1972). Later mandatory participation was replaced with “adequate opportunity for citizen participation” in the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 and the “encouragement of the public” in the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972 (Day, 1997). The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 instructed members of the President’s Council on Environmental Quality to consult with the Citizens’ Advisory Committee on Environmental Quality and other groups “as it deems advisable” (Day, 1997).

Despite this apparent shift in emphasis from mandatory to advisable involvement, the 1970s was marked by an explosive growth in federally mandated citizen participation. The Federal Advisory Committee Act of 1972 required citizen advisory boards throughout the Federal bureaucracy and encouraged the participation of organized interests. A symposium on *Citizen Participation in Public Policy* cited impressive statistics: 137 (61%) of the 226 public participation programs operating in federal agencies had been created during the decade (Rich & Rosenbaum, 1981, p. 439). The Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (1979) presented similar data: 124 (80%) of the 155 federal grant-in-aid programs requiring public participation were adopted in the 1970s. A smaller surge appeared at state and local levels. Gormley (1981) estimated that 75% of state utility regulatory commissions had a high level of citizen participation. And Cole’s (1974) surveys of state and county governments indicated growing opportunities for citizen involvement.

Although the federal government did not pursue one policy toward participation (Stenberg, 1972), through its interventions, direct citizen participation became more of a feature in urban renewal, juvenile delinquency, poverty, manpower training, model cities, neighborhood health centers, and community mental health programs. There appeared to be a two-level process: The national level provided funds and guidelines and the local level executed. The locus of implementation was in the neighborhood with ordinary citizens exercising varying degrees of control depending on the community and its citizens. This trend was compatible with the ever-broadening power of the citizen in the electoral process through political parties and their conventions, the direct primary, initiatives, referenda, and recalls, boards and commissions, and public opinion polls that are considered to be unofficial referenda in the minds of elected officials.

Demands for direct citizen participation in issues of basic welfare and quality of life expanded in the last two decades of the 20th century. A confluence of voices from students, union members, working and middle-class Whites, government workers, environmentalists, feminists, and consumers amplified the movement. Becoming more suspicious of the growing size of government, the power of experts, and the effect of technology, activists of all persuasions wanted more direct control and power in the decisions that affected them. To date, these voices and their demands have not shown any signs of abating.

### **Citizen Participation and Democratic Theory: Sources of Ambivalence**

There are two central questions for any democratic system: Who should rule and how should that rule be configured in practice? For a good part of U.S. history, the answer has been that an elite group of citizens should rule through a representative system of government. In the *Federalist Papers*, for example, one finds an aversion to direct citizen participation. Hamilton argued that direct citizen participation would not be necessary and that a sound administrative system would keep people's allegiance (Stivers, 1990). In Federalist 63, Madison explicitly rejected a direct role for citizens and called for exclusion of the people who needed protection against their errors and delusions (Rohr, 1984). Thus, the Constitution was drawn up to minimize direct citizen participation by relying on an educated and propertied elite to govern. Although there is now a universal franchise, the idea of representative government is very much alive as witnessed in the 2000 election when the electoral college and the Supreme Court, rather than the popular vote, determined who would be president of the United States.

The question of how well elites have ruled through a representative system has been widely debated. Some, like Schumpeter (1943), believe that representation works well enough as long as the masses elect their leaders and otherwise stay out of politics and do not attempt to influence or control their representatives. Others see representation as a malfunctioning system that endangers democracy, especially a representative system based on pluralism.<sup>3</sup> Critics of pluralism believe that vested interests often override public interests (Burnheim, 1985; Fishkin, 1991, 1997) due to the "mobilization of bias" (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962) and the "spillover effect" (Fishkin, 1991). Groups with money often are advantaged over other groups who lack the knowledge, skills, and resources to be heard in the political process.

Other advocates of reform push for greater citizen involvement to curb the abuses of a representative system (Barber, 1984; Box, 1998; Pateman, 1970). They propose direct rather than indirect citizen involvement. The following statements summarize some of the basic arguments in support of direct citizen participation.



*Direct citizen participation is developmental.* As first postulated by Aristotle and later elaborated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Pateman, 1970) and John Stuart Mill (Krouse, 1982; Warner, 2001), citizen participation is intrinsically valuable because it develops the highest human capacities and fosters an active, public-spirited moral character. The state exists to establish the conditions for the exercise of citizenship so members can live well—the ultimate aim of which is to achieve virtue (Stivers, 1990, p. 87). Thus, through direct participation, people are able to realize their potential (Hart, 1972). Simply put, “good processes produce good people” (p. 613). Any obstacle to direct participation inhibits this self-development (Cunningham, 1972).

*Direct citizen participation is educative.* Rousseau and Mill believed that democracy has to be learned and it can only be learned through practice (Pateman, 1970). The more one participates, the more one develops the attitudes and skills of citizenship, and the more others will be drawn into the process, making the system more democratic. To sustain this virtuous cycle (Oldfield, 1990), all institutions in a society should be supportive of democratic ideals. Authoritarian conditions at work will have a detrimental effect, especially because people spend a great deal of time in their jobs. Thus, a participatory government requires a participatory society that reinforces and sustains it, especially at the local level (Pateman, 1970). Also, according to Rousseau (Pateman, 1970) and John Stuart Mill (Krouse, 1982; Warner, 2001), citizens need to deliberate to make good collective decisions. Instead of relying on one another’s raw public opinion, citizens need to come to public judgment (Yankelovich, 1991). Public judgment evolves from taking into account others’ interests and hearing competing arguments, objections, and counterarguments before any collective decision is made. It emerges from face-to-face dialogue and deliberation (Bohman, 1998; Bohman & Rehg, 1997; Drysek, 1990; Elster, 1998), during which time citizens come to identify and share a common conception of what Rousseau calls the general will and Mills calls the common good (Pateman, 1970). Anyone outside the deliberative process is prevented from learning the norms by which this consensus is achieved, resulting in a divide between those who participate and those who do not. This divide ultimately can engender rifts and conflicts between participants and nonparticipants. By involving everyone who wants to participate, direct citizen participation has the potential to be a “solvent of social conflicts” (Salisbury, 1975).

*Direct citizen participation is therapeutic and integrative.* Most citizens suffer from alienation and “only through participation will or can they be made well.” Direct citizen participation is “justified as therapy—a process as the healing of the sick” (Hart, 1972, p. 614). Participants achieve psychic rewards, a sense of freedom and control over their lives, and strong feelings of political efficacy with higher levels of participation. They also gain, according to Rousseau and Mills (Pateman, 1970), a sense of belonging in their community.

*Direct citizen participation is legitimating.* As citizens participate in governmental affairs and give their consent to decisions, they legitimate those decisions and the regime that makes them (Pateman, 1970; Salisbury, 1975). This legitimacy produces stability within the system and the regime that makes the rules.

*Direct citizen participation is protective of freedom.* According to Rousseau, participation enables people to be and remain their own masters and ensures that no one or group

is master of another (Pateman, 1970). Freedom comes from participation in decision making because people gain a very real degree of control over their lives and their environment (Pateman, 1970). The people themselves are the best guarantors of their rights, and it is the rule of law, not people, that will protect their freedoms. Direct citizen involvement also fosters more responsive policy and administrative systems that are more in concert with what citizens desire, especially in the early stages of the policy process when the agenda is set.

*Direct citizen participation is instrumental.* It is necessary to obtain power and power is required to recoup losses, enhance gains, and enlarge the benefits for self or for one's group (Salisbury, 1975). Direct citizen participation is a mechanism for those without power to challenge those who have it. It is a lever for making changes, whether it is to ensure material or psychic rewards. Its intent is to give those without power a platform and voice for change (Arnstein, 1969) and to reduce the tyranny of the haves over the have-nots.

*Direct citizen participation is realistic.* It is impossible to govern without the consent of the governed. Modern society is complex. People have to be included as a source of information and collective wisdom for society to use its resources wisely. Their direct participation can minimize delays and can be a source of innovative ideas and approaches (Barber, 1984). Centralized systems, even representative ones, do not have the capability to adapt quickly and flexibly, especially given the technological and social transformations taking place in postindustrial societies.

Many regard direct citizen participation with distrust (Dahl, 1989). They doubt the ability of the masses to make a positive contribution to governance; in fact, they are viewed as a potential threat to the system. The masses, says Schumpeter (1943), are "incapable of action other than a stampede" (p. 283). Such views are consistent with "a long-standing consensus in Western political thought: that substantive involvement by citizens in governance is unworkable, however desirable it may be" (Stivers, 1990, p. 87). Reasons against direct citizen participation rest on the following assumptions.

*Direct citizen participation is based on a false notion.* "Human nature is flawed." People are either "too passionate and selfish or too passive and apathetic" (Stivers, 1990, p. 87) to be directly involved. Studies have "demonstrated that the common man is not the rational, self-motivating, and thoughtful democrat of the Jefferson ideal. Rather, the picture that emerges is of a lethargic, irrational, and prejudiced individual who neither understands nor is particularly committed to democratic principles" (Hart, 1972, p. 610). Because individual citizens cannot realistically be trusted, they need "benevolent, but firm, guidance from an informed and politically active minority" (Hart, 1972, p. 611).

*Direct citizen participation is inefficient.* We live in a large, complex, bureaucratic society. Government is too big to support face-to-face relationships on which participatory democracy depends (Fishkin, 1991; Stivers, 1990). Mass involvement is undesirable because it would be too expensive, too slow, and too cumbersome to try "to get everybody in the act and still get some action" (Cleveland, 1975). Moreover, the average citizen does not have the ability to comprehend the management of complex public affairs and institutions (DeSario & Langton, 1987; Fishkin, 1991; Hart, 1972). As society has become more culturally and technologically sophisticated, it needs to rely on more refined, expert

decision making. Extensive participation implies a “negation of the expertise built up by the specialist” (Kaufman, 1969, p. 9). Elected officials and administrators have ultimate responsibility to formulate and execute public policy. We should rely on their professional expertise to do what they are hired to do. Otherwise, decision making will be more difficult (protracted and contentious), if not altogether uninformed, when amateurs are involved.

*Direct citizen participation is politically naive.* Governance should rest on an informed, knowledgeable elite. Only a small minority needs to be actively and directly involved in politics. When given the chance, citizens will choose organization that provides security and well-being, even though it begets hierarchy and control. “Oligarchy is the outcome of organic necessity” (Michels, 1949, p. 402) and is indispensable in complex societies. It is not possible to have both complex organization and democracy. Besides, interest-group politics is too entrenched for the individual citizen to compete. Direct citizen participation cannot prevent powerful cliques from dominating the policy process nor can it eliminate differences in power that it is supposed to equalize (Kweit & Kweit, 1981). Not everyone is equally qualified to decide thoughtfully on all issues. Individuals differ and there are limits to eliminating the differences among them (Fagence, 1977).

*Direct citizen participation is unrealistic.* Direct citizen involvement is a luxury that modern societies cannot afford. It requires skills, resources, money, and time that most citizens do not have (Grant, 1994; King, Feltey, & Susel, 1998). Citizens are too busy making a living and supporting their families to be more actively involved. The assumption that people will participate if given the opportunity does not fit with reality. For the most part, relatively few people take advantage of opportunities that do exist (Almond & Verba, 1989). Furthermore, not all people want to participate and should not be coerced into participating, which then would raise questions of the inequality of participation that would favor some and exclude others.

*Direct citizen participation is disruptive.* Too much citizen involvement heightens political conflict and is dysfunctional. High levels of mobilization lead to disequilibria that destroy social stability (Barber, 1984). Public sympathies are almost without exception incoherent, incompatible with one another, of variable consistency, and imprecise (Fishkin, 1991). The increased “noise” in the system (Kweit & Kweit, 1981) makes it hard for decision makers to respond. Furthermore, heightened expectations for direct participation cannot be filled and as a result they are likely to breed low self-esteem, alienation, and distrust—everything that citizen involvement is supposed to prevent (Kweit & Kweit, 1990). In contrast, limited citizen participation has a positive function. It cushions “the shock of disagreement, adjustment and change” (Pateman, 1970, p. 7). Citizen apathy, in fact, helps maintain the stability of the system. In addition, citizens’ preferences or interests have a strong tendency to be expressed in terms of vested interests. There is no guarantee that common interests and the welfare of the whole will be addressed or protected. What is more likely is an emotional fragmentation that ends up polarizing people without any mechanism that brings them back together. Reliance on the bureaucracy to direct and execute strategies and programs of citizen participation does not reduce the concern. When some members of society participate and others do not, for whatever reason, then their lack of involvement creates a vacuum that can be filled too

easily by bureaucracy's preferred clientele (Fagence, 1977). This opening has the potential for corruption and the exploitation of public policy for private interest (Etzioni-Halevy, 1983).

*Direct citizen participation is dangerous.* It can lead to extremism, as the totalitarian systems with their high rates of citizen participation have demonstrated during the 20th century (Pateman, 1970). Data from large-scale empirical investigations also reveal that lower socioeconomic groups have nondemocratic and authoritarian attitudes (Pateman, 1970). Their preference is to adopt antidemocratic or antisocial policies that value stability over uncertainty. Known injustices have been preferable under the conditions of unpredictability and change (Fishkin, 1991).

### **Dilemmas of Direct Citizen Participation**

The critiques of direct citizen participation summarized above raise a number of dilemmas that have to be addressed if direct citizen participation is to be treated more seriously in a complex, technologically advanced society. We briefly summarize them here for two purposes. They are important themes that are raised throughout the literature. The reader will find it easier to sort through the myriad of perspectives and views if they are kept in mind. We also return to the dilemmas in the conclusion where they serve as guideposts in our assessment of how well direct citizen participation has fared to date and what its prospects may be in the future.

*The dilemma of size.* The modern administrative state is very large and complex. Direct citizen involvement will have to accommodate numerous groups and individuals. Direct democracy was formulated for small groups meeting face-to-face and operating in relatively constrained public spaces. How can direct citizen participation overcome the limitations of scale (Dahl, 1989; Fishkin, 1991)?

*The dilemma of excluded or oppressed groups.* There are disadvantaged citizens who have been systematically excluded from representative democracy (Dahl, 1989; Sanders, 1997). Will there be room in the participatory process for ethnic and religious minorities, indigenous peoples, women, the old, gays and lesbians, youth, the unemployed, the underclass, and recent immigrants? And who will speak for future generations?

*The dilemma of risk.* Many complex technologies pose substantial hazards and risks to individuals, communities, regions, or even to the entire planet. Imposition of risks on people without even their tacit consent is an act of tyranny (Ellul, 1964). Those exposed to risks (chemical, radioactive, and biotechnological hazards) "are so numerous, and so capable of political mobilization, that they threaten the stability of the political-economic order, and thus place legitimation at issue" (Drysek, 1996, p. 480). How do we deal with these risks?

*The dilemma of technology and expertise.* Citizens find it difficult to compete with professionals in terms of their knowledge, information, and expertise (Drysek & Torgerson, 1993). Administrative and technical elites crowd out both citizens and their representatives in the participatory process. How can ordinary citizens participate in the decisions made about complex technologies, especially when there can be wide

disagreements among the experts, and the costs of gaining the knowledge, information, and expertise to stay current in these debates can be prohibitive?

*The dilemma of time and crises.* We are in an era of accelerating crises (Hart, 1972; Toffler, 1971). Decisions often have to be made quickly without involving large numbers of people. There may not be time for large-group deliberations. Besides the decision costs involved in reaching agreements (Fishkin, 1997), citizens may not have a great deal of time to give to participatory processes (Grant, 1994). How will we deal with time constraints and crises?

*The dilemma of the common good.* Direct participation may not truly reflect the common good. The common good depends on deliberation and not just assurance of political equality or the capture of public opinion through the latest polls, faxes, 800 numbers, computers, and other technological marvels. Power to the people does not necessarily produce thoughtful deliberative power. Incentives have moved us toward direct democracy at the cost of deliberative democracy (Fishkin, 1991). How can direct democracy be more deliberative to enable people to think more seriously and fully about public issues?

## ADMINISTRATIVE THEORY AND DIRECT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

What is the role of the citizen in a democratic society (Box, 1998; Held, 1996)? This question is a central one in democratic and administrative theory. Answers to it are many and have varied over the years depending on context and historical circumstances. Responses not only define what is appropriate citizen behavior, but they also outline what represents appropriate administrative behavior. Citizen and administrator roles are intimately intertwined in an advanced postindustrial society—citizens need administrators and administrators need citizens (Box, 1998). Compatibility between role definitions is the ideal for interactions between citizens and administrators to be mutually supportive and reinforcing.

Periods of change can disrupt role definitions of citizens and administrators (Herbert, 1972; Van Meter, 1975). Role definitions once thought to be a good fit with each other and the environment can be questioned and disputed. Alternate theories of administrative and citizen behavior can surface and compete for acceptability, each claiming the right to set expectations and standards of behavior. Ideally, changes in one role definition would coevolve with the other. If citizens were to become better consumers, then administrators would be expected to become better brokers and contract negotiators for government services. However, change does not proceed with such precision and order. Deeply ingrained beliefs and role expectations are not transformed overnight nor do they move in parallel. Administrators can be caught in a vortex of competing theories, each with different claims about administrative and citizen behavior.

We are in such a period now. A confluence of historical forces, economic trends, and changing political preferences has provoked a reexamination of public administration theory and practice. Different models about what it means to do the public's business have emerged. Direct citizen participation needs to be understood within this context because it sets the terms and conditions not only for citizenship—how we define it, how we express it, and how we judge its effect—but also for how we view the administrator's role in support of it. Table 1 provides an overview of some of the better known models of administration and the roles that citizens and administrators are expected to play in each of them.

**TABLE 1: Citizen and Administrator Roles in Public Administration Models**

<i>System</i>	<i>Citizen Role</i>	<i>Administrator Role</i>
Authority	subject	surrogate for ruler authority
Representative	voter	implementer of legislation
Administrative	client	expert, professional
Pluralist	interest group advocate	referee, adjudicator
Political/market economy	consumer, customer	broker, contract monitor
Civil society	volunteer, coproducer	liaison, coproducer
Social learning	colearner	colearner, trustee, steward, facilitator

*Citizen as subject in an authority system.*<sup>4</sup> This model is the oldest among those on the list. The assumption is that there is an authority (could be religious or political) that rules through a direct connection with the divine. The administrator serves as a link between the ruler and the ruled. His or her duty is to carry out the ruler's bidding. The citizen's duty is to obey both the ruler and his or her administrative voice.

*Citizen as voter in a representative system.*<sup>5</sup> This model calls for an expanded role for the citizen. It is centered on the electoral process that enables the citizen to vote for candidates who will represent him or her in the legislature. It also includes activities such as party involvement and political contributions, as well as other formal constitutional obligations such as serving in the military and on juries. Administrators are directly accountable to the elected representatives. Their role is to be the implementer of legislative will as expressed through laws and mandates.

*Citizen as client in an administrative state.*<sup>6</sup> The administrative state rests on the following assumptions. The prime value in decision making is efficiency, defined as the greatest output at the least cost. Administrators who staff public bureaus are professionals, selected and promoted competitively on the basis of competence and merit. They are experts at making rational and value-free decisions. Politics and bureau administration are separated as values and facts are and should be separated. To ensure accountability to politicians, bureaus are organized hierarchically, on the basis of merit and expertise, specialization of function, standardization, and the clear delineation of responsibilities and duties. Good public decisions depend on planning and centralized fiscal management. The elected chief executive, who represents the interests of all the people, energizes and coordinates all parts of the political and bureaucratic system. Citizens are clients in this model. They are to respect and defer to the expertise and neutral competence of professional bureaucrats who are responsible to politicians for implementing policy, making rational decisions in the public interest, and ensuring equal and equitable processes and outcomes. Because citizens do not have the specialized skills, knowledge, or ability to be directly involved in government decision making, their role is to provide the required input and support to administrators so programs and activities can be properly designed, implemented, and evaluated.

*Citizen as interest-group advocate in a pluralist system.*<sup>7</sup> Pluralism rests on the assumption that democracy is best achieved through collective action. Citizens are expected to promote their interests more effectively in groups rather than working as individuals. Multiple, diverse, and autonomous advocacy groups exist to represent the wide-

ranging interests of society. Taken as a whole, because each group tends to focus on specific issues within the broad electoral mandate, the groups are believed to serve as the best watchdogs of the greater good. Furthermore, through interest-group conflicts, the full diversity of affected interests can be represented and a reasonable approximation of responsive policy can be developed. For its part, government ensures competing interest groups multiple access points and means of participation in the political process. Dispersed centers of power are arranged both vertically and horizontally enabling active and legitimate groups the opportunity to be heard at critical stages of the decision process. Bargaining, competition, compromise, and power sharing among power centers are necessary to get anything done. In this system of adversarial democracy, ambition counteracts ambition and absolute power is checked. Citizens are expected to be knowledgeable about their interests, support the creation and maintenance of interest groups to protect their interests, elect public officials who represent their interests, and rely on the courts to adjudicate disputes among competing interests. The administrator's role is to be a referee and broker in this system to ensure that all interest groups have equal access and treatment in the administrative system.

*Citizen as consumer/customer in a political/market economy.*<sup>8</sup> In this model, individualism and the pursuit of self-interest are valued. It is assumed that the best way to reflect individual preferences is to rely on the political marketplace in much the same way consumers/customers rely on the economic marketplace to signal their preferences. If bureaus do not meet citizen needs, then citizens should be free to use other options in government or in the private and nonprofit sectors. Threatened by loss of business, bureaus then have incentives to change and adapt to retain their consumer/customer base. To enable these arrangements, the steering and production functions of government are separated. Steering encourages entrepreneurial leadership and management responsibility in meeting customer needs. Production of public services then can be shared with nongovernmental units (private and quasi-private). In fact, competition among service providers is encouraged to give customers the best service at the least cost. Relationships among providers can be based on formal contracts, cooperative arrangements, informal agreements, and partnerships. These extensive relationships produce a set of associations often described as networks that become a new form of organizing. Managing these relationships adds to the complexity of the administrative function. In such a complex system, administrators act as liaisons, brokers among service vendors, and contract monitors. They are expected to understand and apply business management that is assumed to be generic for both public and private organizations as well as nonprofits, especially the use of pay-for-performance and other private-sector techniques. In terms of the government design, smaller, decentralized, deregulated, and flexible government units are preferable to pick up and reflect customer preferences.

*Citizen as volunteer and coproducer in civil society.*<sup>9</sup> This model focuses on civil society—those institutions separate from the state and the private sector. As Drysek (1996) notes, civil society is important because it “can constitute a site for democratization. . . . It can be a place where people choose to live their public lives and solve their joint problems” (p. 482). Civic engagement creates two roles for the citizen. The first is the role of volunteer in nonpaying activities to support improvements in neighborhoods and communities and civic life in general. For example, volunteers participate in conventional law enforcement through neighborhood watches and citizen patrols and in public

education through the maintenance of school facilities, participation in clean-up campaigns, and as classroom aides and student tutors. The second is the role of coproducer. Citizens and administrators cooperate with each other through neighborhood associations, community organizations, and other client groups to redesign and deliver government services. Their mutual goal is to improve the quality and quantity of service outputs. Citizen-agency collaborations in the production of services occur at all levels of government, but the most prevalent are at the local level. Coproduction has emerged as an attractive option during budget cutbacks, mounting service demands, and stretched resources. Its virtue also lies in the creation of network ties that are essential for building strong communities and maintaining a healthy democratic system.

*Citizen as colearner in a social learning process.*<sup>10</sup> Solutions to public dilemmas and problems have to be discovered through social learning. They are not “givens.” Social learning occurs through collaborations among citizens, public officials, and employees who are required to make value judgments and tradeoffs among competing problem definitions and solutions to get anything done. It is nurtured through dialogue—enabling participants to respect and listen to one another’s opinions, and through deliberation—enabling competing perspectives to be aired and considered before decisions are made. In their roles as stewards of the public trust, public executives and administrators serve as facilitators of the learning process. They also promote the restructuring of political institutions so that supportive political cultures can be built and sustained. They advocate learning in smaller, decentralized, and flatter government units to encourage citizen and employee involvement and they develop new techniques to accommodate collaborative problem solving and decision making in large groups. Ultimately, the goals of social learning are to develop citizen identity, increase civic virtue, build learning communities, and harness the energy and talents of all members of a democratic society.

*Summary.* Citizen empowerment, a fundamental tenet of direct citizen participation, is an important element in six of the seven models summarized above. Citizens can be empowered in their roles as voters, advocates, consumers, customers, volunteers, coproducers, and colearners. However, only the social learning model puts citizens on an equal footing with public officials. As colearners and full partners, it requires them to be fully engaged in the democratic enterprise by being directly involved in problem solving and decision making about the public’s business.<sup>11, 12, 13, 14, 15</sup> Other models require limited citizen participation, such as those focusing on the economic benefits of citizen participation when citizen are active in the roles of coproducers, owners, and coinvestors.<sup>16, 17, 18, 19</sup>

## ARENAS OF DIRECT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Direct citizen participation is manifest at all levels of government, although it tends to be more evident locally and regionally due to problems of scale. We find its expression in programs<sup>20</sup> and policy areas such as education,<sup>21</sup> policing,<sup>22</sup> health<sup>23</sup> and social services,<sup>24</sup> justice and environmental systems,<sup>25</sup> and economic and community development.<sup>26</sup> Citizens also are involved throughout all stages of policymaking—analysis,<sup>27</sup> initiation, formulation,<sup>28</sup> implementation,<sup>29</sup> and evaluation. The earliest forms of direct citizen participation focused on policy implementation—the initial entry point for federally mandated citizen involvement. Because interventions during the implementation phase were believed to occur too late



in the policy process for citizens to have a positive effect (King et al., 1998), proponents began to recommend opening up citizen involvement during policy analysis, initiation, and eventually budgeting.

Regardless of the arena of direct citizen involvement, we find tension between experts and citizens. As society becomes more modern and bureaucratized, professional administrators and experts begin to dominate the policy process. Experts have the education, skills, and time to devote to policy concerns. In contrast, citizens lack the special training and resources needed to be cogent about complex policy problems, especially those involving highly sophisticated technology (Aron, 1979; Cohen, 1995; DeSario & Langton, 1984; Hadden, 1981; Morgan, 1984; Zimmerman, 1995). As a consequence of these disparities, professionals and experts gain in power, while citizens, unable to participate as coequals, decrease their involvement.

Struggles among experts, professionals, and citizens become an even greater source of tension when experts and professionals are not attuned to the issues of the poor, minorities, or those left out of the policy process. Under these conditions, reformers often call for institutional change (e.g., decentralization of services, local control, and direct citizen participation) as a means to redistribute power between experts and citizens and to give citizens without voice and representation a chance to be heard. Thus, direct citizenship participation in a democratic society comes to be viewed by many as a major vehicle of social change and transformation (Korten, 1980, 1981). The extent to which it is espoused and practiced (e.g., Gitell in education) or the extent to which it is opposed or found to be of questionable value (e.g., Myren in policing) appears to depend on the level of citizen dissatisfaction with a particular government service. As we see below, the greater the dissatisfaction among citizens within a policy domain, the louder the calls for direct citizen participation.

### MECHANISMS OF DIRECT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Citizens have numerous ways to participate in their government (U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1979; Verba & Nie, 1972/1987; Verba, Scholzman, & Brady, 1995). Citizens can make political contributions, write or phone their representatives, or work and vote for political candidates. Citizens also can support and join lobby groups to champion their causes (Berry, 1981; Gormley, 1981; Schuck, 1977; Weber & Khademian, 1997). Reliance on elected officials and lobbyists to represent citizen interests is an example of indirect forms of citizen participation. They have been studied extensively in the political science literature. Our focus here is on the mechanisms that directly involve citizens in problem solving and decision making about issues of public concern.

Conventional mechanisms are many (Arnstein, 1969; Burke, 1968; Langton, 1978). They include such things as serving on juries,<sup>30</sup> attending public hearings,<sup>31</sup> participating in advisory boards, commissions, and task forces,<sup>32</sup> responding to telephone polls and newspaper clip-out questionnaires, contacting and meeting public officials, and writing letters to the editor expressing interest or opposition to some governmental action. Unfortunately, these conventional avenues tend to involve only a small percentage of the citizenry.<sup>33</sup> Most are one-way transmissions of information from public official to citizen or from citizen to public official rather than citizen engagement in dialogues and deliberations over public policy with fellow citizens and public officials.

This section examines some of the innovative mechanisms designed to facilitate greater deliberation among the citizens. They are grouped by level of analysis. Individual-level

participation<sup>34</sup> enables citizens to present their views and preferences directly and interactively to their representatives. Group-level<sup>35, 36</sup> participation involves citizens working in groups ranging in size from 3 to 75. Large-group<sup>37, 38, 39</sup> participation brings hundreds of citizens together to deliberate about some issue or problem. And electronic participation<sup>40</sup> opens up the possibility of cyber-democracy that enables deliberations online in virtual democratic communities.

The decision to sort mechanisms by level of analysis was done deliberately to underscore the tension surrounding the problems of scale. As citizens directly participate in increasing numbers and in more complex formats, the inevitable question arises: How do we get larger numbers of people involved and yet retain the ideal of deliberation that is best enacted in small, face-to-face groups (Cleveland, 1975)? Deliberation is not “the aggregation of interests.” It requires thoughtful examination of issues, listening to others’ perspectives, and coming to a public judgment on what represents the common good. Public judgment differs from public opinion, in the sense of the typical opinion poll. Public opinion is “uninformed, superficial and transient” and not a reliable basis for policy (Yankelovich, 1991). Public judgment comes from people working together, face-to-face, in a shared search for effective solutions to their community problems. It requires information about an issue, knowledge of the basic elements of a problem, as well as an understanding of the relationships among the elements and the consequences and tradeoffs associated with different policies. The larger the number of people involved in direct participation, the harder it is for public judgment to emerge.

Mechanisms at each level of analysis offer innovative solutions to deal with the problems of scale. These solutions differ from earlier attempts in a number of ways. Rather than relying on a subset of the population, they all make efforts to be more inclusive, in some cases drawing random samples of participants from all of the major constituencies, including the poor and minorities. They also provide citizens with extensive information about the nature of the policy problem and attempt to engage them in the same problem-solving context that elected officials experience by using the same rigorous approaches in data collection and analysis.

Careful attention also is paid to process issues, not just the content of citizen deliberations. Process is concerned with questions about who participates and how, sponsorship, facilitation, leadership, decision making, sequencing of activities, timing, support, and responsibility for implementation. The more people become involved in problem solving and decision making, the more attention to process is warranted. The topic has become so important that a whole subfield devoted to process issues has developed (Bryson & Anderson, 2000; Bunker & Alban, 1997).

We also should note that process becomes even more critical when intractable issues such as growth, allocation of environmental resources, and planning for the future drive the agenda. Recommendations on these topics drawn from public deliberations are more likely to be accepted by the wider public and by elected officials if people have confidence in the process used to produce them. In fact, faith in the deliberative process has enabled some communities to use public deliberations for time-sensitive issues. Most important, we find evidence of cases of deliberations to address community budget problems, challenging the belief that deliberations are inappropriate in crisis situations.

## ASSESSMENTS OF DIRECT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

There are many questions that can be addressed in evaluating direct citizen participation (Chess, 2000). Should summative or formative evaluations be employed? Are long-term or

short-term effects better to assess? What should be evaluated—process or outcome variables? Should goals be evaluated or should evaluations be goal-free? Are user-based or theory-based evaluations more appropriate? Who should evaluate—outsiders or participants? What evaluation designs are most appropriate and should qualitative or quantitative methods be used? And what are the uses of evaluation and the implications for agency and citizen use? These and other questions are standard for evaluative researchers to consider (Herman, Morris, & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987; Stecher & Davis, 1987; Suchman, 1967; Weiss, 1972).

Of the many alternatives open to evaluators, one is particularly important for direct citizen involvement. As we saw in section two, administrative theories carry different assumptions about the citizen's appropriate role in a democratic society. The pluralist model, for example, is concerned about the outcomes of participation and the extent to which the benefits and burdens are distributed throughout society. In contrast, the learning model focuses on processes and their educational and psychological effects on participants. Using criteria derived from the pluralist model to judge direct citizen participation based on the learning model would not be appropriate. Not only would we miss what we want to measure, we likely would introduce distortion to the results. Failures in direct participation could just as easily be understood as failures in evaluation design.

Along these same lines, evaluators must take care that their own models and views of citizen participation do not cloud their assessments. Administrators have been accused of cooptation and manipulation because they have given citizens the appearance of delegating authority and responsibility while still retaining control over processes and outcomes (Arnstein, 1969, 1972). Alternatively, citizens have been charged with "overdramatization, hyperbole, and shrillness" in their tactics and style. Their "questionable activities, including exploitation and abuse of the mass media" are said to "more closely approximate guerrilla warfare than normal political activity" (Cupps, 1977, p. 482).

An alternative interpretation of the above statements about administrative and citizen behavior is that evaluators disagree on the roles that citizens and administrators are expected to play. If one assumes the administrative state model, for example, it is reasonable to believe that administrators are professionals who should retain their authority because of their expertise and their accountability to democratically elected representatives.<sup>41</sup> This point was made by the Reagan administration when it called for a return to the "state model of administrative responsiveness." It believed that federally mandated citizen participation had caused the bureaucracy to become unresponsive to elected officials and was therefore antidemocratic. Likewise, citizens' use of confrontational tactics as described above could be considered to be consistent with advocacy and interest group politics. In the role of advocate, citizens compete with other interest groups to push their ideas onto the action agenda. Their aggressive behavior could be viewed as appropriate and necessary to promote their ideas in the corridors of power and to win out over competing views. Thus, evaluation designs, especially given the competing perspectives on citizen participation, need to make clear which administrative model informs their analysis. Otherwise, results can be misinterpreted and the underlying tensions surrounding direct citizen participation can obscure what is really going on.

The following research provides good examples on how to assess direct citizen participation and avoid the pitfalls of evaluation research. They also illustrate an impressive array of designs and methodologies that range from surveys to comparative case studies. Most notable are their efforts to build theory by identifying the conditions under which direct citizen participation fails or succeeds.

For example, "Resident Participation: Political Mobilization or Organizational Co-optation?" by David Austin (1972) presents findings from the Study of Community

Representation in Community Action Agencies (CAA).<sup>42</sup> Researchers identified a cross-community randomly selected sample, stratified by region, of 20 CAAs to explore citizen participation and its consequences. Variations in participation patterns depended on a number of factors: the extent to which there was stability in the social system, accepted patterns of power, the presence of organized political and social movements agitating for community action to benefit low-income or ethnic minority citizens, the percentage of the population that was Black or minority, the belief that poverty was a consequence of individual failure, and city size.

Erasmus Kloman (1972), in "Citizen Participation in the Philadelphia Model Cities Program: Retrospect and Prospect," offers a retrospective evaluation of the Philadelphia program and an appraisal of its future prospects. This research demonstrates the difficulties of conducting evaluation in highly charged political environments and the challenge of reconciling multiple perspectives. Disagreements arose over the meaning of citizen participation, on the role of citizens and neighbor associations, on the oversight responsibilities of local and national agencies, and on the criteria to judge policy outcomes. Disputes adjudicated in court between government agencies compounded the difficulties.

Judith Rosener (1978) advocates an approach that she believes avoids some of the major difficulties of evaluation. In "Citizen Participation: Can We Measure Its Effectiveness?" she creates a two-by-two matrix that describes four types of evaluation environments for citizen participation. Using a case study from the California Department of Transportation, Rosener illustrates how an evaluator can use the matrix to move the evaluation environment from the worst setting (e.g., no agreement on goals, criteria, or cause/effect relationship between a program activity and the achievement of goals and objectives) to the healthiest evaluation environment (e.g., agreement on participation goals, objectives, and the criteria by which success or failure is measured).

"Making Bureaucrats Responsive: A Study of the Impact of Citizen Participation and Staff Recommendations on Regulatory Decision" is an evaluation of citizen participation during public hearings held by the California Coastal Commission. Judith Rosener's (1982) hypotheses-testing study of 1,816 public hearings found that citizen participation changed commissioners' voting outcomes independent of staff recommendations. In contrast to conventional wisdom, Rosener finds that citizen participation can be effective in public hearing, although she cautions that the relationship among staff recommendations, citizen participation, and voting outcomes is complex and needs more study.

Cheryl King, Kathryn Feltey, and Bridget Susel (1998), in "The Question of Participation: Toward Authentic Public Participation in Public Administration," ask how citizen participation can be improved. Using interviews of subject-matter experts and focus groups (of public administrators, activists, and citizens), their study sought to identify the barriers to citizen participation and strategies for overcoming them. Their findings indicate that effective, or authentic, citizen participation requires dialogue and deliberation.<sup>43</sup> Three barriers to citizen participation are identified: the nature of life in contemporary society, administrative processes, and current practices and techniques of participation. According to the authors, overcoming barriers to citizen participation requires a learning process built on citizen empowerment and education, reeducation of administrators, and enabling administrative structures and processes that change the way citizens and administrators meet and interact.

Xiaohu Wang (2001) also searches for a better understanding of citizen participation. In "Assessing Public Participation in U.S. Cities," he reports the findings from a survey of chief administrative officers in U.S. cities with populations greater than 50,000. The officers were asked to identify the types of participatory methods citizens used, where and how much

citizen participation occurred in their cities (both in terms of management and service functions), and the extent to which citizens were involved in decision making. He found that a wide variety of citizen participation mechanisms were employed, with a surprising 81.6% of the cities using the Internet to communicate with citizens. Some citizen participation appeared to occur in central management functions (e.g., budgeting, personnel, procurement), whereas a much higher level was reported in service functions (e.g., zoning and planning, parks and recreation, policing and public safety). Citizen participation in decision making did occur, but only about one third of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their cities involved the public in identifying agency goals and objectives. The study also found various causes of increased citizen participation: size of government, political divisiveness, managers' willingness for accountability, and an interesting agenda. Citizen participation had the greatest effect in terms of its ability to meet public needs and build a consensus.

Eran Vigoda (2002a) explores the relationship between citizen participation and public sector performance in his article "Administrative Agents of Democracy? A Structural Equation Modeling of the Relationship between Public-Sector Performance and Citizen Involvement." Drawing a sample from 260 households in a large Israeli city, he uses five alternative models to test the relationship between public administration performance and citizenship involvement. A structural equation modeling using LISREL VIII reveals the superiority of one model. However, the results were paradoxical, according to Vigoda. Public sector performance was negatively related to citizen involvement. As citizens became more satisfied with performance, they were less inclined to actively participate in political and community affairs. This finding suggests that "citizens may become active only when some of their essential needs are not satisfied by public authorities" (p. 266).

### **BUILDING THEORIES OF DIRECT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

Theory building is an art but, on the topic of direct citizen participation, not a particularly well developed one. We are in the early stages of theory development. The area is rich in case studies, but there have been no attempts at meta-analysis across cases, at least that we have been able to uncover. Although there is much speculation on what makes direct citizen participation successful or unsuccessful, few definitive statements can be made for all policy arenas, for all stages of the policy process, and for all participants. What works in one situation may not work in another.

The lack of theory development is not surprising given the complexity of the topic. The number of individual, group, and organizational variables, not to mention contextual factors that could be considered, can be overwhelming. One reasonable response has been to reduce this complexity by focusing on one aspect of direct citizen involvement. Sherry Arnstein (1969), for example, categorized various approaches to citizen participation ranging from manipulation to citizen control. Thomas Webler and Seth Tuler (2000) empirically developed a set of rules, based on Renn and Webler's normative theory of public participation and Jürgen Habermas's concept of ideal speech and communicative competence, that they believe should govern interactions between citizens and public officials. Each of these efforts has taken an important first step in theory building, but both require more field testing in different contexts before they attain the status of a developed theory.

Another technique of theory building is to approach the topic of direct citizen participation by focusing on different levels of analysis. For example, micro-level theory could be developed to account for citizen and administrative behavior during problem-solving and

decision-making activities. Mid-range theories could be developed to link the nature of issues being addressed and the type of participation mechanisms being employed. Macro-level theories could be developed to describe how direct citizen participation evolves over time given certain historical and social forces. The three articles summarized below represent the state of the art in theory building for direct citizen participation at the micro-, mid-, and macro level of analysis.

For example, John Clayton Thomas's (1990) article, "Public Involvement in Public Management: Adapting and Testing a Borrowed Theory," builds theory at the micro level. He adapts the Vroom and Yetton model from the literature on small group decision making and tests it against 42 decisions made with varying degrees of public involvement. At the mid level, Lawrence Walters, James Aydelotte, and Jessica Miller (2000) offer a model of public involvement based on the purpose of public involvement (discovery, education, measurement, persuasion, and legitimization) and the nature of the issue (well structured, moderately structured, and ill structured). Creating a purpose-issue matrix, they then position public participation techniques and strategies (e.g., town meetings, focus groups, formal hearings, etc.) within the matrix or order to give public administrators some guidance on which strategies to use under which conditions.

Eran Vigoda's (2002b) article, "From Responsiveness to Collaboration: Governance, Citizens, and the Next Generation of Public Administration," represents theory building at the macro level. He builds an evolutionary continuum of public administration-citizen interactions based on the role of citizens, governance, and public administration authorities and their reciprocal interactions. Depending on the historical context, citizens can be viewed as subjects, voters, clients or customers, partners, or owners. Authorities in turn can be rulers, trustees, managers, partners, or subjects. Four types of interactions derive from the interactions between citizens and authorities: coerciveness, delegation, responsiveness, and collaboration. For future public administration, he advocates the next step on the evolutionary continuum—collaborative interactions and partnerships between citizens and authorities. He discusses what collaboration and partnership mean, and whose responsibility it is to forge them. Although his model has not been tested empirically, he speculates that by changing the roles of authorities, citizens, the media, and academia, productive collaborations can be achieved in the future.

### **CONCLUSION: COMING OF AGE OF DIRECT CITIZEN PARTICIPATION**

Direct citizen participation is pervasive. We find examples in arenas from education to the environment, in policy processes from policy initiation through budgeting and implementation, and at all levels of government from the local to the federal. Its growth has been explosive, thanks in no small measure to federal legislation that mandated it and the practitioners and scholars who have developed innovative techniques to accommodate it. Interactive surveys and statewide collaborative projects are just two of the new techniques that have been used successfully to enable more people to come to public judgment about the common good. Given people's inventiveness and ingenuity, there is good reason to expect that other social inventions will follow in the future.

Despite the pervasiveness and growth of direct citizen participation over the past 50 years, tensions remain. We return to those outlined in the first section to gauge how much progress has been made in dealing with them.

### **Dilemmas of Direct Citizen Participation**

*The dilemma of size.* Size continues to be a factor in direct citizen participation, although we find very important advances in reducing some of its drawbacks. New social technology has been invented that enables more citizens to be directly involved in large-group problem solving and decision making. As reviewed in section three, citizen collaborations now can accommodate thousands of people at one point in time. At this juncture, no upper limit to the numbers involved appears to have been reached. Careful attention to design and process issues have improved chances for success, as have new patterns of leadership and decision making. Revolutionary forms of connectedness—media, new adaptations of information and computer technology, and the Internet—are now being used to support the deliberative process.

One very famous example, which used some new technological advances, is the electronic town meeting for World Trade Center site planning. On July 20, 2002, as part of the civic initiative called Listening to the City, 4,300 people came together to shape the future of Lower Manhattan. New Yorkers from every walk of life participated to review the six plans that had been developed for the reconstruction of the World Trade Center site. The nonprofit AmericaSpeaks designed the format, called 21st Century Town Meeting, to accommodate more than 4,000 people who sat in groups of 10, with a facilitator and a laptop computer at each table and an electronic polling keypad for each person (Lukensmeyer & Brigham, 2002). Nearly 1,000 staff and volunteers supported the event. They came from every state in the union as well as five countries to volunteer their services. As part of the design, participants heard presentations about the six plans and then deliberated with their table group about what they had heard. Facilitators worked with each table to ensure participants listened and learned from one another. Each table then submitted its views through a wireless laptop computer that was linked to others in the room. Neutral analysts, called the “theme team,” reviewed the comments from the hundreds of tables and identified the strongest themes coming from the deliberations. The theme team, in a matter of minutes, reported back the results of the deliberations to the participants in the meeting room on a dozen large screens. Participants then used their polling keypad to prioritize the themes and give feedback to the theme team and to public officials. A 2-week online dialogue with 818 people in 26 small groups followed, allowing people who could not attend to discuss the issues and review proposals. The results of this innovative program, Listening to the City, had a profound effect on the rebuilding process. Public officials rejected the original six site plans, went back to the drawing board, and identified six new design teams who were charged with developing plans based on criteria set forth by participants. Thus, with this very important example, we see how dialogue and deliberation can be married with computer and information technology to deal with the serious problems of scale.

*The dilemma of excluded or oppressed groups.* Federal legislation gave some voice to excluded and oppressed groups in the 1960s, but for many, the involvement was short lived due to changing mandates and regulations that reduced the level of their initial participation. These groups were further disadvantaged because they lacked the resources that would enable them to take time off to join deliberations with more affluent citizens. To bridge the economic divide, at least during regulatory hearings, some assistance was provided in the way of financial aid to help defray the cost of obtaining legal counsel, expert witnesses, necessary documentation, and the actual reimbursement of participation expenses (Aron, 1979; Paglin & Shor, 1977), although these efforts were not

widespread throughout government. As noted in section three, there has been some success in bringing disadvantaged groups into public deliberations with public officials through the use of interactive surveys that draw random samples of the population. But as society becomes more reliant on information and computer technology to conduct these surveys, it will be important to guard against other divides—those between the information rich and the information poor, between the computer literate and the computer illiterate. The educational divide among citizens also continues to be a source of concern. Many citizens are discouraged and intimidated from participating because they lack the information and knowledge to consider complex policy issues. Inviting everyone to the table as coequals in a learning process, and giving them the tools and resources they need to be successful, is one of the greatest challenges of direct citizen participation.

A very encouraging demonstration of how social technology could be used as a leveling device is the World Trade Center deliberation on reconstruction. When advance registration numbers revealed under representation of certain demographic and geographic groups, organizers of the 21st Century Town Meeting were able to increase the numbers by directly contacting community neighborhoods and encouraging people to participate. The result was roughly an equal representation of men and women, and a good mixture of age groups, with the exception of youth. (The youth had a much higher participation rate in the online dialogue that followed the event.) Although racial diversity did not match the regional census, it was notable: 14% of participants identified themselves as “mixed racial heritage” or “other,” 12% as Asian, 10% as Hispanic, 7% as African American, and 67% as Caucasian (Lukensmeyer & Brigham, 2002). Equally important, the expert facilitation at each table leveled the playing field by ensuring that all participants had the same information, the same access to subject matter experts who were present to answer their questions, and the same opportunity to be heard.

*The dilemma of risk.* The risks from complex technology are grave. Direct threats from our technology (e.g., nuclear power and recombinant DNA) and indirect threats from the by-products of the technology (e.g., pollution, environmental degradation) pose hazards to everyone. As Jack DeSario and Stuart Langton (1984) point out, “never before has mankind had the imminent capability to achieve such radical constructive and destructive alterations of society” (p. 223). However, setting up the incentives and decision processes so that these issues can be dealt with equitably has been a subject of much debate. Early direct citizen participation efforts tended to focus on social issues such as civil rights, housing, urban renewal, education, and social services. It was only in the 1970s with the environmental and consumer movements that direct citizen participation began to collide with technological establishment over issues of risk and the distribution of hazards. The NIMBY opposition got its start in these encounters and continues unabated today, although the oppressed and excluded groups have not been heavily represented in these movements. One mechanism that could be used in the future is Paolo Freire’s (1970) conscientizaco, or “critical consciousness,” a method of civic education developed in Brazil. It involves dialogue among oppressed people to help them discover the social injustices they are experiencing and to encourage the collaborative action necessary to transform their situations. Interest-group politics and adversarial legalism, characteristic of the U.S. system (Kagan, 1991; Kelman, 1992), have made critical consciousness a less attractive option in the past. However, its emphasis on civic education, dialogue, and learning makes it a process worthy of exploration in the future.



*The dilemma of technology and expertise.* The federal government acquired a central role in the development, application, and regulation of new technologies (DeSario & Langton, 1984). When sophisticated technologies outgrew congress' ability to oversee them, new professional bureaucracies developed to serve in its stead. Private organizations experienced a simultaneous expansion of specialists and experts. Together, the two sectors eventually created a new "technostructure" of professionals who were expected to apply their specialized theories, models, and procedures to solving societal problems (DeSario & Langton, 1984). However, the limits of expert decision making began to surface. Scientific experts, good at achieving objectives, were not particularly good at defining them. Moreover, the science they espoused did not preclude them from making value choices in the name of objectivity and neutrality. As the public became more uneasy about technology and expert power, especially as the failures of technology became more apparent (e.g., Love Canal, Three Mile Island, Agent Orange), citizens began to demand greater participation in complex technological issues such as air and water management, control of hazardous wastes, nuclear power, and DNA research (DeSario & Langton, 1984). Yet, the match between citizens and experts does not necessarily produce a level playing field. As Zimmerman (1995) notes, "nuclear power provides the prototypical example of technological authoritarianism" (p. 89). We lack the structures and procedures to integrate technocratic and democratic contributions. To the extent the deliberative processes described in section three continue to unite experts and citizens in collaborative problem solving and decision making, then we can say with some confidence that progress is being made in addressing the dilemma of technology and expertise. To the extent that these two groups fall back into their separate corners, then technocracy and democracy will continue to be the "chief protagonists in the technological struggle" (DeSario & Langton, 1984, p. 224).

*The dilemma of time.* A constant criticism of direct citizen participation is that it takes too much time. The business of government requires expeditious treatment, especially during crises when split-second decisions have to be made. The more people who are involved in some decision process, the harder it is to act with dispatch. True, it is more difficult to make decisions as the number of people increases. However, this argument has less sway when we examine the cases that employed direct citizen participation to address budget problems (Roberts, 1997; Weeks, 2000). Not only were large-scale public deliberations effective in cutting budgets, they also were instrumental in maintaining civility throughout the process. As long as there was some latitude in terms of time—4 months in one case at the local level—then direct citizen participation was found to be a viable option. When we factor in the argument that time is money, and that public deliberations are expensive with all the planning, facilitation, staff, and resources needed to support them, we still have to consider what it costs not to have public deliberations. There is the potential for implementation disruptions and failures, costly litigation when citizens challenge administrative decisions, not to mention lost good will and opportunities for social learning. So unless these long-term costs are factored in, the counterargument can easily be made that the dilemma of time is more of an issue for those who want to retain their administrative prerogatives rather than build a community of citizens who need to learn how to make hard choices in a resource-constrained world.

Related to the dilemma of time is the nature of the problem under consideration. Hard problems take more time for consideration. Citing a toxic waste facility, cutting a budget, and

strategically planning for the future all are good examples of these types of problems. Often referred to as “wicked problems” (Fischer, 1993; Rittel & Webber, 1973; Roberts, 2001), their formulations are ambiguous and inconclusive, their resolutions are imperfect and temporary, and their criteria for judgment are difficult to assess independently of the social actors involved (Day, 1997). These intractable problem situations do not lend themselves to technical resolution and routine decision making. They require tradeoffs and value choices among competing options and solutions. Growing numbers of social scientists (e.g., Chisholm, 1998; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Gray, 1989; Huxham, 1996; Mandell, 2001; Straus, 2002; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; Susskind, McKearnan, & Thomas-Larmer, 1999) have concluded that the only way to cope with wicked problems is through “increased doses of participation” (Day, 1997, p. 430). Collaborations among citizens, experts, and administrators over strategic plans, budgeting, and environmental concerns in sections three and four of this overview certainly give evidence that this strategy can be effective. Citizens often expressed appreciation for the opportunity to be directly involved in policy matters that they considered to be relevant and important. Rather than criticize direct citizen participation for its inability to be efficient in crisis situations (and that criticism may not stand when all the long-term costs and consequences are factored into the equation), it may be just as important to assess its effectiveness in coping with wicked problems. Although direct citizen participation takes time, it also affords time for meaningful dialogue and deliberations. Indeed, proactive citizen involvement may be just what is needed to prevent wicked problems from becoming crises in the future.

*The dilemma of the common good.* The issue of the common good is not just about direct citizen participation. It is about direct, deliberative citizen participation—the ability of citizens to reason together and to come to public judgments with their peers in face-to-face meetings about issues of public concern. We know that a number of trends are threatening this ability. Although citizen access and personal involvement may be on the rise with the growing use of public initiatives, referenda, public opinion polls, and tele-democracy, these techniques aggregate individual interests and do not enable direct contact and interaction. Traditional mechanisms for citizen participation—party involvement, voluntary associations, and membership in advisory and advocacy groups—have the potential to be deliberative but they usually are not (Fishkin, 1991, 1997). In terms of civic engagement, there has been movement from direct toward indirect participation in civic organizations as professional staffs are hired and citizens become dues-paying members who substitute money for time. Some, in fact, have referred to the period of 1930 through 1995 as the “bureaucratization of civic engagement” (Skocpol & Fiorina, 1999). In addition, as nonprofit agencies sign on to deliver social services through partnerships, alliances, joint ventures, and networks, these arrangements that professionalize and privatize civic life center on the efficiencies of production rather than the deliberation of public concerns. The question that prompts much discussion and debate is, where is the public space where citizens can directly reason and learn with one another about issues of public interest?

The new participatory mechanisms such as large-group collaborations introduced in sections three and four belie these trends and give evidence that it is possible to create a public space for social learning even in complex, modern societies.<sup>44</sup> The King et al. (1998) evaluation study in section five also provides strong support for learning through deliberation and demonstrates how receptive people are to engaging in meaningful dialogue with one another. Deliberative polling, a new technique, also has possibilities for the future. It brings together a

cross sample of the electorate to deliberate over questions of public policy, aided by experts who provide the facts in language that can be understood by the layperson. The numbers of people involved in these experiments are small thus far, but measurements before and after these deliberations indicate that learning among the participants does occur (Fishkin, 1991, 1997). The wonderful example of the World Trade Center deliberations, as noted above, has profound implications for large-scale deliberations. Not only did more than 4,000 citizens learn from one another, public officials also learned that when the public is deliberatively engaged, their policy recommendations can be thoughtful and substantive. And finally, the ideal of community as a living space, not just a marketplace, is very much alive in Box's (1998) work on citizen governance. He advocates rethinking the structure of local government by redefining the roles of citizens, elected officials, and administrators. The intent is to shift responsibility from the professionals and elected representatives to the citizen through new mechanisms such as the coordinating council, citizen boards, and "helper" role for public service practitioners. These and other recommendations for change indicate that the search for a space to deliberate about the common good still motivates a great deal of creative thinking and action. Although not conclusive, these are hopeful signs and positive avenues for experimentation in the future.

### Next Steps

Direct citizen participation captivates our attention and imagination. There is something very seductive about the idea that people ought to be directly involved in the decisions that affect their lives. Despite the warnings of its dangers, limitations, impracticality, and expense, especially in large, complex, heterogeneous, technologically advanced 21st-century societies, it still remains an ideal that animates many of our theories and beliefs. Its appeal continues to attract and fascinate us.

The practice of direct citizen participation is another matter. We struggle to ensure that our public deliberations are inclusive of all citizens, not just a subset. Our ability to organize, plan, and deliberate with thousands of people strains the limits of our social technology. We are in a continual search for new practices and techniques that enable us to be directly involved in a way that creates a public space for learning while not hindering the work of government. The disappointments and failures in direct citizen participation over the past 50 years have been well chronicled.

The gap between our ideal and its practice appears to have energized us rather than deterred us. Over the past decade, there has been a surge in the number of books and articles written on the subject of direct citizen participation, dialogue, deliberation, collaboration, and the use of information technology to support the democratic process. Creative experiments with direct citizen participation are occurring in the field in increasing numbers. The deliberative democratic project, our social experiment, is still very much alive. Although the tensions still plague us, we have evidence that substantial progress has been made in coping with them.

The next steps in this journey will proceed on two interrelated paths. The first path compels us to track and evaluate what innovative practitioners in the field are doing. Social technology (designing and managing large groups of people for deliberative problem solving and decision making) is advancing at a rapid rate thanks to their inventiveness and creativity. Practitioners are energized, and as two innovators (Lukensmeyer & Brigham, 2002) behind *Listening to the City* have commented, "The values are there, the strategies are there, the people are there. It is simply up to all of us to make it happen" (p. 365).

Scholars have a role to play in these evaluations. A number of critical questions need to be addressed:

- Do the public deliberations involve substantive issues of concern to the public? Are the problems wicked enough to warrant the expenditures of public resources that will be required to plan, conduct, and follow up the deliberations and integrate their results into government problem solving and decision making?
- How are participants selected? Are all individuals and groups invited and do they attend and actively participate?
- Does the process enable participants to learn from one another, and what is it they learn? Do citizens' views of their fellow participants change as a result of these deliberations, and how do they change?
- Does the social technology used to organize the deliberations level the playing field among the participants and provide everyone with the resources, information, and expert support that they need to come to public judgments?
- What do the public officials learn from participants? To what extent does the deliberative process affect their roles as public officials? How do their views of citizens change as a result of the deliberative process?
- Do public deliberations achieve their stated intentions? Do the outcomes inform new policy and procedures?
- Do those not in attendance trust the outcomes of the deliberative process? The general citizenry will want to know that these efforts are credible and truly represent an attempt to learn and discover about the common good rather than be used as another platform for interest-group politics, behind-the-scenes manipulations, or a cover for decisions already made.
- Do the outcomes of these deliberations have the potential for unintended consequences, and if so, is there an attempt to consider what they might be and how one might deal with them?
- Can new information and computer technology be a substitute for face-to-face deliberations<sup>45</sup> or can they only be used as a support for face-to-face deliberations?

The second path, related to the first, requires better theory building about direct, deliberative citizen participation, especially as it pertains to administration. As the least developed area of all the topics addressed in this article, it needs careful attention from scholars. Theory building can proceed on many different levels as we saw in section six. At the micro level, it would be helpful to know what motivates citizens to participate. What keeps them invested in social learning and direct, deliberative participation and what discourages them from being engaged? Knowing when and how citizens learn also would be important. For example, is it possible for all citizens to listen, learn, and solve problems together, no matter what their backgrounds, personal characteristics, educations, and situations? What enhances their learning and what inhibits it?

At the group level, it would be useful to have better theory on how deliberative groups function. What type of leadership enables this learning and what are the implications for public officials when they assume the role of steward of the learning process? Which design options and techniques of facilitation, organizing, and problem solving are supportive of the learning process? Does computer-assisted groupware facilitate the deliberative process or does it distract participants' attention and impede face-to-face dialogue? Often referred to as collaborative technology, the question is whether groupware can support higher level learning activities as well as it supports administrative functions.

At the macro level, we need to understand how larger political, technological, economic, and historical forces may shape or inhibit direct, deliberative citizen participation. As other countries seek to emulate western democratic traditions, it is important to question whether the model is applicable to those that have not had a democratic tradition or those that recently have emerged from totalitarian rule. Is the social learning process a necessary condition for

democracy to take hold or is social learning a consequence of a democratic system? If there is an evolutionary process that prepares people for the responsibilities and requirements of direct, deliberative citizen engagement, then the model might not be appropriate for all countries and situations. On the other hand, what better way to teach people how a democracy functions than to engage the citizens in problem solving and decision making about issues of importance to them?

No matter what the level of analysis, it must be remembered that central to any evaluation or theory-building exercise concerning direct, deliberative citizen participation is the issue of power (Aleshire, 1972; MacNair, Caldwell, & Pollane, 1983). Citizen deliberations intentionally seek to level the playing field among the participating social actors during the deliberations. Whatever power base individuals bring to the table, all share the right to be there, to be heard, and to be part of the learning process. Privileged status, whether it is based on expertise, money, or position, does not give some participants the right to control the agenda or the outcomes, especially when the issues are wicked and alternative solutions are based on values and not science.

Moreover, it is important to recognize that it is not just how much power a social actor has, but it is the power distance among the social actors that is the critical variable (Kanter, 1977; Kipnis, 1976; Pfeffer, 1981). Evidence for the power equalization hypothesis indicates greater consensual, cooperative behavior between and among people when power is more equally distributed among them. Unequal power tends to produce exploitative actions in the more powerful, whereas more equal power results in more effective and collaborative outcomes (Bacharach & Lawler, 1981; Rubin & Brown, 1975). Research on conflict also supports this view. Although conflict can arise between people of equal power, the most pervasive conflict comes from dominant and subordinate groups—the haves and the have-nots (Deutsch, 1973, p. 93). Thus, power equalization or, conversely, power distance among participants, should be a central feature of future evaluations and theory-building exercises on citizen deliberations.

The two paths—evaluation and theory building—eventually converge as we attempt to understand the conditions under which direct, deliberative citizen participation is or is not appropriate. Wholesale application of direct citizen participation has not been advocated, nor is it expected to be a viable option in all cases and in all situations. Rather, its use has been recommended in wicked situations (Fischer, 1993; Rittel & Webber, 1973; Roberts, 2001) when problem formulation is ambiguous, judgment criteria are difficult to establish, and solutions are valued-based and do not lend themselves just to technical reasoning and analysis. This is an important step, but more guidance than this is needed for public administrators who, as we saw in section two, are caught in a maelstrom of competing views on how to conduct the public's business. On the firing line between government and citizens, their role conflicts pull them in different directions—from being efficient, responsive professionals to being colearners and stewards of the public trust. When should they rely on indirect citizen participation through top-down directives from legislative and executive authority, and when should they open up the problem-solving process to invite more grass-roots citizen participation?

One possible answer comes from what we refer to as the “safety valve” principle. Direct, deliberative citizen engagement is likely to be used to the extent that there is dissatisfaction with current government policy and procedures. The higher the level of dissatisfaction, the more likely that direct citizen engagement will be employed as a mechanism to reduce dissatisfaction levels. To be effective, however, its use must be predicated on power sharing and social learning among the participants of a deliberation. If direct involvement is used or seen

to be used as a tool for the purposes of manipulation or cooptation, then the levels of dissatisfaction among participants, as well as observers, are likely to increase, setting up a cycle of instability and distrust between the government and its citizens.

No matter which theory one explores or which path one follows in the study of direct, deliberative citizen participation, the undertaking will be complex and challenging. But for those who believe that our democracy is in trouble, that citizens' voices are muted by manipulation and moneyed interests, that adversarial democracy, by pitting citizen against citizen, threatens the commonwealth and our collective future, the choice may be well worth making. For others who remain skeptical about the benefits of direct citizen participation, especially its deliberative version, they owe it to themselves to observe at least one of these occasions in action. Many who witness them are awed by the fundamental wisdom of people, who, when given the chance, are able to rise to the occasion and publicly deliberate about the common good. One recent example is New York Daily News columnist Peter Hamill (cited in Lukensmeyer & Brigham, 2002), who listened to the deliberations over the World Trade Center. His words are a fitting way to end this review and a good beginning to the next phase of the social experiment in direct, deliberative citizen participation.

We came to the vast hangar at the Javits Center expecting the worst. Put 5,000 New Yorkers in a room, charge them with planning a hunk of the New York future, and the result would be a lunatic asylum. . . . None of that happened. . . . From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. they were presented with basic issues about the rebuilding of those 16 gutted acres in lower Manhattan. At each table they debated in a sober, thoughtful civil way. They voted, offered comments, and moved on to the next item on the agenda . . . and because the process was an exercise in democracy, not demagoguery, no bellowing idiots grabbed microphones to perform for the cameras. . . . In this room, "I" had given way to "we." Yes, the assembly was boring to look at, too serious, too grave, too well-mannered for standard TV presentation. And it was absolutely thrilling. . . . We have a word for what they were doing. The word is democracy. (pp. 365-366)

## NOTES

1. For an expanded analysis of the many different strands in the definition and conceptualization of citizenship, see Kalu (2003).

2. It is acknowledged that this distinction between elected officials, administrators, and citizens may become blurred, especially in smaller communities, when elected officials and administrators serve on a part-time basis. For the purposes of theory development, however, it is important to make analytical distinctions between the public and those who are elected to serve and administer to them.

3. Pluralist theory (Dahl, 1971) assumes that citizens assemble into interest groups and pressure the political elite in government to formulate policy to support their interests. Because everyone is assumed to have a chance to be part of an interest group and get their ideas considered by the political elite, then those whose ideas are adopted and win out over other ideas are considered to be, by definition, in the public's interest.

4. See Vigoda (2002a, 2002b) for a fuller description of this model.

5. See Dahl (1998) for an elaboration of this model.

6. See Wilson (1887/1941), Gulick and Urwick (1937), and Yates (1982) for an overview of this model.

7. See Dahl (1956) and Yates (1982) for a summary of this model.

8. For a general overview of this perspective, see Osborne and Gaebler (1992). For a description of vouchers that enable citizens to purchase services of their choice from authorized suppliers, see Crompton (1983).

9. See Brudney and England (1983), Ferris (1984), Skocpol and Fiorina (1999), and Putnam (2000) for an overview of this perspective.

10. See Dewey (1966), Gawthrop (1984), and Korten (1980, 1981) for a more complete description of the learning process.

11. See Frederickson (1982), Ventriss (1989), Nalbandian (1999), and Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) for an overview of the social learning approach.

12. Frederickson's (1982) fundamental premise is that "effective public administration of the future should be intimately tied to citizenship, the citizenry generally, and to the effectiveness of public managers who work *directly* with the citizenry" (p. 502). He traces the origins and traditions of civism in public administration and concludes that public administration has lost its focus on civism. Its restoration requires "an emphasis on the *public* aspects of the field and to the basic issues of democratic theory" (p. 503).

13. Curtis Ventriss (1989) builds on the same theme and advocates developing a new philosophy of public administration based on civic purpose. He asks, "Is public administration's public purpose always restricted to responding to state direction, or does it entail broader social responsibilities?" (p. 175). Broader social responsibilities is his answer, because the polity is more than government institutions. To meet its social responsibilities, public administration must expand its conceptualization of the public and incorporate a new public purpose based on citizenship. This new civic purpose ultimately requires a shift from the "scientization of social science" to the creation of a new public social science.

14. See Nalbandian (1999). He illustrates how the roles, responsibilities, and values of city management professionals have been transformed to accommodate the new civic purpose. Based on data from survey questions, correspondence, and in-depth panel discussions, he finds that city managers now aspire to be community builders and enablers of democracy. They expect to take on a facilitative leadership role to encourage citizen participation, develop community partnerships, and build consensus among diverse community interests.

15. See Denhardt and Denhardt (2000). They juxtapose what they call the New Public Service model with two other normative models—Old Public Administration and New Public Management. To make the comparisons, they lay out three ideas that provide the conceptual foundation for New Public Service: (a) an active and involved citizenry concerned with the public interest and collaboratively engaged with public officials in governance; (b) a rebirth of civil society, where people work out their personal interests in the context of community concerns, and government plays a role in creating, facilitating, and supporting connections between citizens and their communities; and (c) new approaches to knowledge acquisition that are based on sincere and open discourse (e.g., dialogue and deliberation) among all parties, including citizens and administrators.

16. See Levine (1984), Schachter (1995), and Smith and Huntsman (1997) as examples of the economic approach to citizen participation.

17. Charles Levine (1984) asks how one designs a system that builds citizen trust in government, citizen efficacy, and a shared conception of the common good, especially when the current conceptualization of the citizen is predicated on narrow self-interest? He reviews six service delivery models, the dominant strategy for each one, and the roles the citizens are expected to play. He eliminates five alternatives and believes the answer lies in coproduction—"the joint provision of public services by public agencies and service consumers" (p. 181).

18. Hindy Schachter (1995) offers an alternative role for citizens. In contrast to customer-centered models, she introduces an owner-based model of citizenship. Schachter believes that only the owner-citizen model keeps the focus on the citizen as a primary actor in a democratic society. To ensure the model's implementation, however, requires public empowerment through citizen education, consistent information exchange between government and citizens, and service learning that reinforces the citizen's responsibility for assuming a role in his or her community.

19. Gerald Smith and Carole Huntsman (1997) challenge both the citizen-owner model and the citizen-customer model and offer a third model—the citizen as coinvestor. This model draws from economic theory and the marginalist theory of value. Central to it is the belief that as citizens are motivated to increase incremental value for themselves and their communities, so should public organizations be motivated to create incremental value for their constituents.

20. See Strange (1972a, 1972b) for an overview of Community Action and Model Cities Programs. His article reviews the history of citizen participation in OEO and Model Cities Programs.

21. For education, see Gittel (1972), who argues that education needs a balance between professionalism and public participation. She concludes that systematic exclusion of certain groups (e.g., parents of school children, the poor, and minorities) has produced failure of the educational system. She sees community control, especially the redistribution of power between experts and citizens, as the vehicle for institutional change.

22. For policing, see Myren (1972). He focuses primarily on the policing function of the justice system where most citizen action has been found. He outlines four ways in which the citizenry can participate in policing: lending various kinds of support to policy agencies; actual assumption of police duties under the direction of regular policy officers; formal evaluation of police performance; and community control and the setting of policy for police operations.

23. For health services, see Howard (1972).

24. For social services, see Rein (1972).

25. Citizen involvement in environmental issues has a long history. The following articles offer a sample of some of the cases: Ireland (1975), Kauffman and Shorett (1977), Godschalk and Stifitel (1981), Plumlee, Starling, and Kramer (1985), Kraft and Kraut (1985), and Desai (1989). For those focusing on the tensions between the democratic ethic and technology, see Fiorino (1990), Frankenfeld (1992), Laird (1993), Zimmerman (1995), and Abel and Stephan (2000).

26. See Ventris and Pecorella (1984) as an example of citizen participation and community development. The authors use community development programs as the backdrop to pose a key question in the debates on direct citizen participation: How do we reconcile direct citizen participation with the exigencies of a modern, rational/analytic, technological society? They examine two very different community development programs to address this question. The first program relies on a bureaucratization and professionalization of experts (e.g., lawyers, technicians, researchers) to manage the change process. The second model follows what David Korten (1980, 1981) has described as “the learning process approach to change”—maximum citizen participation in the development and implementation of community programs and the use of confrontational tactics, when necessary, to pressure the political system. Although the authors acknowledge that there are risks and opportunity costs in both approaches, it is their belief that the social learning approach holds the greatest promise for the citizen’s development and ultimately for long-term community development.

27. See deLeon (1992) for issues in policy analysis. He calls for an end to the “elite syndrome” in policy analysis. According to deLeon, the separation between policy maker and public produces two cultures and results in a confidence gap between the rulers and the ruled. The remedy, according to deLeon, is a return to the original intent of policy science—the improvement of democratic practice. This can best be done by policy sharing between analysts and the public. Although certain policy issues (e.g., education, health care, social welfare, housing) may lend themselves to a more democratic style of policy analysis due to their pervasiveness, importance, and schedule, deLeon believes that policy sharing is essential to sustain democracy and prevent the tyranny of policy science.

28. See Roberts (1997) for policy initiation and formulation. She uses two cases to illustrate the success of direct citizen involvement during the policy initiation phase. The first documents how a school superintendent invited direct citizen participation to help solve a district’s severe budget crisis. The second case shows how a governor and commissioner of education used direct citizen participation to craft state educational policy. The budget case in this article is important because it demonstrates that, even under crisis conditions, citizen participation can be a viable mechanism for making policy choices.

29. See Ebon (2000) for citizen participation in budgeting. Ebon operationalizes three concepts—institutional structure, degree of cultural diversity/homogeneity, and political culture—and correlates them with responses from city managers in cities with a council-manager form of government. In this initial exploration between budgeting and citizen participation, she finds variation in direct citizen involvement and in the use of participatory methods. For example, there are higher rates of participation in cities with moralistic and traditionalistic policy cultures. Larger cities also use greater citizen participation and a greater number of the participatory methods.

30. See, for example, Jacobsohn (1977).

31. For an overview of public hearings, see Checkoway (1981), Cole and Caputo (1984), and Kihl (1985).

32. For examples of citizen participation in advisory boards, commissions, and task forces, see Stewart, Dennis, and Ely (1984), Rimmerman (1985), and McShane and Krause (1995).

33. Initiatives, referenda, and recalls are exceptions that can involve large numbers of citizens. However, because the intent of these mechanisms is not dialogical or deliberative, they are not included in this overview.

34. For an example at the individual level of analysis, see Watson, Juster, and Johnson (1991) in “Institutionalized Use of Citizen Surveys in the Budgetary and Policy-Making Processes.” Based on a case study of local government, this article demonstrates the utility of using interactive citizen surveys to evaluate basic services, identify service delivery problems, establish citizens’ goal preferences in terms of services, set local government priorities, and allocate resources during the budget process. It also identifies survey methods and procedures that have to be followed to ensure that results are valid and reliable.

35. For an example of small group participation, see “Emergent Citizen Groups and Emergency Management,” by Robert Stallings and E. L. Quarantelli (1985). They document how emergent groups of private citizens can participate in government activity. Emergent groups are those that “emerge around perceived needs or problems associated with both natural and technological disaster situations” (p. 94). Defined as newly formed, and lacking in formalization and tradition, they are grouped into two major types: emergent groups at emergency times and emergent groups at nonemergency times. NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) groups that attempt to prevent or close a neighborhood hazardous waste dump would be an example of a nonemergency group.



36. Another example of small group participation is the citizen panel (Crosby, Kelly, & Schaefer, 1986). The panel is a new form of citizen participation that is modeled after the jury system. It is a small but demographically representative sample of citizens called together for intensive deliberative processes. As a proxy for the public at large, similar to Fishkin's (1991, 1995) deliberative polling and Yankelovich's (1991) public agenda forums, it represents conclusions that the electorate would have been expected to reach if it had had a similar opportunity to deliberate. The article presents a case study of 60 randomly selected individuals in Minnesota who participated in a panel charged with the responsibility of analyzing the effect of agriculture on water quality and making recommendations to project sponsors, including several state agencies.

37. deHaven-Smith and Wodraska (1996) document how government agencies are beginning to use large-group techniques to enable multiple agencies and jurisdictions to manage resources collaboratively to protect ecosystems as a whole. The article describes an integrated resource planning process used by the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. Because water issues involve both technical and equity concerns, the idea was to bring managers, producers, and consumers together for some joint problem solving and decision making. The case demonstrates the use of the American Assembly process, a model developed by Dwight Eisenhower when he was at Columbia to address issues that were national or international in scope.

38. "State Strategic Planning: Suggestions From the Oregon Experience" by Gerald Kissler, Karmen Fore, Willow Jacobson, William Kittredge, and Scott Stewart (1998) describes large-group participation techniques that involve hundreds of citizens in setting the state's direction. The authors conclude that this model of state strategic planning can be a valuable process to help the state and its citizens adjust to major economic and social transformations.

39. Edward Weeks (2000) describes four community dialogues conducted in Eugene, OR, Sacramento, CA, and Fort Collins, CO—cities with populations ranging from 100,000 to 400,000. The dialogues in Eugene and Sacramento invited citizens to invest their time and intellectual energy to work through difficult budget problems. The dialogues in Fort Collins and Eugene addressed contentious issues of community growth. Using four criteria to judge the effectiveness of the community dialogues (broad, informed, deliberative, and credible participation), the authors found it was possible to convene large-scale public deliberations to enable local governments to take effective action on pressing community problems.

40. Andrew Kakabadse, Nada Kakabadse, and Alexander Kouzmin (2003) examine the pros and cons of information technology in the digital age and its ability to support the democratic process. New forms of civic discourse such as the Citycard, electronic town hall meetings, Santa Monica's interactive computer network, and voter communication vouchers suggest there is potential for virtual communities to form. Yet, there is a downside to electronic democracy, not the least of which are the new divisions among the citizenry between the information rich and the information poor, between those who have access to sophisticated information and communication technology and those who do not. The authors recommend that the best use of IT is to promote participatory policy analysis to help educate citizens to make more informed policy choices.

41. In addition, the congressional mandate "maximum feasible participation" was difficult for administrators to interpret because congress could not agree on what participation meant and how it was to be implemented in practice (Cunningham, 1972; Strange, 1972a, 1972b).

42. See Aleshire (1972) for an overall assessment of community action and model cities programs.

43. See Roberts (2002a, 2002b) for an extended discussion of dialogue and deliberation.

44. See the research on collaboration to find other examples of participatory approaches (Chisholm, 1998; Chrislip & Larson, 1994; Gray, 1989; Huxham, 1996; Mandell, 2001; Straus, 2002; Sullivan & Skelcher, 2002; Susskind et al., 1999).

45. See the following links that are attempts to develop online dialogues without the face-to-face interaction: Web Lab (<http://www.weblab.org>), Information Renaissance (<http://www.info-ren.org/>), and e-thePeople (<http://www.e-thepeople.org/>).

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