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Public Meetings and Public Officials: Officeholders' Accounts of Participatory and Deliberative Democratic Encounters with Citizens

Todd Spencer Kelshaw

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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2002

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Chair of Supervisory Committee:

Associate Professor John Gastil

Reading Committee:

Associate Professor John Gastil

Assistant Professor Patricia Moy

Gerry Philipsen
Professor Gerry Philipsen

Date: 7-22-02

University of Washington

Abstract

Public Meetings and Public Officials: Officeholders' Accounts of Participatory and Deliberative Democratic Encounters with Citizens

Todd Spencer Kelshaw

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Associate Professor John Gastil
Department of Communication

Despite their potential democratic value, public meetings between citizens and officeholders are poorly understood sites of political participation and community planning. Although there has been a recent rise in scholarly and practical attention paid to citizens in public meetings, officeholders' accounts and practices have been largely ignored. Given the stake that public officials have in meetings with citizens, and the effects that their contributions may have on meetings' procedures and outcomes, it is important to inform our understandings of public meetings by acknowledging and describing officeholders' experiences.

This project approaches public meetings from a deliberative democratic perspective, which values communicative interaction as the underlying constitutive force of democratic organizations. Recognizing the prevalence of expressive and competitive public discourses in American politics, a deliberative democratic approach focuses

concern on how potentially synthetic kinds of talk, like deliberation and dialogue, play out in political speech situations. This dissertation's most basic assumption is that public meetings between citizens and officeholders provide contexts in which deliberation and dialogue may flourish.

The project's empirical dimension features case studies of three government-initiated public meetings. The research applies descriptive methods that cohere with the ethnography of speaking approach, and which include participant-observation and interviews with participating and facilitating officeholders. Case reports describe and discuss the contexts in which meetings take place, the kinds and qualities of talk that participants enact, and officeholders' senses of motivations, purposes, roles, relationships, constraints, opportunities, outcomes, and so on. The fundamental research goal is to respond to the general question, What are some of the ways in which public meetings—particularly deliberative public meetings—might take place given our civic milieu and the practical experiences of officeholders?

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Dedication

To Martha, for continually reminding me that one day I would finish this.

Chapter 1: Orientation and Project Overview

This project concerns the discursive qualities and political functions of public meetings between citizens and officeholders. Public meetings are potentially complex speech situations in which democratic tensions between *pluribus* and *unum* play out. In this sense, public meetings reflect and contribute to American politics' condition in important ways. Yet public meetings are the "least understood methods of public participation in community planning" (McComas, 2001, p. 36). For this reason, describing participants' communicative experiences in public meetings—including their senses of contexts, motivations, goals, relationships, enacted talk, outcomes, and so on—is useful for understanding the events' utilities and potentials in public life. An improved understanding of public meetings, in turn, may provide novel insights about the state of American democracy. Toward this end, this project approaches public meetings with theoretical considerations, participant-observations of three case studies, and interviews with public officials whose experiences shed light on connections between citizenship, community, and communication.

As an introduction to the dissertation that follows, this chapter accomplishes four things. First, it explicates the project's academic orientation in terms of the "deliberative democratic" scholarly discipline. Next, the chapter introduces the set of issues in contemporary American political communication theory and research that motivate the project. The third task is an explanation of the dissertation's research questions and goals. This chapter concludes with an overview of the dissertation's organization.

The Deliberative Democratic Orientation

Nestled between—and overlapping with—the academic fields of communication studies and political science is a new area of scholarship, typically identified as political communication. Although the practice of political communication is as ancient as politics itself, the disciplined study of communication as a central facet of political processes has gained the "political communication" appellation only in the late 20th century. Furthermore, in its young disciplinary life, political communication has changed dramatically. In its early conception the field of political communication developed concern for politicians' communicative actions, and for the communicative tools (e.g., mass media) that politicians have at their disposal to advance persuasive goals. A typical scholar of political communication was likely to study such topics as public opinion polling, media campaign coverage, political speech-giving and press-conference management, and campaign advertising (Stempel, 1994). These were all subjects that prepared one to serve as a political media consultant or campaign strategist, and which—in short—informed the communicative efficacy of politicians. The one-sidedness of the political communication field, however, is currently being tempered by three important advents: assumptive changes in the related fields of communication and political science; the emergence of a sub-discipline within the political communication field that concerns deliberation between citizens and public officials; and an increased interest in the role of democracy in the American republic.

Although it is in ways more of an inclination than a defined discipline, the study of so-called "deliberative democracy" (Bessette, 1980; Button & Mattson, 1999; Cohen, 1997; Warren, 1996) is marked by integral values, assumptions, and applications that lend distinction. If one is to accept Deetz's (1994) definition of a "discipline" *vis-à-vis* a "field" or an "area of study," the former is characterized by a "set of conceptions and practices [that] are guided by an anomalous problem rather than centered on predefined phenomena or sets of topics" (p. 568). In this sense, the study of deliberative democratic theory and practice is indeed a discipline. Further, it is a discipline that is characterized by a defined ethical agenda and coordinated civic activism.

This dissertation is written from a deliberative democratic orientation. With the goals of explicating this orientation and laying groundwork for the content that follows, it is useful to briefly explore how the field of political communication is situated "at the intersection of politics and communication, broadly conceived" (Taylor and Francis Group, 2002) and how the deliberative democratic discipline forges for itself a particular niche within the broader field of political communication. What follows are descriptions of communication studies, political science, political communication, and deliberative democratic studies. The characterizations of these disciplines illuminate both overlaps and distinguishing features, and ultimately portray deliberative democratic studies as an area of inquiry that is at once unique and synthetic.

Communication Studies

Contemporary scholarship in the field of communication studies is at once diverse and synthetic, having emerged out of the historical interplay of various social scientific and humanistic writings during the twentieth century. The present-day field of communication studies is a broad area composed of numerous related disciplines, including rhetorical theory and practice, interpersonal communication, group and organizational communication, cross- and intercultural communication, mediated communication, and many others.

What binds these diverse studies together is an assumption that to be human is to be communicative, and to be communicative is to be forever immersed in human-made networks of cultures, societies, communities, and other relational meanings. As one communication program's mission statement declares, "Communication is a process that creates and reveals meanings, relationships, and cultural patterns" (University of Washington Department of Communication, 2002a). This concern for the link between communication processes and the construction of social and cultural meanings is recurrent in many other prominent and typical academic programs' missions. To cite two other examples:

> At its core, our field engages an essential aspect of human life—the creation and sharing of meaning in diverse social, institutional, and political contexts. (Leff, 2002)

> We view human communication as a fundamentally creative activity in which participants jointly construct their personal and relational goals; create visions of the future; and sustain important values, norms, politics, culture, and diverse ways of being human. We view communication as a powerful force for change . . .. (Syracuse University Department of Speech Communication, 2002)

Integral to this general approach is an understanding that communication is not merely an expressive tool or skill set. Instead it is a complex and ongoing process that is central to human living, insofar as to be human is to be a relational co-producer of meanings. This is what Deetz (1994) labels a "communication-based [conception] of human interaction" as opposed to an "expressive" conception that renders communication a mere tool for transmitting and receiving ideas (p. 566). Although the expressive conception has dominated the field through much of its formal existence, the communication-based conception is currently gaining prominence in academic departments throughout the United States.

This approach to communication as more than simply instrumental is a historically recent development. The American discipline grew out of rhetorical studies in the early part of the twentieth century, at a time when rhetoric experienced division between studies of literature and oratory (Nilsen, 1991). Throughout its early disciplinary life, the "speech communication" dimension of communication studies (as it may be distinguished from other dimensions such as broadcasting, media studies, journalism, and speech and hearing sciences) revolved around critical thinking and vocal presentation. For example, the curriculum of the University of Washington's Division of Speech (a subset of the English Department) in the 1930s included courses in argumentation and debate, presentational speaking (Essentials of Speaking, the Speaking Voice, Advanced Speech Composition, Extemporaneous Speaking, Rhetoric of Public Speaking, etc.), and oral interpretation of literature. There were only three conceptual (i.e., non-practical) courses in the curriculum: Forms of Public Address, History of Public Speaking, and Mind and Speech (Nilsen, 1991, p. 40).

With regard to communication in political contexts, strategically presentational and expressive kinds of discourses have traditionally dominated communication scholars' attention. For example, communication studies programs may highlight the political applications of public address and debate—two mainstays of the discipline throughout its existence. Nevertheless, there has been a historical ebb and flow in concern for non-presentational/non-strategic kinds of political discourse (by various labels such as deliberation, dialogue, and discussion). At the University of Washington, for example, concern for "public discussion" (as something less competitive and more spontaneous than debate) rose in the 1940s. However, "student interest in the public discussion of social issues seemed to decrease [in the early 1950s]." At this time there was an increased interest in "more competitive traditional debating" (Nilsen, 1991, p. 97). With the contemporary movement away from expressive conceptions of communication, the communication studies field appears to be rediscovering interest in public discussion and other genres of immediate, non-strategic, and multilateral discourse. As Deetz (1992) asserts as editor of the International Communication Association's influential and mainstream Communication Yearbook,

> Communication is more usefully conceptualized and studied today in response to issues of democracy rather than those of control and social influence. If that is done, the central questions facing us concern the nature and manner of participation guided by an ideal of participatory expansion rather than the

> processes of influence guided by administrative ideals of effectiveness and efficiency. (p. xiv)

Political Science

In a distinct compartment of contemporary American scholarship, the field of political science comprises topics such as political theory, American government and politics, international relations, and comparative politics. The field includes a wide range of sub-issues such as public law, economics, international peace and conflict resolution, feminist political theory, and American voting behavior. In one typical curriculum,[1] scholars "acquire knowledge of political institutions and processes and learn to think critically about public policies and their consequences. They learn how to evaluate individual, group, and mass behavior in political settings" (University of Washington Department of Political Science, 2002).

With some exceptions (notably in the area of political philosophy), political science has a bent that is quantitatively social scientific. Whereas there is a theoretical push to treat "the different practices and institutions of different societies . . . as related to different clusters of intersubjective or common meanings," the "mainstream social scientists" in the political science field tend to "differentiate [societies] by different clusters of 'behavior' and/or subjective meaning" (Taylor, 1994, p. 199). In other words, political science is historically a behaviorist discipline.

Compared to communication studies, political science has experienced relative stability with regard to its identity and purview during the twentieth century. What has changed in political science, however, are the variables that factor into political phenomena, especially with regard to advents in media technology and the construction of a national culture. The rise of television in the 1950s and 1960s, and the American cultural preoccupation with the Internet in the 1990s have profoundly affected political processes, as well as the very issues that motivate public policy. They have also provided the American polity with a shared cultural and political literacy (Hirsch, 1987) and transformed the public sphere into "sphericles" of sub-cultural political affiliations (Gitlin, 1998a, 1998b; McKluen & Fiore, 1967; Morley, 1992; Zaller, 1992).

These changes in media technology and their effects on the cultural and political realities of contemporary America have spurred political scientists to think about communication issues. But the mainstream work in the field has maintained a fundamentally causal, expressive conception of communication (as opposed to a communication-based conception). Whereas, for example, in communication studies the concept, dialogue has rich and subtle connotative values built out of a tradition of conscientious philosophical work (e.g., Bakhtin, 1981; Bohm, 1996; Buber, 1965; Gadamer, 1995; Sampson, 1993; Stewart & Zediker, 2000), in political science it is often treated as a measurable variable. In one political scientific conception, dialogue is simply defined as "when two candidates address the same subject" (Simon, 1998, p. 3). Of course, there is no reason to criticize such a conception for its lack of subtlety since it fulfills a particular theoretical and scientific function. The important point, rather, is that political scientists generally view communication in political processes as one kind of behavior among many. Political scientists traditionally conceive communication as an epistemological and strategic function rather than an ontologically constitutive one. In other words, political scientists typically approach communication as one piece of the puzzle rather than the table upon which the puzzle pieces are laid.

Political Communication

The study of political communication has its roots in political science, communications (e.g., mass communication), and public relations scholarship. When scholars spoke of "political communication," it was in reference to the communicative strategies and tools available to politicians in the advancement of their persuasive appeals, as well as to the tools available to the press for informing the public (Stempel, 1994).

Contemporary political communication, as a defined discipline, fills a gap that had formed between communication studies and political science. This gap had developed, ironically, as scholars in both of the distinct fields became increasingly interested in similar phenomena. The gap marked neglected ground that was nonetheless tillable. The concerns of contemporary political communication research are consistent with political science (e.g., public opinion, voting behaviors, campaign strategies, etc.), but the field carries an assumption—furnished by communication studies—of the ontological centrality of communication in political processes. In an introductory essay for an issue of the journal, Political Communication, Bimber (2002) surmises that the discipline includes concern for:

> political advertising and campaign effects, elite discourse, political deliberation and communicative action, public opinion, direct candidate communication through campaign appearances, media framing, and priming. (p. 1)

All of these topics are coherent with traditional political science research. In political communication as a specified discipline, however, these topics may be explored with more conceptual regard for communication processes—for "how citizens and communities talk among themselves, how public officials make decisions together, and how citizens and officeholders talk to each other" (University of Washington Department of Communication, 2002b).

It is notable that the field rarely escapes subsumption in *both* political science and communication studies departments. Although there are prominent journals devoted to political communication (most notably, Political Communication) and several renowned political communication programs (such as the Annenberg Schools at the Universities of Pennsylvania and Southern California), the discipline is typically treated as a specialized track within political science *or* communication studies. As well, the major national membership associations of political science (American Political Science Association) and communication studies (National Communication Association) both have special sections devoted to political communication, but there is no single, formal, autonomous membership association for political communication scholars.

In spite of subsumption, the field's strength of character is in its cross-disciplinary scope. At the University of Washington, for example, the College of Arts and Sciences invested funds toward the collaboration of faculty in the Department of Political Science, the School of Communications, and the Department of Speech Communication. The result is a curriculum (an undergraduate minor and an interdisciplinary Ph.D. concentration) in political communication with several cross-listed courses (and several others that are housed by the discrete departments) that students in any of the three academic units may pursue. Faculty members in all three departments cooperate in course development and instruction.

Deliberative Democratic Studies

A specific sub-topic in the political communication field is the study of deliberative discourses, enacted by citizens with each other and with public officials. Whereas certain other dimensions of the political communication field are concerned with the strategies and media that pertain to talking *to*, the deliberative democratic scholars are interested in what happens when people talk *with*. Accompanying this interest is a noticeable value preference for political interaction over unilateral action, and a sense that a democracy's public is ultimately a community—"a diverse body of people joined together in ever-changing alliances to make choices about how to advance their common well-being" (Mathews, 2001, p. i). This community may make the best choices, it is assumed, through interactive, reasonable talk ("public deliberation") about civic issues (Doble Research Associates, 1996; Ryfe, 1998).

In addition to the assumption that increased and improved public deliberation is the key to enabling an "engaged public" (Mathews, 2001, p. i) and "public acting" (Briand, 2000), deliberative democrats share a perception that such increases and improvements are an urgent task. Although public deliberation is considered a uniquely promising mode of democratic political talk, it is perceived as underutilized in American civic life (Doble Research Associates, 1996; Fishkin, 1995; Gastil, 2000; Ryfe, 1998). Fortunately, deliberative democrats are reflective enough to acknowledge their biases and agenda, and careful to explicate and address specific criticisms of the deliberative bent (Doble Research Associates, 1996; Ryfe, 1998).

Deliberative democratic notions will be explored in specific detail in Chapter 2. At this point I aim merely to highlight the connection between research and practice in the discipline of deliberative democratic studies. Descriptive theoretical and empirical research is consistently accomplished with an eye toward the ways in which findings may inform and improve deliberative practices (e.g., Fishkin, 1995; Gastil, 2000). In this sense, the reflective concern for civic engagement in multi-lateral discourses is understood as enjoying a unique niche within the political communication field—not just because it marks concern for a special kind of political talk that has been historically ignored, but also because it advances a proud civic movement.

Motivating Issues

An assumption shared by deliberative democratic scholars and practitioners is that citizens generally have insufficient opportunity to participate in public policy-making, and this results in general civic inefficacy (Snyder, 1999), self-fulfilling attitudes of disengagement and cynicism (Gastil, 2000; Mathews, 1994), and a cultural fragmentation that widens moral rifts (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). Whereas the deliberative democratic call for increased and improved public deliberation as a solution to this problem is articulated in the second chapter, it is important here to explicate the assumption that there is, in fact, a problem. What follows is a characterization of the alleged problem according to the general deliberative democratic position. I postpone treatment of blame and solution issues, however, until Chapter 2.

The Problem of Citizen Inefficacy

Deliberative democrats maintain that American citizens are abstracted from political problem-solving processes. With the exception of voting, citizens' political contributions go largely unexpected, unsolicited, and unincorporated. There are two issues that are relevant to the broader problem of citizens' inefficacy: trust in the authority of representational mechanisms, and passivity.

The first issue concerns the centrality of representational mechanisms in American governance. As Cheney (1995) observes, "Students of small-group communication or group dynamics in psychology understand well that when a group's membership exceeds a certain number, say 15, it becomes very difficult for the group to work together as a whole" (p. 173). Thus, Cheney derives a principle: "The intense, face-to-face interaction required by real, direct democratic participation cannot be maintained in something larger than what we call a small group. Larger groups must therefore create subunits or spin off new organizations" (p. 174). As it will be discussed in specific detail in Chapter 2, this is the same conclusion drawn by Federalist framers of the United States Constitution, who noted that since "it is inconvenient, and perhaps even impossible, in a State . . . for all the individuals to assemble together . . . it was therefore necessary . . . to introduce the idea of representation" (anonymous, in Bailyn, 1993, p. 274). In accordance with this is James Madison's assertion that only relatively small groups are capable of inclusive deliberative interaction, and that representative bodies offer the best means for bringing the multiplicity of public voices into political consideration: "The public voice pronounced by representatives will be more consonant to the public good than if announced by the people themselves convened for that purpose" (in Roberts & Roberts, 1997, p. A11). The preservation of face-to-face deliberation as a decision making method is built into this, but it is an elite deliberation that hierarchically separates the general polity from discourses and "decisions made at the top" (Gastil, 1993, p. 127).

The representational problem, then, revolves around two questions posed by Fishkin (1995): "Who speaks for me?" (p. 7) and, "What should representatives do [with regard to discerning and acting upon a 'public will']?" (p. 30). Although I postpone thorough exploration of these questions until the second chapter, I do raise one aspect here that is tied to civic inefficacy: the related functions of trust and authority in representational democracy. The republican habit of deferring civic responsibility to governing bodies diminishes direct democratic participation. Continued reliance on authority without direct democratic complement nurtures passivity (Warren, 1996).

I distinguish passivity from apathy and cynicism (described below). Passivity is not a feeling *per se*, or even something that one might have the ready occasion to reflect on. In this sense it is tied to the "taken-for-granted assumptions" of ideology (Deetz & Kersten, 1983, p. 162). In its relevance to trust and authority, it is also tied to subordination to dominance—what Gramsci (1971) calls "hegemony"—and civic consent (Habermas, 1971; Hall, 1985). As a fairly passive citizen body, we allow our personal and popular opinions to be constructed, bestowed, and attributed to us by certain elite discourses (Edelman, 1988). Zaller (1992) has studied this phenomenon closely, and he makes the following observation:

> Many citizens . . . pay too little attention to public affairs to be able to respond critically to the political communications they encounter; rather, they are blown about by whatever current of information manages to develop the greatest intensity. The minority of citizens who are highly attentive to public affairs are scarcely more critical: They respond to new issues mainly on the basis of the partisanship and ideology of the elite sources of the messages. (p. 311)

Zaller's conclusion is that mass opinion—from heresthetically[2] privileged issues to the strategies for managing them—is manufactured by elite policymakers and the media, imposed upon the public via unilateral communication transmissions, and ultimately referred to by elites, ironically, as the public will which the government must answer to. Without regular bi- or multilateral interaction between citizens and policymakers, the public is relegated to an unreflectively passive role. Though in practice elite control is not so complete and decisive, this is, nonetheless, the model of citizenship advanced even by mainstream democratic theorists (e.g., Page, 1996).

The Problem of Citizen Apathy and Cynicism

Related to the problem of citizens' inefficacy, citizens are prone to political apathy and cynicism (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Dionne, 1991; Mathews, 1994; Putnam, 2000). Apathy and cynicism are closely tied but subtly distinct. The former concerns a quiet reluctance to engage civically whereas the latter concerns a more assertive distaste for all things political.

The condition of political apathy among lay citizens is most overtly evidenced in the regularity of low voter turnout (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). Moderate-to-low voter turnout is not a new phenomenon. It has actually been a concern in American democracy from its inception. But that modern America's voting rates fall "far below nineteenth century America and twentieth century Western Europe" (O'Leary, 1996, p. 28) suggests "a disconnection from the system and from its shared political identity, a disconnection that is distinguishable from any specific political effects in one election or another" (Fishkin, 1995, p. 44). This problem seems to be tied generally to structural and cultural conditions, although specific phenomena such as current events (or the lack of, at least in media treatments), qualities of media coverage, and campaign behaviors likely bear effects as well (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992). Part and parcel of low voter turnout is the fact that many Americans feel that they do not have the necessary time and energy to pay attention to political issues, much less participate actively or vote (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Fishkin, 1995; Gastil, 2000). This suggests that issues of politics and governance are not a priority for many.

It is important to point out that whereas deliberative democrats regard low voter participation as real problem, they—more importantly—see it as a symptom of a deeper civic malaise. Given that the act of voting has been mistakenly promoted in American political life as the key or even sole responsibility of citizenship (Snyder, 1999), and that voting participation is low, deliberative democrats view citizens as that much further removed from the kind of rich communicative engagement that democracy supposedly requires. If the polity thinks that "democracy is about elections . . . and elections are about candidates packaging their ideas as platforms and selling them to citizens in an exchange for citizens' votes," then this limits discursive public engagement while allowing citizens to believe that voting is the full extent of their civic responsibility (Campbell, 2001, p. 18). Furthermore, as "consumers," citizens may believe that the "market's" selection is inadequate or does not provide a clear, distinguishable choice. This may promote apathy in that it is tied to "a culture of helplessness, which feeds on itself. . . . [When] people don't participate, it helps create an atmosphere of cynicism" (Mathews, 1994, p. 33).

Cynicism is tied to the empirically measurable phenomenon of voter turnout perhaps as strongly as apathy. Cynical citizens, however, are typically more concerned about politics than are apathetics, regardless of the shared sense of helplessness. Cynicism is seen by some political scientists as "the by-product of [officeholders'] failed promises, policies, and performance" (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997, p. 28). A representational democracy puts great weight on the notions of authority and trust (Warren, 1996), and when citizens believe that officeholders have compromised their trust—either in policymaking or in ethical character—cynicism results. Other influential factors include sensational and ridiculing portrayals of political processes in the media (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997) and candidates' uses of negative campaign ads (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995). A key symptom of cynicism is withdrawal from participatory involvement in politics, which may be manifested in the "tuning out" of news and information, and reluctance to engage in even basic political activities like forming opinions and voting. In this sense, cynicism and apathy are closely tied. But cynicism is marked by a more pronounced resolve to avoid voting, much less more involved kinds of democratic behaviors.

Consider this testimony from a self-proclaimed "cynic" residing in Seattle, Washington: "It doesn't matter who you vote for, it's just a feel-good thing" (in Kelshaw, 1997). The descriptor, "feel-good thing" raises a sense of political participation as a perceived hegemonic act, in that it is understood to supplant consequential efficacy with a false sense of accomplished civic duty. This informant has neither voted in an election nor participated in a formal political event since he voted in 1992's federal election.[3] This experience was "unsuccessful," as he said—not unsuccessful in the sense that the presidential candidate whom he voted for was not elected to office (he was) but because the candidate's proposed policies (those that spurred the informant to vote in that election cycle) never materialized. The informant reports:

> The big issue then was health-care, but as we've seen, that whole issue got stalemated. . . . Democracy as a system is no different than feudalism. The ones being represented are the elite—the rich and powerful. . . . The government now is being orchestrated by corporate minds, by lobbyists, by public interests. . . . The rich and powerful are going to keep the rich and powerful in place. All they want is that people be pacified. (in Kelshaw, 1997)

These sentiments reflect the sense of "helplessness" proposed by Mathews (1994, p. 33). They also clarify a connection between inefficacy—as a discrete problem—and cynicism. Whereas inefficacy concerns an actual rift between policymaking and public engagement, cynicism concerns the *awareness* of this rift and its resultant inefficacy. One response to this awareness is to proactively intervene in political structures and processes (as deliberative democrats attempt to do). Another response is to "tune out," as an increasing percentage of Americans, voting research shows, choose to do (Carter, 2001, p. 48; League of Women Voters, 2002).

The Problem of Cultural Fragmentation

Certainly, diversity and disagreement are healthy and crucial for a democratic society's well being. Without difference—in experiences, perspectives, values, beliefs, and so forth—an organization will stagnate or develop dangerous policies without adequate reflectivity (Janis, 1972; Lamm, 2001). However, in the setting of a healthy community, disagreement "is always expressed in the context of shared cultural traditions" (Ryfe, 1998, p. 6). As Bellah, et al. (1985) and Reynolds and Norman (1988) posit, a central American problem is that cultural traditions are fragmented. This creates intractable "moral conflicts" (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997) that preclude beneficial political processes and outcomes (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996).

In terms of political process, discourse is reduced to diatribe when cultural traditions are fractured. "Public discourse on divisive issues is often dominated by destructive debate between polarized opponents" (Chasin, et al., 1996, p. 1; Pearce et al., 1987). Furthermore, "Positions potentially capable of interesting, eloquent elaboration [are] truncated into obscene slogans and semantically simplistic actions" (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997, p. 5). The perceived incommensurateness of the distinct positions becomes manifest in incompatible ways of speaking that resist alignment, which would guarantee that "even though [interactants] may disagree, they understand at some level that they both or all are in conflict, trying to negotiate a compromise, or problem solving" (Stewart & Logan, 1998, p. 63).

There is an "inevitable link between the quality of communication and the outcome of communication" (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997, p. ix). In this sense, public processes and policies are bound together. This is a crucial point, because "unlike conventional liberals, deliberative democrats view communication as key because it offers the only avenue for expressing and negotiating deep moral differences" (Ryfe, 1998, pp. 6-7). Communication as an inherently social enterprise, then, is crucial for establishing shared cultural traditions by reconnecting people (Etzioni, 1996, 2001). Whereas proponents of non-deliberative republicanism might consider low voter participation as the pinnacle problem of contemporary civic life, deliberative democrats recognize that there is a more radical problem. This problem concerns the troublesome ways in which Americans enact (or avoid) their disagreements, and it is manifested in a many-faulted civil society.

The Deliberative Democratic Response

Deliberative democrats respond to these perceived problems through theoretical and empirical research, and through the implementation of programs intended to draw citizens into civic life. Whereas I will both explore some theoretical and empirical research and explain the workings of some specific programs in Chapter 2, it is important here to provide a brief characterization of the range of practical projects that deliberative democrats implement. According to Pearce and Littlejohn (1997),

> [There are] literally hundreds of . . . organizations that have been formed in recent years to increase public participation in political processes, create places for nonadversarial conflict resolution, and improve communication among citizens. Most of these . . . are not-for-profit; virtually all are nongovernmental: most are nonpartisan, although some focus on particular issues. (p. 199)

These organizations are responding to the problems of civic inefficacy, civic apathy and cynicism, and cultural fragmentation.

With regard to cultural fragmentation, some practitioners view "conversation" and "dialogue" as appropriate means for nurturing communicative alignment in the face of moral disagreement.[4] Two exemplary programs are the Public Conversations Project (Chasin et al., 1996) and the Public Dialogue Consortium (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). The PCP applies family therapy concepts and procedures to moral and civic problems (Chasin et al., 1996), and the PCD employs "systemic questioning," "appreciative inquiry," and "reflecting" stages of discussion in order to forge new ways for ideological adversaries to talk together, and to instill mutual respect (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997, pp. 200-204).

Other projects are more concerned with using collaborative means for developing an informed, efficacious, and enthusiastically engaged polity. Prominent examples are National Issues Forums (Fishkin, 1995), Citizen Juries (Crosby, 1995), and Study Circles (Study Circles Resource Center, 1991). Although by varying means, these three projects bring citizens into deliberative conversations (often in small groups, and sometimes with officeholders or candidates) in which information can be mulled over, reasoning applied, and decisions about important civic issues reached (either my consensus or majority-rule polling). These three programs and many others are affiliated either directly or tangentially with the Kettering Foundation, a non-profit, non-partisan think-tank devoted to deliberative civic renewal (Mathews, 2001).

Project Goals and Research Questions

This dissertation is launched out of appreciation for the activities of deliberative democratic programs such as those described above. As it will be discussed in more specific detail in Chapter 2, research suggests some important consequences of increased and improved citizen deliberation, including participants' heightened understandings of complex issues (Denver, Hands & Jones, 1995; Fishkin & Luskin, 1999; Gastil & Dillard, 1999a, 1999b), the encouragement of voice (Gill, 1996), a reconception of democratic citizenship as participatory (Leighninger & McCoy, 1998; Warren, 1992), and the strengthening of community in light of diversity (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). Burkhalter, Gastil, and Kelshaw (in press) theorize about these benefits in sum, proposing that public deliberation is "self reinforcing" in that it "strengthens deliberative beliefs, skills, and habits" (p. 29), thus perpetuating the alleged benefits and generally making citizens more politically energetic, efficacious, and accountable.

This dissertation's point of departure, however, is in its sense that the majority of deliberative democratic research and applicative programs focus concern on the needs, attitudes, perceptions, and political interactivities of lay citizens. Of course, a primary (and legitimate) reason for this tendency is that the deliberative democrats recognize a historical exclusion of lay citizens from political policymaking. These writers and practitioners seek to re-center citizens in political processes as more than mere voters.

Briand (2000), for one, bestows a degree of responsibility upon citizens to initiate and participate in deliberation when he observes, "the failure of contemporary politics to generate effective solutions cannot be laid solely at government's door" (p. 54). This commitment to "public acting," which is "something that citizens do, not something that governmental agencies or officials do" (Briand, 2000, p. 62), demonstrates the pendular swing of scholarly attention away from official discourses to those of common citizens.

But in what persists as republican political structures on American local, state, and federal levels, the description and encouragement of direct democratic activity on the part of citizens only goes part way to remedy the extant problems of civic inefficacy, apathy and cynicism, and cultural fragmentation. If dialogic and deliberative practices are to be infused into official policy-making processes, and if they are to benefit the quality of public policy, then elected and appointed officeholders—who remain, ultimately, public policy's authors—must be included in the public meetings where such discourses may occur. Their experiences must be taken into account when conceiving ongoing political contact that revitalizes democracy.

Deliberative democratic projects are on the rise. Projects include both citizen-led public meetings—such as Study Circles (Study Circles Resource Center, 1991), Citizen Juries (Crosby, 1995), Public Conversations (Chasin et al., 1996), Public Dialogues (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997), National Issues Forums (Fishkin, 1995), "living room meetings" (Gill, 1996), and so on—and government-mandated events, like those required of grantees by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (2002). With this perceptible rise comes an expectation that government officials play some sort of sensitive role in public meetings, as participants and—in some if not most cases—facilitators. Given that officeholders experience real constraints when it comes to incorporating the diverse voices of a dynamic and heterogeneous polity, it is unrealistic to assume that "good" or "responsive" officials act simply according to the voiced will of those enervated citizens with whom they meet. When it comes to policy making, the function of republican officeholders is not merely representative, just as the role of constituents is not merely constitutive (Baudrillard, 1983; Kelshaw, 1997). Officeholders experience tension between rational autonomy and responsibility to the people's will, which—as a unitary and objective thing—does not truly exist, much less cohere with any kind of objective, *a priori* "common good." If government policy-makers are the conduits through which the American *pluribus* is transformed into the *unum* of policy and law, then officials' deliberative experiences with the equivocal "many" begs scholarly attention.

When deliberative democrats focus their efforts on the political understandings and practices of citizens, it is possible to recognize such things as how citizens' attitudes and understandings become more "sophisticated" (Gastil & Dillard, 1999b) and how citizen-centered deliberative events may best be approached to encourage participation and productivity (Fishkin, 1995; Gill, 1996; Leighninger & McCoy, 1998). This research is laudable and crucial to a deliberative democratic reconception of American citizenship. But at a time when deliberative democrats are encouraging the institutionalization of public meetings in official policy making processes, it is important to recognize this: We know very little about the lived experiences of officeholders in face-to-face public meetings, as these experiences pertain to the deliberative democratic conceptions of such meetings in general and public deliberation specifically. Certainly, public officials (of both the elected and appointed varieties) face particular constraints and opportunities when moving through public meetings to the authorship of public policy. But the question of what such constraints and opportunities are has not been adequately addressed.[5]

The dissertation's goal arises from this point. The overarching goal is to respond to the question: What are some of the ways in which public meetings—particularly deliberative public meetings—might take place given our civic milieu and the practical experiences of officeholders? I may best approach this goal by exploring four related research questions:

1. Where in the scope of American political talk are there appropriate ecological niches for institutionalizing public meetings?
2. Discursively, what distinguishes public meetings from other kinds of political speech situations?

3. What diverse civic needs might different kinds of public meetings (with different discursive qualities) fulfill?

4. How may officeholders' accounts inform understanding of public meetings' democratic potentials and restrictions?

My hope in exploring these questions is to inform not only the ongoing work of those who push to institutionalize deliberative democratic practices, but also the activities of those officeholders who will be increasingly required to participate.

To pursue the issues raised in these questions I must synthesize theoretical exposition, public meeting participant-observation, interviews with participating and facilitating officeholders, and interpretive reflection on the meetings' contexts, enacted talk, and officeholders' accounts. This project's empirical dimension revolves around three case studies that I selected from a larger assortment of meetings observed between June 2001 and May 2002. The chosen cases represent a sample of government-initiated public meetings. By exploring these cases' contexts, enacted talk, and officeholders' reported experiences, I attempt to provide an informative view of face-to-face democracy's potentials, constraints, and communicative dynamics.

Dissertation Overview

This dissertation considers niches in the civic milieu where face-to-face public meetings may be institutionalized. Its general goal is to describe and interpret three government-initiated public meetings by exploring features pertaining to their contexts, enacted talk, and officeholders' experiences. The project is structured according to six chapters (including this introductory chapter). What follows is a brief preview of these chapters in terms of their goals and contents.

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 provide conceptual exposition. Their basic purpose is to orient the reader and establish a theoretical context. Such theoretical context is crucial for preparing the subsequent empirical work. Without a theoretical basis, it would be impossible to interpret cases in ways that illuminate their significances within the discursive milieu of American political life.

In addition to providing general orientation, this first chapter initiates articulation of a needs-analysis case argument from the deliberative democratic perspective. An effective needs-analysis case argument includes issues of problem, blame, and solution (Freeley, 1986; Ziegelmuller & Dause, 1975). The fundamental problems of American political organization are characterized in Chapter 1 as concerning citizens' political inefficacy, their senses of apathy and cynicism, and the forging of cultural rifts. The second chapter resumes this argument. Blame is attributed to structures and attitudes that move political communication "away from the civic republican idea that one can be a citizen only if one engages with others in civic practices" (Snyder, 1999, pp. 35-36). Proposed solutions include participatory (Barber, 1984; Held, 1987) and deliberative (Bessett, 1980; Held, 1987) democratic initiatives. These initiatives encourage projects related to deliberation, civic journalism, and dialogue. Benefits allegedly apply to the individuals who participate (Gastil & Dillard, 1999a, 1999b; Leighninger & McCoy, 1998; Study Circles Resource Center, 1991) and the larger democratic society (Fishkin, 1995; Mathews, 1994; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997).

With the deliberative democratic needs-analysis case argument laid out, the second chapter proceeds by articulating conceptions of dialogue and deliberation that are built from philosophical literature and practical accounts. In these conceptions, dialogue and deliberation are portrayed as two particular (and related) kinds of civic talk with endemic qualities and requisite attitudes. They are described *vis-à-vis* other kinds of civic talk (and *vis-à-vis* each other) by applying Bakhtin's (1986) theory of speech genres. This theory is exceptionally useful for describing large-scale democracies' heteroglossic natures, and thus for recognizing the dynamic interplay of various civic discourses.

Extending Bakhtin's theory of speech genres to the study of political communication prepares the content of Chapter 3. The third chapter introduces the notion of discursive gaps and addresses various kinds of public meetings that may be used to fill them. It does this specifically by describing a typology of public meetings that differ in goals and qualities of talk, but which all bring officeholders and citizens into face-to-face communicative contact (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000). Chapter 3 also provides a typology of public officials who may participate in public meetings. The assumption is that different officeholders experience different roles, responsibilities, expectations, and so on, and that these factors affect their experiences in public meetings with citizens.

Generally, the third chapter recognizes that the guiding purpose of mapping political discourses reflects a sense that different speech genres are appropriate for different civic functions. If there are specific, necessary civic functions that are going unfulfilled, then it is important to identify and forge discursive spaces for new communication events. The provision of typologies of public meetings and officeholders is crucial to the design and execution of the dissertation's empirical study.

Chapter 4 introduces the empirical study that is the subject of the dissertation's final three chapters. The fourth chapter explains the selection of cases for study, which were chosen in order to capture variation across public meeting and officeholder types. The chapter also explains the methodology behind data collection. The data is composed partly of fieldnotes assembled during participant-observation of public meetings. These observations are structured according to Hymes' (1972) conceptions of "social units" and "speech components." The data also includes transcripts of interviews with officeholders who participated in the events. These interviews focus on the officeholders' experiences of the public meetings, including their perceptions of motivations, goals, intended and enacted communication processes, and outcomes.

The dissertation's fifth chapter is devoted to the presentation of data. The chapter is structured according to the three case studies, which are chronicled individually. An important point behind the presentation of this observational and interview data is that the case studies are not intended to provide generalizeable findings. Rather, they are intended to provide focused views of some public meetings in practice, with all of their contextual and discursive complexities. Reflective consideration of the observed speech components and the participating officeholders' reports may raise some issues that deliberative democrats' practices have overlooked. The hope behind the collection and interpretation of data is that some of the constraints and possibilities experienced by officeholders may be illuminated, to the betterment of government-initiated public meetings in the future.

With this in mind, Chapter 6 discusses the cases' contexts, enacted talk, and officeholders' reported experiences. These case discussions explicate several noteworthy features that have implications for thinking about public meetings' utilities in democratic communities. The final chapter also responds to the project's motivating research questions by applying insights from the cases, reviews the dissertation's major points, addresses its strengths and limitations, and identifies potentials for ongoing research.

Summary

This introductory chapter has accomplished four things. It has situated the project's academic and theoretical orientation in terms of the deliberative democratic perspective; described some of the problematic conditions of contemporary American civic life that motivate the project; identified the project's research questions and empirical goals; and previewed the dissertation's textual structure.

First, I positioned the project's academic and theoretical orientation in terms of the deliberative democratic approach to civic phenomena and practices. I did this by identifying deliberative democratic studies as a discipline within the political communication field, which is in turn a field that bridges the communication studies and political science areas of inquiry. Deliberative democratic studies take from political science its major topical concerns, including the construction of political meanings and the processes of public policy derivation. From communication studies, deliberative democratic scholarship takes two related assumptions. The first assumption is that political meanings are socially constructed in intersubjective communication processes.

This leads to the second assumption: that political inquiry and practice should be grounded in concern for civic participants' ways of speaking, because that is where politics is brought to life.

Having explicated this project's academic orientation, the chapter then addressed its motivation: the problems of civic inefficacy in policymaking, civic apathy and cynicism, and cultural fragmentation. Alleging that these general problems underlie the United States' many specific political troubles (e.g., low voter turnout, divisive partisanship, etc.), deliberative democrats respond by implementing open-ended public discussions (such as those facilitated by the Public Conversations Project and the Public Dialogue Consortium) that are tailored to address the problem of cultural fragmentation along moral faults. It also concerns the implementation of projects such as National Issues Forums, Citizen Juries, and Study Circles that bring citizens together with each other and with public officials to derive informed public policy.

The chapter's third task was to identify the dissertation's goals. I recognize that, despite the deliberative democratic efforts to encourage institutional (government-initiated) public meetings, there has been little attention paid to officeholders' participatory experiences. In eagerness to privilege citizens' political experiences—and thus to reinvent citizenship in a participatory mold—deliberative democratic researchers have inadvertently neglected officeholders' experiences. Lost in this neglect are accounts of constraints and opportunities that are especially important given the officeholders' institutional responsibilities. With this in mind, I ask, What are some of the ways in which public meetings—particularly deliberative public meetings—might take place given our civic milieu and the practical experiences of officeholders?

This broad question is best addressed by responding to four relatively specific research questions: (a) Where in the scope of American political talk are there appropriate ecological niches for institutionalizing public meetings? (b) Discursively, what distinguishes public meetings from other kinds of political speech situations? (c) What diverse civic needs might different kinds of public meetings (with different discursive qualities) fulfill? (d) How may officeholders' accounts inform understanding of public meetings' democratic potentials and restrictions?

With these questions in mind I describe the contexts, enacted talk, and officeholders' accounts of three public meetings. All cases are government-initiated and bring citizens and officeholders together in face-to-face communication. But the meetings vary significantly in terms of motivations, goals, processes, and so on. Each case report includes contextual information, narratives developed from my participant-observations and field-notes, and pertinent content from interviews with facilitating and participating officeholders. In interpreting this data, I hope to illustrate the contextual and discursive complexities that public meetings may experience, and thus flesh out some implications for understanding public meetings' democratic utilities. My ultimate intention is to inform both the deliberative democratic agenda and the practices of officeholders in conceiving and implementing effective public meetings.

Finally I have previewed the dissertation, which is arranged according to six chapters. The first three chapters provide theoretical exposition that is crucial for understanding the deliberative democratic ideals and agenda. This exposition also provides means for recognizing niches in the civic discursive landscape where public meetings—particularly deliberative kinds—may be appropriate. Chapter 4 explains the methodology for selecting case studies, observing case studies, and interviewing officeholders. Chapter 5 presents the case reports in descriptive terms whereas the sixth, concluding chapter assesses them in discussions. In addition to providing interpretive discussion, Chapter 6 serves as a conclusion for the entire project. As such, it responds to the motivating research questions, reviews the project, and addresses strengths, limitations, and implications for future research.

Chapter 2: Public Deliberation and Republican Democracy

The term democracy denotes collective self-rule. The general democratic notion, though, does not specify how the members of a political unit should carry this out. Depending on the context, democratic governance may stress egalitarian, respectful relationships (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997) and consensus building (Sager & Gastil, 2001) or, at the other extreme, radical individualization or partisanship—manifested in such behaviors as majority-rule voting (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Johnston et al., 1992) and executive decision making (Burns, 1978; Schmitt, 1996). Between the *pluribus* and the *unum* of democratic participation, healthy large-scale democratic organizations are likely to experience a wide range of decision-making (task-related) and relationship building (maintenance) processes, all of which fulfill particular functions.[6]

The different discourses that compose a healthy democracy are tied to diverse aspects of the rounded citizen, who is at once a community member and an individual. At times this hypothetical citizen behaves communally and collaboratively, as when she participates in neighborhood meetings or discusses current events at the local coffee counter. At other times she is individualistic (or partisan) and expressive, as when she votes in an election, places a political sticker on her car bumper, or participates in an organized protest. Her communication may, at other times, be somewhere between collaborative interactivity and expressive activity, as when she attends a public forum to observe officeholders or candidates debate. Fostering different kinds of communicative channels and behaviors in different situations is responsive to a gamut of organizational needs, ranging from open-ended pluralism to sheer authority. Conversely, being unresponsive to diverse needs results in over-emphasizing certain kinds of communication and neglecting others, to the detriment of a healthy democracy and participatory citizenship (Dewey, 1954; Hirschkop, 1999; Rawls, 1996; Zaller, 1997).

The interplay of communal and liberal conceptions of citizenship within large-scale democracies is manifest in the tension between direct-democratic and representational processes. Cheney's (1995) principle is at the heart of this tension: "The intense, face-to-face interaction required by real, direct democratic participation cannot be maintained in something larger than what we call a small group. Larger groups must therefore create subunits or spin off new organizations" (p. 174). At stake in the playing-out of this tension is the quality of civic engagement and efficacy in political matters, and power relations between government officials and citizens. According to Gastil (1993),

> As the number of group members increases, it becomes more difficult to maintain an even distribution of final authority in the group. Decision-making hierarchies may begin to emerge, separating lower level group members from decisions made at the top. In its most benign form this may amount to a form of representative democracy, and at the worst, the group becomes an oligarchy or dictatorship. (p. 127)

The American civic structure is conceived as a form of representative democracy. But what form of representative democracy is it, with what predominant qualities? From a "communication-based" perspective on human interaction (Deetz, 1994, p. 566), this question may only be answered by assessing the institutional and informal genres of talk that occur in American civic life. From this perspective I recognize that an organization's discourses both affect and reflect its structure and relationships. Communication and structure are thus integrally bound. As Hirschkop (1999) writes, it "isn't a matter of institutions and political structures first and language, if ever, afterwards. . . . Transformations in the style of speech and the available forms of communication are critical in the struggle for a just and democratic society" (p. 26).[7] More plainly, "communication is the 'stuff' that composes the public's business, the process in which our social worlds are made" (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997, p. 92).

This chapter is about such "stuff": the kinds of talk that affect and reflect the condition of American politics. It is also about American democratic talk *vis-à-vis* a particular ideal that urges dialogic and deliberative transformations. Specifically, this chapter contextualizes the deliberative democratic agenda by accomplishing three tasks: (a) articulating the argument for increased dialogue and deliberation among citizens and between citizens and officeholders; (b) defining and describing dialogue and deliberation in conceptual and practical terms; and (c) extending Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory of speech genres to democratic politics to describe the "heteroglossic" demands of large-scale democratic organizations, and the potentials of dialogic and deliberative talk as they complement (and are complemented by) other genres of public talk.

Causes of Civic Inefficacy, Apathy and Cynicism, and Cultural Fragmentation

The first chapter initiated a needs-analysis case argument. This argument is structured around issues of problem, underlying causes, and solution—all of which I examine from a deliberative democratic perspective. The argument began by recognizing three fundamental and related problems in contemporary American civic life. It will culminate in the encouragement of dialogue and deliberation among citizens and between citizens and officeholders.

As Chapter 1 described, deliberative democrats group a wide range of specific symptoms in American political life (e.g., low voter turnout, uninformed voting, lack of community involvement, and competitive and sensationalized politics) into three related and underlying categories of ill: civic inefficacy, civic apathy and cynicism, and the widening of cultural rifts. Here I summarize some key alleged causes for each of these three general problems, as identified in the deliberative democratic literature.[8] These causes are all tied to communicative features of contemporary American politics, including structural and stylistic preferences—"speech codes" (Philipsen, 1997)—that privilege stratification, elite control, and competitive practices.

Blame for the Problem of Civic Inefficacy

The problem of civic inefficacy concerns a functional abstraction of the American public from executive and legislative processes and decisions. It is manifested in a scarcity of formal channels through which citizens may both develop educated policy preferences and inform policymakers, as well as a prevalence of "top-down" scalar chains throughout a bureaucratically structured organization. Although there are various conventional ways in which citizens are encouraged to express themselves (e.g., including public opinion polls, public hearings, talk radio, and direct lobbying), none is completely adequate for creating an informed and deliberative public will, articulating this will precisely, and influencing public policy (Gastil, 2000, pp. 92-93). Without channels that permit citizens to derive and effectively express their informed policy preferences in a "bottom-up" or circular manner, the structure's representational policymaking mechanisms are cut off and autonomous. This problem is due to structural and attitudinal features of contemporary American life, which reinforce each other.

Structurally, the very size of the American democratic system challenges management of the relationship between local and general discourses, and thus the idea of inclusive civic participation (Dahl & Tufte, 1973). Citizens on local levels are relatively able to engage in direct democratic contact with each other and policymakers, and therefore be efficacious. Their access and influence, however, become diffused within more general systems such as state and federal policy arenas. This is because they must rely on representational mechanisms in larger systems (Cheney, 1995). In those mechanisms, elected and appointed officials speak for—i.e., legislate and administrate for—the people who cannot be physically present to speak for themselves. Officeholders, talking among themselves, develop understandings of issues through discourses that absent citizens do not have access to, and, thus, exercise a large degree of decision making autonomy. Deliberative democrats assert that the structural privileging of elite discourses—rather than those of the citizens whom the elites represent—contributes to an inefficacious public (Bessette, 1980, 1994; Fishkin, 1995; O'Leary, 1996; Snyder, 1999; Zaller, 1992).

This was not always the case in American governance. A civic republican model was the democratic standard until the later part of the nineteenth century. In this model, "America was characterized by a vibrant civil society in which individuals became citizens as they engaged together in civic practices" (Snyder, 1999, p. 12). In the Populist movement following the American Civil War, however, there was "a transition . . . from community-based citizenship to individualistic information consumption that . . . parallels a similar shift in the larger political party structure" (Snyder, 1999, p. 17). Although the Populist movement itself was subsequently replaced during the Progressive Era and the industrial revolution, the disengagement of the polity and the autonomy of elite partisans and policymakers continued to increase. In contemporary American politics, the structure—girded upon scalar chains of downward information and persuasion—favors elite discourses. This inhibits the establishment of a knowledgeable, deliberative, and efficacious public. The result is the "domination of mass opinion by elites" (Zaller, 1992, p. 311) and the pervaded sense that citizens' responsibilities involve reactionary voting rather than more constitutive communication, like innovative community problem solving.

A fundamental aspect of this alleged elite domination and narrowing of citizenship is the devaluation of local, face-to-face discourses. This devaluation limits citizen's information repertoires and capacities for voice. Instead of structural and attitudinal preferences for communal knowledge formation and decision making, there is an individualizing impulse that renders citizens' engagement decidedly private. Rather than building information bases through communal engagement, citizens are more likely to gain political understandings by watching television (Morley, 1992, p. 278). Even the modern rise of "town meeting" style public forums, in which officials engage in question and answer "discussions" with citizen-audiences, are tailored for mass-media presentation and consumption. Rather than emphasizing interactive discussion, such events protect officeholders and candidates with pre-screened questions and prepared speaking notes; ultimately, these occasions provide elected officials with opportunities to rhetorically construct their public images and heresthetically package political issues. Citizens may find opportunities for voice in such forums, especially in cases when questions are not pre-screened; often, though, such events merely provide angry citizens opportunities to rant, creating discursive contexts in which "little two-way communication occurs" (Mathews, 1994, p. 23).

Attitudinally, the American public has generally accepted the structural limitation of communicative channels and the emphasis on elites' unilateral discourses and autonomous decision making. A large part of this acceptance concerns the unquestioned role of trust in representational authority (Warren, 1996). A representative's function, it is assumed, is to stand for a collective that is not physically present—to both point to a referent (i.e., the public will) and articulate its essence in some way. This assumption perpetuates a mistaken confidence in the very existence of a referent—the public will—prior to its representation. It also disguises the fact that, in the practice of political representation, the signifiers of public will are inherently autonomous individuals—"human beings" with inevitable private interests who are charged with making "good" deliberative decisions within confined discursive contexts (Dewey, 1954, p. 76). As Bessette (1994) notes,

> Although representatives have an obligation to prefer the interests of their constituents to their own personal interests, they have an equally important

> obligation to exercise their independent judgement as to what policies would best promote the good of their constituents and of the nation. This judgement will be informed by the discussion and debate that occur within the legislative body; for only those who are directly exposed to the arguments can reach wise decisions. (p. 41)

The representational assumption that political representation is an epistemological function of knowing and enacting an extant public will fosters undue confidence in officeholders' authority and responsiveness. Citizens are instructed to assume that representatives act in communal, rather than private, interests and that officials are passive to "the domination by the public weal of their other desires" (Dewey, 1954, p. 76). This confidence, in turn, minimizes institutional reliance on deliberative citizen engagement. The ultimate result is "a justifiable surrender of judgement by subjects to those who rule on their behalf" (Warren, 1996, p. 46) and the popular sense that efforts to inform their public officials have little effect, or (more optimistically) are simply not necessary.

The theme that runs through these related structural and attitudinal inhibitors of informed and engaged citizenship is this: popular deliberation is not the standard or primary means of affecting informed public policy; rather, the popular vote plays this role. Citizenship is thus truncated, with its primary responsibility enacted in the individual and private act of voting. Voting *is* a kind of voice, and it has a significant indirect bearing on public policy: "When members of Congress consider an issue, they are naturally concerned with reelection, with publicity, and with the effect of their deliberations on public perceptions . . . in addition to the merits of the issue" (Fishkin, 1995, p. 42). But voting is a limited and limiting kind of voice, especially when voting choices are not prepared with deliberative consideration. When replacing rather than complementing more communal forms of discourse, unidirectional campaign messages and impulsive voting hamper the quality of political information and the propensity for community problem-solving. The result is a cycle of civic inefficacy, rooted in "underdeveloped public judgements" (Gastil, 2000, p. 33) that arise through the manipulation of political information as it is passed down through mass media channels (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Zaller, 1992). The less informed and engaged the citizens, the more permission elite policymakers—at the urging of special interest lobbies—have to author and control public knowledges, agendas, and policies.

The emphasis on voting as the hallmark activity of citizenship further limits civic engagement because it exempts citizens from the need to gain encyclopedic political knowledge. Political science scholars like Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1995) and Lupia (1994) reinforce the sense that voting is the fulcrum of democratic participation by valuing heuristics (voting shortcuts, such as partisan cues) in light of the typical citizen's perceived lack of time and energy for more involved knowledge and interest formation. Lupia (1994), for one, argues that voters who rely on partisan cues tend to derive the same opinions or decisions as if they had pursued full encyclopedic knowledge, but with much less time and energy. This value-emphasis on product (the election) avoids concern for the process of democratic self-governance, and thus limits democratic citizenship to a reactive (rather than responsive) and non-creative role. The effect is an uninformed—and thus inefficacious—civic body.

As Bartels (1996) argues, "One of the most striking contributions to political science of half a century of survey research has been to document how poorly ordinary citizens approximate a classical ideal of informed democratic citizenship" (p. 195). This failure of informed efficacy, deliberative democrats argue, is due to an increasingly limited and individualized conception of citizenship, a preoccupation with unilateral elite discourses and abstracted decision making practices, and a scarcity of formal channels through which citizens can collaborate with each other and their public officials.

Blame for the Problems of Civic Apathy and Cynicism

When democratic citizenship is narrowed around the simple act of voting, voter turnout numbers are troubling. Low voter turnout suggests that a large percentage of the American public is "tuned out." This is due to largely apathy and cynicism, which are different but related problems of American civic life. They differ in that the former involves a perceived disconnect between politics and one's immediate life, and the latter involves an outright distaste for politics and professional politicians. Both hamper civic participation and interest in politics. Due to apathy and cynicism, voter turnout numbers remain low, citizens tend to be under-informed and unconcerned about political issues, and gulfs between citizens and policymakers grow wider.

Generally, media representations of politics encourage apathy and cynicism by portraying it as a spectator sport (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). The political players inhabit arenas (e.g., "inside the beltway") far removed from the living rooms and neighborhoods of typical citizens. Both the playing-out of the political "game" and the consequences of public policy are reported and observed without drawing connections to citizens' daily lives. This is particularly true for apathetics, who view politics as akin to a soap opera or a sports drama. Citizens-as-spectators need not watch if the content becomes too sickening or irrelevant. With a sense that either "it doesn't matter to me" or "things will never change," politics can be ignored without perceived consequence. In the case of cynics, Mathews (1994) claims that citizens have been "forced out of politics by a hostile takeover" and are "mad as the devil" about it (p. 11). This anger does not, however, motivate them to take politics back. In many cases, it simmers in the form of cynicism that disheartens citizens and prompts further withdrawal from public activities—even rudimentary ones like voting.

There are two aspects of contemporary American politics-as-a-spectator-sport that specifically contribute to apathy and cynicism. These are the focus on competitive discourses—such as debate and negative campaign advertising—as the standard mode of political talk and the sensationalism (even "pop-culturalization") of political actors and their interaction.

Politics as competition. Tannen (1998) claims that we live in an "argument culture" that promotes competitive kinds of public discourses. Kohn (1992), too, observes that American citizens are taught from an early age that competition—in all facets of daily life—is the normal communicative code. In politics, the two-party structure and partisan forms of speech, such as debate and negative campaign advertising, contribute to a sense that politics is a sport fueled by self-interest, manipulation, and lack of consequence for Americans' daily lives.

Debate is "repetitive, entrenched, and rhetorical. Rather than opening people up to new ideas, debate tends to close them down—they get an 'I already heard this a thousand times' attitude, and they just talk louder and argue harder about their own views, rather than being receptive to others'" (Conflict Research Consortium, 1997). The two-party structure in American politics promotes debate over more collaborative genres of discourse. This is because issues may be simplified to revolve around two competing positions rather than a variety of alternatives. This makes public issues palatable for a citizen body that has limited time, energy, and encyclopedic knowledge. It also facilitates tidy decision-making closure when time limitations exist. Unfortunately, debate truncates political possibilities by excluding "outside" possibilities that may, if given voice, have some legitimacy (Kelshaw, 1997). It also inhibits synthetic and collaborative means for problem solving, while fueling antipathy and a sense that policies serve the powerful rather than the public.

Debate is a non-synthetic mode of discourse. Since opponents bring previously decided attitudes with them to the event (and partisan audience members typically have already made up their minds about the issues), they tend to be unresponsive and inflexible when exposed to counter-arguments. Chasin et al (1996, p. 326) identify features of debate that make it "destructive." Among these features:

(a) Participants tend to be leaders known for propounding a carefully crafted position. The personas displayed in the debate are usually already familiar to the

> public. The behavior of the participants tends to conform to stereotypes. (b) The atmosphere is threatening; attacks and interruptions are expected by participants and are usually permitted by moderators. Participants speak as representatives of groups. (c) Participants speak to their own constituents and, perhaps, to the undecided middle. Differences within "sides" are denied or minimized. (d) Participants express unswerving commitment to a point of view, approach, or idea. (e) Participants listen in order to refute the other side's data and to expose faulty logic in their arguments. Questions are asked from a position of certainty. These questions are often rhetorical challenges or disguised statements. (f) Statements are predictable and offer little new information. (g) Debates operate within the constraints of the dominant public discourse. (The discourse defines the problem and the options for resolution. It assumes that fundamental needs and values are clearly understood.)[9]

Whereas debate has value in certain contexts, it is overemphasized in American political processes. Without institutional and regular use of complementary kinds of discourse—such as deliberation and dialogue—politics' competitive character simplifies and entrenches oppositional ideologies, and it fosters popular senses of exclusion and non-empowerment.

A second prominent and competitive mode of political speech that encourages apathy and cynicism is the negative campaign advertisement, or "attack ad." Attack ads "account for approximately half of all campaign messages" and are "shrinking the electorate, especially the non-partisan electorate" (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995, p. 10).

One reason that negative spots are so prevalent is due, ironically, to the drop in voter activity that they cause. "Candidates might air negative advertisements with the objective of systematically reducing turnout among those intending to vote for the opposition" (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995, p. 109). Attack ads, then, not only contribute to an apathetically and cynically inactive polity, but—in extension—to an autonomous representational body.

Attack ads fuel apathy and cynicism by highlighting mudslinging and diatribe as normative modes of political discourse. This instills a sense among the citizenry that politics is a manipulative game that is not about honesty, cooperation, and concern for the public good as much as it is about dishonesty, partisan antipathy, and power currencies. "Political advertising—at least how it is currently practiced—is slowly eroding the participatory ethos in America" (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995, p. 99).

Politics as pop culture. Politics is rendered apparently inconsequential, and even despicable, through its creation of carnivalistic public personas and dramas (Gitlin, 1998b). Even during particularly entertaining episodes like the Clinton/Lewinsky scandal, in which numerous citizens tune in to politics, a popular sense is advanced that politics have little to do with governing and much to do with personal egos and partisan game-playing. This fosters apathy and cynicism because politics is seen as inconsequential for American daily life, and its players as ridiculous and worthy of mocking (Moy & Pfau, 2000).

Cappella and Jamieson (1997) describe the portrayal of politics in television news media as perpetuating a "spiral of cynicism" by emphasizing competitive political conceptions. Moy and Pfau (2000) provide data suggesting that television talk shows may reduce citizens' confidence in government institutions by mocking politicians and political structures. The development of media technologies in the twentieth century bear important sociological effects in general (Ong, 1982), and, more specifically, on the public's sense of what politics is and how it functions (Davis & Owen, 1998). In part, the effect is a sense that "if something is not on television, it hasn't happened" (Fishkin, 1995, p. 14). Furthermore, what is displayed on television is cut into sound bites taken out of context, and displayed as images that construct politician's personas and digestible narratives. Personas tend to be caricatured in simple terms of "good guy" and "bad guy," and narratives honed around divisiveness and mudslinging. Although these personas and narratives may hold the public's attention between commercial breaks, they ultimately contribute to a sense that political activity is not a noble pursuit, and certainly not something that "normal" people do. In short, mass media treatments of politics perpetuate an inherently top-down enterprise that contributes to a passive, consumerist, and abstracted citizenry (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Gitlin, 1998a, 1998b; McKluen & Fiore, 1967; Morley, 1992; Zaller, 1992).

Blame for the Problem of Cultural Fragmentation

Rifts not only exist between citizens and officeholders, but also along American society's cultural faults. The problem of cultural fragmentation concerns the public's sense that moral and ideological disagreements have only mutually exclusive options for resolution. Though a democracy requires diverse ways of perceiving and talking in order to remain healthy (Dewey, 1954; Janis, 1972), it also needs a common culture that provides shared traditions and discursive means for turning diversity into something synthetically productive (Ryfe, 1998). When differences are emphasized in ways that make distinct cultural groups and their value-constructs seem irreconcilable to each other, a large democracy becomes more fractured and less synthetic. Groups define themselves by their competing ideologies, and strive to influence public policy by implementing distributive ("either/or") rather than integrative ("both/and") power (Dahl, 1957; Lilly, 1989).

Pearce (1989) describes the communicative mode that widens cultural divisions as "ethnocentric." Ethnocentric communication is the process by which members of a culturally diverse society evaluate others' perspectives and ways of speaking according to their own cultural standards. This kind of talk is "the norm in contemporary American society. It . . . structures domestic political discourse" (Pearce, 1989, p. 120). The prevalence of ethnocentric communication hampers empathy across a pluralistic polity and prevents political means for talking about ideological differences in productive, synthetic ways. It also defines and opposes different cultural groups in competitive power relationships (Kohn, 1992).

The definition and opposition of different ideological groups within a democratic society raises the notion of *e pluribus unum*, by which unifying public policies emerge out of a heterogeneous public and its direct-democratic and representational discourses. If those discourses are fundamentally ethnocentric, the movement toward political coherence is conceived as competitive rather than synthetic. Groups with less distributive power are identified as dissidents, and their cultural value schemes and ways of speaking are marginalized or eradicated to preserve coherence with society's dominant norms. When opposing cultural groups have roughly equal power currencies, their inter-group communication takes the form of "diatribe" in which no one group gains an upper hand, and competing perspectives are hardened instead of transformed (Chasin et al., 1996; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997; Tannen, 1998).

The proliferation of diatribe as a standard approach to political discourse is the fundamental source of blame for the problem of cultural fragmentation in American democracy. To clarify, diatribe is not a singular discursive form. It is an assortment of speech genres that share emphases in active expression rather than interactive transaction. Ritualized political diatribe includes debate and demonstration, both of which posit *a priori* belief and value schemes rigidly against each other in competitive ways. If opponent groups with mutually exclusive commitments hold enough distributive power to refuse coherence, the speech event produces head butting and the solidification of those *a priori* perspectives that participants brought with them.

In short, the widening of cultural rifts in American civic life appears to be due in large part to a historical emphasis on competitive public discourses—to the "argument culture" in which American politics occurs (Tannen, 1998). Just as American free market capitalism values competition, the political system to which it is tied privileges discourses that conceive power as distributive rather than integrative. The result is a lack of synthetic means for managing moral conflicts and the widening of cultural rifts.

Remedies for Civic Inefficacy, Apathy and Cynicism, and Cultural Fragmentation

As an antidote to liberal individualism and its socio-political effects, proponents of participatory and deliberative citizenship aim to replace America's "thin representation" with "strong democracy," and its focus on individualism with a focus on community (Barber, 1998).[10] Deliberative and dialogic events are crucial to this transformation, and necessary for establishing "democratic legitimacy" (Cohen, 1997, p. 21; Fishkin, 1995; Gastil, 2000; Mansbridge, 1990; Mathews, 1994; O'Leary, 1996; Putnam, 1993). In this section, I identify and summarize some prominent programs that encourage deliberation and dialogue, and address some of the literature that speaks to their successes and potentials for transforming American politics. I group different projects into three categories: (a) events that bring citizens into contact with each other and, sometimes, with officeholders to develop informed and efficacious perspectives on public problems; (b) civic journalism projects that make political issues relevant for citizens; and (c) dialogic events in which citizens and policymakers on opposing sides of moral conflicts forge new ways of understanding and talking about seemingly irreconcilable issues.

Deliberative Projects

Sponsored largely by non-profit organizations, there are a number of projects that aim to improve citizens' understandings of complex civic issues and their potential for articulate voice in policymaking. As well, these programs strive "to close the gap between the abstract idea of citizenship and the daily realities of people's lives" (Leighninger & McCoy, 1998, p. 183). Three prominent examples are Citizen Juries

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(Atlee, 2002; Crosby, 1995; Smith & Wales, 1999), National Issues Forums (Fishkin, 1995; Gastil & Dillard, 1999a, 1999b; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997; Young, 1999), and Study Circles (Gastil & Dillard, 1999b; Leighninger & McCoy, 1998).

Citizen Juries were first convened in the mid-1970s as a citizen-led effort to garner public input on environmental issues. Since then, the procedure has become more formal, and the issues and applications more wide-ranging. Their strength is in their "potential for combining fairness and competency"—i.e., democratic inclusion and rational processes—in developing informed and deliberative public opinion on civic issues (Crosby, 1995, p. 173).

Citizen Juries consist of ten to twenty people, randomly selected to reflect a community's demographics. Participants study a public issue, proposal, or candidate and consult with experts of diverse ideological backgrounds. They then deliberate, and consult further with experts as needed. After several days of information gathering and deliberation, participants craft findings—although not according to rigid demands of consensus. Finally, they present their findings to officeholders and, through the media, the public.

The goal of Citizen Juries is to form microcosms of society that are ideally informed about public issues, and, from their deliberation, may advise other citizens. In cases in which Citizen Juries evaluate candidates, referenda, or initiatives, the group's conclusions are published and distributed, and thus function as heuristics that potentially inform other citizens' voting practices. Unlike standard voter shortcuts, such as partisan cues, this heuristic is based on a heterogeneous body of deliberative citizens rather than the advice of rigid ideologues with apparent self-interests.

A second kind of deliberative public meeting is the National Issues Forums (NIF). These forums strive "to strengthen the deliberative foundation of democracy" (Hamlin, 1993, p. 4). They do this by assembling randomly selected citizens (who reflect a demographic cross-section of society) and leading them through a one-day meeting that has four steps. These steps are: (a) the provision of background information, typically in the form of issue books and short videotapes; (b) the encouragement of mutual respect, active participation, and careful listening; (c) the drawing of personal connections between the issues and participants' daily lives; and (d) careful deliberation, which culminates in a quasi-decision-making phase in which participants identify common ground and personal policy preferences (Gastil & Dillard, 1999b, p. 9).

Study Circles, established by the Topsfield Foundation and facilitated by the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC), are similar to NIF. They differ, however, in that they use smaller groups that meet over successive days (instead of just once). According to Leighninger and McCoy (1998), Study Circles are

> democratic, highly participatory discussion groups that meet several times to address a critical public issue. The discussions are facilitated, and they follow a framework laid out in discussion materials specific to that issue. The participants talk about how the issue affects them, then consider some of the larger questions surrounding the issue, and finally discuss ways to take on the issue. . . . Each "round" of study circles concludes with an action forum, where participants

> present their action ideas and community leaders describe other opportunities for people to get involved. (p. 184)

Study Circles promote political ways of speaking that subvert the prevalent competitive modes, and thus provide citizens practice in speaking together in ways that maximize "broad participation, egalitarian communication styles, mutual respect and careful listening" (Gastil & Dillard, 1999b). Action forums permit citizens to meet directly with officeholders in manners that promote bottom-up efficacy. In cases when the press attends action forums—which is common—issues may be publicized in ways that motivate concern among the larger public, and prompt community involvement.

Research points to various benefits posed by deliberative projects like Citizen Juries, NIF, and Study Circles. These benefits include improved sophistication of knowledge bases and opinions (Gastil & Dillard, 1999a), establishment of a sense of issue relevance to participants' daily lives (Baker, 1999), and newfound abilities to talk collaboratively about public issues with those who think differently (Young, 1999). As well, citizens may become motivated to engage in their communities and to seek ongoing opportunities for public deliberation (Burkhalter et al., in press). Generally, citizens benefit by gaining public voice, forming new relationships, and learning about public issues. Government officials benefit, too, in that they gain problem-solving capacities and, potentially, broader public support and the opportunity to be visibly responsive to public advice. Communities as wholes benefit through the new definition of citizenship that deliberative public meetings promote—"one that is based on a more interactive relationship between citizens and their communities" (Leighninger & McCoy, 1998, p. 187).

Civic Journalism Projects

In response to an under-informed, apathetic, and cynical public, some journalists are taking steps to change the way that they present public issues. Some news outlets, such as the *Headwaters News* (2002), attempt to focus concern on civic issues that are pertinent to their communities or regions, and elicit community concern and "stimulate dialogue." Others, like the *San Jose Mercury News* (Heyser, 1999), turn their editorial pages over to the readers—citizens—in order to provide a much-needed public voice.

Daniel Kemmis (2001) of the Center for the Rocky Mountain West (CRMW) in Missoula, Montana describes the Center's *Headwaters News* as a project in "civic" and "public" journalism. "Public life is richer than just going to public meetings," Kemmis told me, meaning that society's political understandings and activities require different kinds of communication channels and events. Kemmis reflected on an event during his time as Mayor in Missoula. "We had lots of growth in Missoula so there was . . . a sense that we needed to protect open space." The issue, though, was not on the public's radar, so there was no initiative among citizens to contribute to problem solving. "Then we got a new editor with an interest in open space. [The local newspaper] covered open space every day." The result was an informed and engaged public that became increasingly participatory in managing the problem with government offices. This example inspired Kemmis to spearhead innovative news projects, like the *Headwaters News* in an effort to connect citizens with their communities.

As a project of the CRMW, the online *Headwaters News* "provides a daily snapshot of news and opinion in the Rocky Mountain region of North America, giving the changing West a tool to better understand itself. It provides a platform for the exchange of ideas, and to explore how online journalism can best suit and serve the West" (CRMW, 2002a). The Internet site provides daily news stories that are garnered from regional reporting sources and framed in ways that emphasize issues' relevance to citizens' daily lives. It also provides interactive channels, such as online forums (on topics such as economics, environment, and community), so that citizens can connect with one another and exchange ideas and perspectives, as well as coordinate civic efforts. The guiding purpose is to provide a "resource [citizens] can use to better understand the region's past and present and to explore and share aspirations for its future" (CRMW, 2002b).

The *San Jose Mercury News* provides a second example of civic journalism projects. Editor Rob Elder recognized that the paper's opinion page relegated readers' voices to the small-print "letters to the editor" section, and that this was a problem. "We wanted to break the caste system that says the newspaper speaks with a deep authoritative voice, while readers, if they get to talk at all, speak with little pip-squeak voices" (Heyser, 1999, p. 9). Following a series of NIF facilitated public meetings in 1995, the paper reconceived itself according to a new rule inspired by editors' experiences in listening to the public: "Journalists and politicians could listen, but not talk" (Heyser, 1999, p. 10). Before redesigning the newspaper's editorial section, editors heard feedback from focus groups, which expressed the perception that the paper was a bully that always told the readers what to think. With this in mind, the editorial section was redesigned to focus on readers' contributions. In this way, diverse perspectives are guaranteed public articulation—a voice that did not previously exist before in the San Jose community. More importantly, these diverse perspectives originate in the civic body instead of with officeholders or media figures. This permits grassroots civic innovation, and an excursion from dominant ideologies. The plurality of views published in the newspaper motivates informal conversations about civic issues throughout the community that were not occurring before the editorial page's reconception.

Civic journalism efforts like those of the *Headwaters News* (2002) and the *San Jose Mercury News* (Heyser, 1999) utilize news media as sites of civic engagement. Unlike what occurs in formally deliberative (e.g., NIF) and dialogic (e.g., Public Conversations Project) events, the kinds of talk that such civic journalism inspires are informal and emergent, and more likely to be mediated (e.g., through online forums) than face-to-face. Regardless, civic journalism initiatives benefit democracy in some perceptible ways. For one, they frame civic issues in ways that make them relevant to citizens' daily lives. As well, they give citizens new channels with which to learn about and articulate new perspectives, hone their political opinions, and potentially inform policymakers. Finally, they encourage civic concern and participation, and prompt new opportunities to talk about civic issues inclusively and productively.

Dialogue Projects

"An adequate conception of democracy must make moral deliberation an essential part of the political process" (Gutmann & Thompson, 1995, p. 87). The key here is deliberation as opposed to diatribe. Moral conflict is an inevitable aspect of democracy, which, by its nature, entails difference. To learn new ways of talking about differences is an important feature of the deliberative democratic approach. As the terms deliberation and dialogue will be distinguished in the next section of this chapter, it is important to note that the kind of talk that is useful for managing moral conflict is dialogue, despite Gutmann and Thompson's (1995) terminology. This is because tidy resolution—e.g., a policy decision—is not as important or immediate as developing new ways of talking and thinking about moral issues like abortion and capital punishment. Appropriately, many of the projects that strive to accomplish this goal describe themselves with the dialogue label.

Such projects include the Public Conversations Project (PCP) and the Public Dialogue Consortium (PDC): two prominent examples among a host of other similar programs nationwide (Chasin et al., 1996; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997; Phelps, 1996a). The PCP and the PDC share much. Their basic goals involve bringing together leaders of opposing ideological movements to talk about their differences in new ways. Doing so encourages finding previously unrealized commonalties and, perhaps, new ways of approaching public policy that would benefit both groups. The PCP, similar to the PDC, has developed

> an approach to creating contexts in which opponents in long-standing conflicts over public issues can move beyond stereotyping, polarizing rhetoric and defensive reactivity, contexts where they can relate in ways that enable them to understand more fully the beliefs, meanings, values, and fears held not only by

> their opponents, but also by themselves. We assume that to the extent that people in chronic disputes make such shifts, they can decrease costs and dangers of the conflict to themselves and to the society at large while increasing the possibility of eventual accommodation or resolution. (Chasin et al. 1996, p. 323)

The model used by the PCP stems from an approach used by family therapists. In one kind of event, representatives of the two sides spend an evening together. After dinner, they sit in a circle discuss how they personally became involved in the conflict, the main issues, and their concerns. Then they ask and respond to questions in a non-threatening manner, and reflect on what they have learned. "There is no pressure to come up with solutions or proposals for action. The goal of this dialogue is to allow people to talk from their personal experience, rather than argue in favor of their positions" (Phelps, 1996, p. 9).

More than deliberative and civic journalism projects, dialogue projects specifically target the problem of cultural rifts in American society. The objective is not to mediate, insofar as "mediation is an activity that seeks resolution of a dispute" (Chasin et al., 1996, p. 325). Also unlike deliberative and journalistic projects, dialogue projects are typically facilitated in private settings rather than public forums. This allows participants to foster relationships and means for disclosing and listening that public forums might inhibit.

Dialogue and Deliberation

The terms "dialogue" and "deliberation" recur frequently in civic literature and projects that aim to transform American political life. Their recurrence is so pronounced that they have seeped into a wide range of practical contexts, often with unreflective appropriation and, thus, vague and incongruent meanings (Stewart & Zediker, 2000; Burkhalter et al., in press; Gastil & Kelshaw, 2002). Up to this point I have invoked dialogue and deliberation repeatedly as valued practices of the deliberative democratic agenda. I have, however, neither clearly defined nor distinguished these words, treating them as primitive terms.[11] The purpose of this section is to clarify dialogue and deliberation according to their conceptual moorings and applications within the deliberative democratic framework. I borrow from philosophical and practical treatments that have influenced deliberative democratic theorists and practitioners, who in turn propel these conceptions in ways that bear on the discourses' lived qualities and potentials. In explicating dialogue and deliberation according to the accepted deliberative democratic understandings, I emphasize shared qualities that distinguish them from other genres of civic talk as well as specific qualities that distinguish them from each other.

Dialogue Defined

Conceptually and practically, dialogue has significant etymological moorings. Marrying the Greek, *dia* and *logos*, dialogue signifies "meaning through"; that is, joint understandings that emerge through participants during engaged interaction (Stewart & Logan, 1998, p. 197). This requires what Gadamer (1995) calls a "fusion of horizons" (p. 306) in which participants' experiences and perspectives confront each other with synthetic potential. As Anderson, Cissna, and Arnett (1994) clarify, "Dialogue implies more than a simple back-and-forthness of messages in interaction; it points to a particular process and quality of communication in which the participants 'meet,' which allows for changing and being changed" (p. 10). Central to this conception is the point that dialogic speech events are not occasions for mere expression, but for collaboratively forging new ways of speaking and understanding. In a word, dialogue is potentially "transcendent" (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997, p. 8).

Anderson et al.'s (1994) description of dialogue as tied to a "particular process" (p. 10) should not be mistaken to mean that it is guided by any strict methodology. There are numerous models of dialogue that span various contexts, and even these models are more fluid than rigidly defined (Phelps, 1996). Pearce and Littlejohn (1997) attest to the nefarious and contextual nature of dialogue-in-process when they describe their experiences implementing Public Dialogue Consortium events: "The PDC is eclectic and creative. It borrows established techniques from other programs, adapts these, and creates new synthetic forms" (p. 199). As Anderson et al. (1994) explain,

> Human dialogue does not just happen, as if sunshine suddenly replaces a thunderstorm. But neither can dialogue be planned, pronounced, or willed. Where we find dialogue, we find people who are open to it, people who do not renounce it cynically, but no expert technicians can merchandise or guarantee this relational quality. (p. xxi)

Although dialogue has no specific methodology, it does—as Anderson et al. (1994) assert—have a particular quality that is crucial to understanding what dialogue is.

Dialogue emphasizes several specific discursive qualities and requires its participants to uphold several specific attitudes. Together, these qualities and attitudes define dialogue as a particular speech genre among other kinds of civic talk in American democracy.

Dialogic qualities. Chasin et al. (1996) describe dialogue as a conversation in which participants

> speak openly and listen respectfully and attentively. Dialogue excludes attack and defense and avoids derogatory attributions based on assumptions about the motives, meanings, or character of others. In dialogue, questions are sincere, stimulated by curiosity and interest. Answers often disclose what previously has been unspoken. (p. 325)

This description identifies some dialogic behaviors that are tied to dialogue's qualities. Although there are numerous related qualities that dialogue invokes, I simplify this list by addressing four core (and overlapping) qualities: inter-subjectivity, openness, relinquishing of control, and insurgence.

Dialogue is an inter-subjective enterprise. Buber's (1965) distinction between "I/Thou" and "I/It" forms of relating is at the heart of dialogue's inherent inter-subjectivity.[12] In dialogue, participants relate as subjects rather than objects, and have the ability to not only affect but to be affected. Dialogue is fundamentally relational and bi- or multilateral. It is not merely causal and unilateral. Thus, the meanings that are produced in dialogue are not individual possessions that reside distinctly in each participant's head (Craig, 1998). Instead, meanings exist "in between" participants who have joint roles in its manufacture (Gadamer, 1995).

Dialogue's second fundamental quality is openness. Openness pertains to two things: participants' manners of disclosing and listening, and meaning-making's ongoing, unresolved nature. When communication partners experience dialogue they mutually employ what Stewart and Logan (1998) label "open sensitive response options" (pp. 139-141). This means that they disclose and perceive each other as personally unique rather than interchangeable; unmeasurable rather than categorized; responsive rather than reactive; reflectively aware of their communication choices; and addressable rather than abstracted (Shotter, 1993; Stewart & Logan, 1998). In this sense, they are open to the possibility of being affected by each other. Dialogue is also open in the sense that meanings are always emergent and never complete. It is a "ceaseless interplay between contrary or opposing tendencies" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 3). Decisions or understandings that arise in dialogue cannot be mistaken for fixed products, but instead as mere moments of "touching down" in an ongoing "polyphony of dialectical voices [that] struggle against [and with] one another to be heard, and in that struggle . . . set the stage for future struggles" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 4). In this sense, dialogue lacks decision and finitude.

Dialogue's third fundamental quality is participants' relinquishing of control. This concerns two aspects of dialogue: meanings are joint and fluid rather than authoritatively imposed; and dialogue always entails a degree of surprise. When participants speak and listen dialogically, it is like people sitting around a spinning potter's wheel. Each person throws clay onto the spinning formation and contributes to its shaping, but no one person has control over what develops (Stewart & Logan, 1998, p. 199). As participants' experiential understandings "fuse," the meanings that emerge are co-constructed (Gadamer, 1995). This contributes to the possibility for surprise. Since participants are spontaneous and responsive to one another—as opposed to working from prepared scripts—there is a lack of control and predictability in what meanings may arise.

Dialogue is also insurgent. This means that dialogue destabilizes existing norms and rules. Participants in dialogue negotiate the rules of their interaction and the meanings that emerge out of it. This does not mean exogenous norms and rules are not real for participants, but, as participants negotiate their relationships and interactive process, new norms and rules emerge that are contextually indigenous. In this way, dialogue destabilizes conventions and expectations that participants may have brought with them to the encounter. The experience affects ongoing discourses and relationships, having undermined their stability.

Dialogic attitudes. For dialogic qualities to become manifest in a speech event participants must maintain specific attitudes. As Stewart and Logan (1998) derive from a wide range of literature on dialogic communication, there are three general attitudes that help dialogue to occur. These are "availability," "flexibility," and "commitment to the conversation" (pp. 262-266).

Availability means "bringing some relevant aspects of yourself to the conversation" (Stewart & Logan, 1998, p. 262) while at the same time being "mindful" of what other participants bring (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992, p. 240). Part of this is what Rogers (1980) calls "empathy." While not dismissing one's own subjectivity and commitments, an empathic participant is "sensitive, moment by moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person" (Rogers, 1980, p. 142). This concerns an imaginative effort to perceive "the other's internal frame of reference accurately, understanding another life from the other's perspective, while not relinquishing one's own identity" (Cissna & Anderson, 1998, p. 92). This attitude allows legitimization of alien perspectives, information, and ways of speaking, and thus the establishment of common ground where there was none before.

Flexibility concerns aligning ways of speaking among participants, and thus preventing a defensive climate (Gibb, 1961; Stewart & Logan, 1998). Specifically, to be flexible participants must use descriptive rather than evaluative language, and emphasize spontaneity instead of strategy in their talk. Descriptions allow participants to step back from judgements of "good" and "bad" in order to focus on relatively neutral observations. This allows them "to remain more flexible in responding to the changes in [their] own feelings and attitudes" (Stewart & Logan, 1998, p. 263). Spontaneous talk situates participants in the "here and now" of their conversation, and allows them to be direct as well as sensitive and responsive. Gibb (1961), in observing numerous business meetings, noticed that defensive climates were fueled by talk that listeners perceived as strategic—prepared (rather than immediately responsive) and manipulative utterances that implied hidden agendas to listeners. If speakers are honest *and* responsive to what others say—in both content and tone—listeners are likely to be less defensive, and a climate for dialogue is better established.

The third attitude that dialogic participants must maintain is commitment to the conversation: "the willingness to focus on what's going on between you and the other [participants], the disposition to be present to [them] for the time being" (Stewart & Logan, 1998, p. 265). This allows commitment to one's own perspective while being provisional in how one speaks and listens. A key to maintaining commitment to the conversation is to advance an attitude of equality instead of superiority (Gibb, 1961), which diminishes the urge to demand others' coherence with one's perspective and cultural ways of speaking (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997, p. 19). A dialogic environment is marked by efforts toward egalitarianism—hierarchically, ideologically, and procedurally—so an attitude of equality is crucial. This does not mean that equality can be actualized in practice, because power relations are ubiquitous and ever developing in dialogic encounters such as collaboratively managed conflicts (Wilmot & Hocker, 1995). An attitude of equality, though, helps participants to be aware of how power dynamics affect their communication, and to strive toward integrative rather than distributive power management.

When participants do not maintain one or more of these attitudes, efforts toward dialogue are hindered. Take this example from a newspaper report (Thorbourne, 2002): "It was billed as a 'Community Dialogue Session.' It came across more like a verbal wrestling match between skeptical neighborhood residents and Montclair State University professors who seemed caught off guard by impertinent questions from an uncooperative student body" (p. A4). The stated purpose of this "Community Dialogue Session," which was funded in part by a federal grant, was to help residents of impoverished neighborhoods organize pending revitalization work. Paid facilitators—all white university faculty—and community members—mostly black, uneducated, and poor—were unable to align their cultural ways of speaking. Community members, angry about the fact that the white professors were being paid for their participation, charged that the professors "seemed to assume that they were dealing primarily with poor, uneducated people" (p. A4). One community member asked the facilitators if they "had ever had an 'Aha' moment in which they realized that most persons in the community didn't need the workshops that were being offered" (p. A4). In response, a facilitator praised the "good points" and invited community members to participate on the advisory committee. This was perceived as "partonizing" (p. A4).

Regardless of blame in this dialogic failure, it is evident that speaking styles and attitudes were not aligned, as dialogue requires. Attitudes of inequality, the perception of hidden agendas, and the inability to listen empathically prevented dialogue from taking place. The result was defensiveness on both sides, and mutual anger that produced oppositions.

Deliberation Defined

The term deliberation, or public deliberation, invokes a strong if not inextricable connection to democracy itself. This is due in part to its centrality in many significant and divergent writings on democracy, ranging ideologically from Hobbes (1994) to Mill (1972) to Habermas (1979). It is due also to its etymological tie to rationality, which, when invoked, lends a sense of legitimacy to democracy's processes and outcomes (Cohen, 1997).[13] Some writers even presume that deliberation is an inherently democratic kind of discourse because it embodies such core democratic values as egalitarianism, inclusion, and participation (Mathews, 1984; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). In recent years, deliberation has become an increasingly central concern of communication scholars (Burkhalter et al., in press; Gastil, 1993; Gastil & Kelshaw, 2002; McLeod et al., 1999; Osborn & Osborn, 1991; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997), public opinion researchers (Page, 1996; Yankelovich, 1999), and political philosophers (Bohman, 1996; Cohen, 1997; Guttman & Thompson, 1996) who wonder about its use and potential in contemporary American life. The traditional assumption that deliberation is part and parcel of democracy has provided, perhaps, a faulty sense that it is *the* democratic kind of talk and that it is performed regularly and competently. New thought on the topic, though, is questioning this assumption and suggests that deliberation in American life is "the exception rather than the rule" (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997, p. 8).

Deliberation serves specialized terminological functions in disciplines ranging from robotics to law to healthcare (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2002). Even within the related fields of political communication, political science, communication, public administration, and policy studies, defining the term succinctly is hindered by its application in a wide range of contexts and processes, and the term's somewhat casual use. Despite a basic understanding that deliberation has something to do with "reasoning on the merits of public policy" (Bessette, 1994, p. 46), the concept is potentially "a moving target that many seek but none can hit" (Burkhalter et al., in press, p. 4). Deliberation does, though, have some defining features that recur across its various conceptions in disciplines related to deliberative democratic studies. These universals lend deliberation distinction as a specific type of political discourse.

Dialogic features of deliberation. Before addressing what distinguishes deliberation from other kinds of political talk it is useful to recognize what it shares with dialogue. Burkhalter et al. (in press) explain that deliberation has so much in common with dialogue that it is fundamentally dialogic (p. 17). Those dialogic qualities and attitudes described above apply thoroughly to deliberation, and overlap with some general democratic values.

Cohen (1997) identifies four aspects of the "ideal deliberative procedure" in civic contexts (pp. 22-23). These four aspects are congruent with the qualities and attitudes of dialogue preserved in deliberation. They also invoke core democratic values that fuel the assumed connection between democracy and deliberation. These four aspects are: (a) participants' freedom from authoritative constraints; (b) participants' application of reasons in advocating and criticizing policies; (c) equality of participants; and (d) group effort toward consensus building.

Cohen's (1997) first deliberative aspect is participants' freedom from authoritative constraints. Freedom here applies to two dimensions of the deliberative process. First, participants must feel that they are permitted to consider any and all proposals that arise in the discussion without exogenous limitations. Second, they must feel as though whatever decision the deliberating group makes may be viably acted upon without authoritative constraint. This falls in line with the dialogic rejection of exogenous authority in favor of joint control. Together, discussants determine the parameters and rules of their deliberation. This does not mean that there aren't such parameters and rules:

it does mean, however, that deliberative participants innovate them collaboratively, from within the conversation.

The second deliberative aspect is the use of reason to support proposals and criticisms. In one sense, deliberation's emphasis on rationality is a feature that distinguishes it from dialogue (as discussed below). In another sense, though, reason need not be conflated with Western logic (which is one particular form of reason). As there are innumerable modes of reasoning that vary from culture to culture—ranging from emotive testimony to syllogistic logic—it can be assumed that the parameters of acceptable reason are to be determined collectively by deliberating group members. The more diverse the deliberating group is, the more potentially acceptable forms of reason may come into play (Sanders, 1997; Warnick & Manusov, 2000). This falls in line with the dialogic attitudes of flexibility and equality, which have ties to the quality of joint control.

The third deliberative ideal identified by Cohen (1997) is equality. This applies to the formal and emergent rules of the deliberative procedure, in that they should not single out individuals. Participants should have equal and adequate opportunities to speak (Gastil, 1993) and maintain an egalitarian collective without concretized hierarchical divisions. If the group requires enactment of leadership roles, they will be best accomplished by rotating the role designations over time. This may prevent formal stratification from occurring. Inclusion is part and parcel of equality, as it requires voicing and legitimization of minority perspectives that hinder groupthink (Janis, 1972). For deliberation to function well, it must encourage diversity. Diversity helps group members to challenge existing rules and norms, and to forge new ways of speaking and thinking about their issues. If diverse perspectives are discouraged in deliberative settings, there is little potential for deliberation to produce synthetic and innovative—or at least roundly considered—outcomes. Such outcomes are deliberation's general goal.

The final deliberative aspect identified by Cohen (1997) is group effort toward consensus building. There are a variety of democratic decision making methods that may be appropriate in different deliberative contexts—consensus, majority rule voting, proportional outcomes, and mixed methods (Gastil, 1993). Similarly, there are a variety of formal means for deliberating toward such decisions, including those prescribed in Robert's Rules of Order (Robert, 1977), secularized derivatives of Quaker practices (Atlee & Zubizarreta, 2002), "dynamic facilitation" (Rough, 1997), and many more. Consensus may not be appropriate or feasible in every deliberative setting (Sager & Gastil, 1999), so deliberation need not involve consensus in order to be bona fide. Cohen (1997) emphasizes a *spirit* of consensus as an aspect of ideal deliberation because it reminds group members that they are bound by common goals.

Distinguishing features of deliberation. Despite deliberation's dialogic qualities, it differs from dialogue in some important ways. Deliberation's distinguishing features are rooted in the term's etymology and historical conceptions, as well as the cultural understandings of those who use the term in contemporary American organizational contexts (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2002). Deliberation's three fundamentally distinctive characteristics involve task closure, focus on policy issues, and rational weighing of evidence. Concisely put, deliberation is a small-group, discussion-based approach to deciding future courses of action based on careful weighing of evidence. This definition situates deliberation apart from dialogue, which does not necessarily strive for finite decision-making, concern the future tense, or privilege logical reason and factual evidence.

The first of these three characteristics concerns task closure. Whereas dialogue's chief goal is ideological transformation through transcendent ways of speaking, it carries a presumption that such change is an "ongoing interplay between oppositional features" that amounts to "ongoing messiness" (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 6; p. 3). The outcome of dialogue is not a tangible product. Instead it is something continuous and complex. In other words, dialogue's chief "product" is the process itself. Gastil & Kelshaw (2002), in assessing dialogue's and deliberation's terminological competition "for market share in the discourse of public participation," found that dialogue connotatively "emphasizes open exploration rather than decision making" in American organizational applications (p. 55). Deliberation retains key dialogic features, including a certain degree of openness, but it is much more teleological. Its goal is to produce something concrete, like a policy decision or formal recommendation. Policy may be decided variously—by majority-rule voting, proportional outcomes, consensus, or mixed methods (Atlee & Zubizarreta, 2002; Gastil, 1993; Sager & Gastil, 1999), but such decisions are products nonetheless.

The second important aspect of deliberation's connection to policy making is its concern for the future tense. In American juridical language, the term deliberation describes group decision making[14] that considers facts in the past (guilt or innocence) as well as courses of future action (sentencing). But the language of civic participation retains and advances only the latter consideration, which is an understanding of deliberation that dates to Ancient Greek democracy. Then, Aristotle (1991) distinguished between forensic (*dikanikon*), occasional (*epideiktikon*) and deliberative (*symbouleutikon*) civic discourses. These three types respectively concern past, present, and future tenses. Deliberative speech in this conception deals with policy issues. Policy is always a matter of future tense. Dialogue, on the contrary, may focus more on current attitudes, beliefs, and values. Whereas there is likely to be a shadow of future action hanging over the discussion, dialogue's goal is not necessarily to determine future courses of action.

The third major deliberative feature is its concern for analytic consideration of sound evidence—a concern that dialogue, which is more permissibly emotional, may not have. Habermas (1984) for one understood reason as the hallmark of ideal public speech, of which deliberation (in his conception) is fundamental. Although Western culture generally values Aristotelian (1991) quasi-logic as the basis of valid reason, it is crucial to recognize that reasoning methods are "appropriate" and "valid" only in cultural (Warnick & Manusov, 1999) and contextual (Perelman, 1982) terms. If a deliberative body is diverse, then different participants will bring different communicative expectations and standards with them to the event. Regardless of cultural communicative preferences, they all must be able to articulate individual interests (Sanders, 1997) and policy preferences (Gastil, 1993) in ways that make sense to others. If participants are not reflective and explicit about their various standards for accepting each other's appeals and evidential support, their communication may be unaligned or, worse, subjected to unacknowledged power imbalances (Mansbridge, 1990; Sanders, 1997).

If, on the other hand, participants are explicit about their communicative expectations and standards, they may negotiate means for both deeming evidence legitimate and reasoning about it. Whereas a pure dialogic event may be "successful" in its open-ended questioning and demolition of normative standards, deliberation requires normative questioning and *reconstruction* if decision-making tasks are to be accomplished. With the presence of a task dimension that dialogue does not necessarily have, deliberation requires that participants share understood norms in pursuit of a common good (Bohman, 1996). What is important to deliberation is that such norms be negotiated and understood by participants collaboratively rather than in manners that foster hierarchical opposition and argumentative competition.

Mapping Civic Discourses: An Extension of Bakhtin's Theory of Speech Genres

Every form of political talk is accompanied by inherent values that manifest themselves in observable and consequential qualities. Different qualities fulfill different needs in managing the tensional space between *pluribus* and *unum* in large democratic organizations. For this reason, defining dialogue and deliberation as two specific speech genres only partly aids understanding their utilities and potentials in American civic talk. The next step is to inductively move from dialogue and deliberation to the broader concept of speech genres, to explain how speech genres function within larger social spheres. Doing so permits contextual appreciation of the qualities that dialogue and deliberation bring to democracy in relation to those of other speech genres. This, in turn, illuminates the democratic needs that dialogue and deliberation uniquely fulfill.

This section extends Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) theory of speech genres to the study of democracy. Specifically, this section utilizes the concept of speech genres in order to understand the heteroglossic nature of republican democracies and the speech genres that they comprise, and how specific democratic speech genres fulfill unique needs in maintaining the relationship between *pluribus* and *unum*.

Heteroglossic Democracy

How one studies civic life is influenced by one's assumptions about communication in organizations. Along the lines of Deetz's (1994) distinction between expressive and communication-based approaches, Pearce and Littejohn (1997) point out what's at stake when studying and practicing democracy:

> People disagree not only in their assessment of the quality of public discourse but in their judgment of the importance of public discourse itself. At issue is one's theory of communication, including a notion of how communication works and what it does. Those who think that communication is a secondary process of publicizing a [political] plan will not treat the quality of public discourse as important unless it hinders the plan. On the other hand, those who consider communication a form of action that constitutes the events and objects of our social world treat public discourse as inherently significant. Here, communication is the 'stuff' that composes the public's business, the process in which our social worlds are made. (p. 92)

To understand this "stuff" it is useful to draw on Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) tensional conception of organizational talk.

For Bakhtin, discourse is inherently relational, and there is nothing "outside" of it.[15] Language is not an objective system that exists for individuals to use as an expressive tool, as Saussure understood (1959). Instead, it inherently communicative, which means that language comes into existence only in its relational enactment. Words build sentences; sentences build utterances, which are bounded by speaking subjects' responsive turns; utterances build speech genres; and speech genres build general cultures. Bakhtin (1986) defines speech genres as spheres in which enacted language "develops its own relatively stable types" of utterances (p. 60). American democracy—like any discursive sphere—is produced and maintained in its speech genres.

Speech genres. Bakhtin (1986) distinguishes "primary" and "secondary" speech genres. Primary speech genres are general spheres of cultural meaning making, such as science, art, politics, etc. These spheres have significant overlaps, and they relationally affect one another within encompassing cultures. Secondary speech genres "arise in" these larger spheres (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 62).[16] The sphere of American politics comprises secondary genres such as dialogue, deliberation, public address, debate, and so on. It entails "complex and . . . highly developed and organized cultural communication " (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 62), and is "heteroglossic" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 263). This means that it is a composite of many different contexts and, thus, many different contextually situated ways of speaking. "Heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide" (Holquist, in Bakhtin, 1981, p. 428).

To understand heteroglossia it is necessary to explicate Bakhtin's notion of centripetal and centrifugal discursive qualities in tension, since it is this tensional playing-out that governs meaning and social relations as constructs that are forever in flux. Centripetal and centrifugal forces are poles on a dialectical continuum—centralizing and decentralizing forces, respectively. Their distinct qualities are in direct opposition. For Bakhtin, every utterance—and thus every secondary and primary speech genre—experiences pulls from both sides, and in this way manifests a particular quality that is the sum of its tensions. "Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject," he explains, "serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in every utterance" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272).

Centripetal discursive qualities. Centripetal forces are related to Buber's (1965) "I/It" (monologic) form of relating. They are standardizing qualities of talk that pronounce and maintain norms, rules, moral and ethical frameworks, and other features of a culture's dominant ideologies. In the terms of organizational communication scholarship, centripetal forces urge "unequivocality" (Weick, 1979)—adherence to a culture's uniform standards and the exclusion or absence of dissenting speech. Examples in American civil society include speed limit signs posted on roadways, "swearing in" speech-acts in legal trials, and the expected practice of bipartisan praise for presidential leadership during times of war. To emphasize centripetal qualities in talk is to invoke and perpetuate existing cultural norms and dominant ideologies.

In Buber's (1965) terminology, centripetal qualities are "monologic." Monologue involves communicatively acting "on" (as opposed to acting "with"), and is in this sense fundamentally expressive. Monologic instances of speech are characterized by unilateralism, intentionality, and authority. The emphasis on control protects speakers from surprise and safeguards their utterances against challenge or responsive discord.

Centrifugal discursive qualities. Centrifugal forces, on the other hand, are related to Buber's (1965) "I/Thou" (dialogic) form of relating. They destabilize existing norms, rules, moral and ethical frameworks, and other features of dominant ideologies. Weick (1979) describes centrifugal qualities in terms of equivocality, a state in which the interplay of pluralistic voices disrupts an organization's unity and authority. Whereas centripetal discursive qualities maintain the *status quo* and the authority of decision, centrifugal qualities continually undermine normative procedures and structures through parody, marginalia, and polyphony. This enables critical reflection, innovation (but not decision), and ongoing transformation. Examples in American civil society include graffiti (e.g., desecration of advertisements), political satire (such as that published in The Onion, a parody magazine), and grassroots citizen movements. To emphasize centrifugal qualities in talk is to subvert existing cultural norms and dominant ideologies.

In Buber's (1965) terminology, centrifugal qualities are "dialogic." Dialogue involves communicatively acting "with" (as opposed to "on"), and is characterized by bi- or multilateralism, emergence, and provision. Dialogue is based on the promise of surprise, because no one participant has meaning-making authority. Since dialogue is constitutive rather than simply expressive, it allows reflective questioning of a culture's dominant ideologies and undermining of fixed truths (May, 1998).

Diverse Speech Genres and Diverse Democratic Needs

The American political sphere is heteroglossic. It is a milieu of different, but relationally bound, speech genres. Just as the larger sphere experiences contrary needs, individual speech genres experience arrays of utterances that manifest the tensional pulls of centripetal and centrifugal forces (Bakhtin, 1986). Speech genres are defined by the sums of their qualities, and in this way differ. Hence different speech genres—including press releases, public address, debate, deliberation, and dialogue—fulfill republican democratic needs, contributing to the maintenance of the whole in light of its parts. Large-scale democratic organizations require not only unity and closure, but also diversity and openness. This is what the phrase *e pluribus unum* addresses: the tension between equivocal processes and unequivocal policies, with an implicit telic emphasis.

Given that democracy comes to life in its communication—in its utterances and speech genres—and that the synthetic and collaborative qualities of dialogically-leaning discourses appear so ethically attractive, one might conclude that an effective democratic transformation would do away with monologic discourses completely. This would be in error. Pearce and Littlejohn (1997) explain that members of the Public Dialogue Consortium

> work from a belief that patterns of communication are the sites where the events and objects of social worlds, including individual selves, are made. There are

> different forms of communication, each of which provides particular constraints and affordances for ways of being human, for personal and social development, and for patterns of social relationships. (p. 198)

To function well, large democracies require many different speech genres (Cheney, 1995). Whereas it is important to celebrate and encourage dialogue and deliberation given their devaluation in standard American politics, it is important, too, to realize that different speech genres are appropriate in different niches and contexts.

To understand this it is useful to think of political processes as conflicts in which various policy possibilities come into confrontation. Kilman and Thomas (1975) identify five different conflict styles that each have certain benefits and limitations, and are thus appropriate in different situations. With respect to two variables—concern for one's own goals and concerns for others' goals—these styles are: (a) avoidance (low concern for both one's own and others' goals), (b) accommodation (low concern for both one's own goals and for others' goals), (c) competition (high concern for one's own goals and low concern for others' goals), (d) compromise (moderate concern for both one's own goals and for others' goals), and (e) collaboration (high concern both for one's own goals and for the others' goals). The dominant conflict modes in American politics are competition and compromise. If conflict participants begin with competitive styles, and if power currencies are lopsided, the more powerful party will win and the less powerful party will lose. If their power currencies are equal, though, they typically switch to compromise—in which each side loses something and gains something. In neither case are outcomes synthetic. The deliberative democratic agenda encourages collaborative conflict management, which demands far more time and energy, but permits synthetic outcomes.

Collaboration (e.g., dialogue and deliberation) is not possible or appropriate in every situation. Sometimes competition or compromise (e.g., debate, protest, filibuster) is a more appropriate and effective style to apply. Phelps (1996b) points out that dialogic (collaborative) conflict management is "not our hope" in several circumstances (p. 8): when either side refuses to talk; when the conversation is co-opted by persons in power; and when issues of ethical justice are involved. Attitudes of equality cannot be maintained in these cases. When issues of ethical justice are involved, and when power currencies are unequal, oppositional actions are suitable for challenging injustice and nurturing power currencies. A prime example is the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Only after power currencies were balanced could public policies be changed.

Sometimes practical constraints for decision making, such as time restrictions, make deliberation an inappropriate speech genre. Compromise—perhaps in the form of negotiation—may be much quicker, and its outcomes acceptable for all participants. Just as consensus is not an appropriate decision making mode in all circumstances (Gastil, 1993; Sager & Gastil, 1999), the process of getting to a decision must reflect the relationships among participants, the constraints participants face, and the group's basic goals.

Of course, democracy is not just about making decisions in small-group, face-to-face contexts. Even though citizen involvement and deliberative public meetings are "under-utilized in the [American] political process" (Burkhalter et al., in press, p. 31), other speech genres should be recognized for the functions they serve in managing the relationship between *pluribus* and *unum*. Information must be disseminated through public address and press releases; injustices must be confronted through organized non-violent protests; candidates must distinguish themselves through debate; and so on. But, in light of the deliberative democratic recognition that citizens are left out of politics, and that competitive, polarizing discourses are applied in situations where collaboration might be more effective, it is necessary to seek out niches where deliberation and dialogue might flourish—appropriately.

Summary

This chapter has provided theoretical exposition that is useful for understanding the democratic values of dialogic and deliberative talk, and for preparing the way for the fourth chapter's subject: face-to-face meetings between officeholders and citizens. Fundamentally, Chapter 2 has been about the basic tension within large democratic organizations—between the *pluribus* and the *unum* in building public policy and community relationships. This tension plays out entirely in communicative practices, by which democratic members manage ever-changing political understandings, relationships, processes, and structures. The basic theoretical premise that girds this chapter is the notion that a healthy large-scale democracy requires a broad range of civic discourse-types with different qualities, ranging on a continuum from dialogic to monologic.

Dialogic discourses (in their most extreme state) emphasize emergent openness—in the senses of participants' open disclosure and provisional sensitivity, and the event's lack of finitude. They are inherently interactive (i.e., constitutive) communication events that treat understandings as synthetically emergent inter-subjectivities. Monologic discourses, on the other end of the spectrum, emphasize authoritative closure—in the senses of power, control, and decideability. They are inherently active (i.e., expressively causal-linear) speech events that treat understandings as objective possessions. Both qualities—and the entire gamut in between—fulfill important functions in healthy large-scale democracies. In this sense, the American political structure utilizes a wide range of speech genres that manifest different qualities. To have a qualitative imbalance is to be unresponsive to the organization's diverse needs and expectations of citizenship.

The deliberative democratic agenda is motivated by a sense that contemporary American politics experiences such an imbalance. This alleged imbalance favors the communicative practices of officeholders, who in turn privilege monologic discourses. Thus, the chapter's first major task was to explicate the deliberative democratic argument for increased and improved dialogue and deliberation among citizens with each other and with public officials. This needs-analysis case argument recognizes three fundamental ills: civic inefficacy, civic apathy and cynicism, and the widening of cultural rifts. Blame for these problems is attributed to structural aspects of large-scale democracy—such as the proliferation of downward-flowing communication channels—and attitudinal aspects—including an individualistic conception of citizenship. The general solution is the insertion of deliberative and dialogic public meetings into the civic milieu. Programs that are currently being implemented include Citizen Juries, National Issues Forums, Study Circles, various civic journalism initiatives, and dialogic events such as the Public Dialogue Consortium and the Public Conversations Project.

With the dialogic and deliberative prescription for the United States' democratic ills laid out, the chapter's second major section clarified what dialogue and deliberation are, in conceptual and practical terms. Dialogue is "a particular process and quality of communication in which the participants 'meet,' which allows for changing and being changed" (Anderson et al., 1994, p. 10). Deliberation is a small-group, discussion-based approach to deciding future courses of action based on careful weighing of evidence. The two share a series of specific qualities, including inter-subjectivity, openness, relinquishing of control, and insurgence. As well, they share attitudes, such as availability (including empathic mindfulness), flexibility (including the use descriptive rather than evaluative talk), and commitment to the conversation (including an attitude of equality). Deliberation, though, differs from dialogue in its goal of decision-making closure, its concern for future courses of action, and its emphasis on rational weighing of evidence.

Having described dialogue and deliberation as two particular speech genres in the larger milieu of civic communication, the chapter's third and final major section took an inductive step back to explore what speech genres are and how they fulfill complementary functions in democratic organizations. This section extended aspects of Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) philosophy of language to political communication. The first assertion was that large democratic organizations are fundamentally heteroglossic, which means that they are composed of a wide range of speech genres that are relationally and tensionally situated. The second assertion was that any given speech genre, in turn, is inherently heteroglossic as well, in that it experiences the internal pull of tensional qualities across its utterances. The ultimate point in this section was that large-scale democracies require a variety of formal and informal speech genres to fulfill a wide range of needs. Dialogue and deliberation, although valued in light of American democracy's alleged monologic imbalance, are not useful in every context. The trick is to locate niches where dialogue and deliberation *should* be applied, and to instill them.

The chapter's underlying objective has been to lay groundwork for thinking about the under-utilization of dialogue and deliberation in American democracy, as well as these speech genre's values and limitations with respect to other, complementary kinds of political talk. This has been a portrayal of the deliberative democratic agenda and the qualities of dialogue and deliberation with respect to American democracy's heterogeneous communication requirements.

With this portrayal, preparation is made for the third chapter. In that chapter I turn attention to the specific topic of public meetings between citizens and officeholders, as these meetings employ various speech genres—including, but not limited to, dialogue and deliberation—to accomplish their goals.

Chapter 3: Identifying Opportunities for Public Meetings

The preceding chapter provided an approach to identifying and describing an organization's various speech genres. A chief benefit of this approach, which is an extension of Bakhtin's (1986) theory of speech genres, is its capacity for mapping an organization's discourses in terms of their various qualities and practical utilities. With regard to the perceived needs of an organization such as a democratic community, one may ascertain what needs are not being met and recognize corresponding gaps in the discursive landscape. There are four related assumptions that gird the proposed usefulness of this approach for this project: (a) a democratic organization is inherently "heteroglossic" (Bakhtin, 1984; Hirschkop, 1999) in that it is composed of various formal and informal speech genres; (b) each genre is in itself heteroglossic in that it internally experiences the pull of tensional qualities (e.g., closure/openness, authority/egalitarianism, etc.); (c) an organization's discursive qualities are tied to the qualities of that organization's structure, processes, and products; and (d) different speech genres (and their various qualities) are appropriate for fulfilling respectively different organizational needs.

If contemporary American democracy has certain needs that are not being fulfilled then new discourses with specific qualities must be fostered. Deliberative qualities may be instilled by encouraging emergent and informal speech, such as discussions among neighbors at the local coffee counter over breakfast and the morning newspaper. Civic journalism projects like the Center for the Rocky Mountain West and its *Headwaters News* (2002) motivate citizens to talk informally about public issues.

They do this by providing news accounts that emphasize the relevance of issues to citizens' daily lives and by facilitating online forums. A chief goal of the *Headwaters News* project is to "stimulate dialogue about issues and events shaping the West" (Headwaters News, 2002). This dialogue occurs in relatively informal settings.

Deliberative qualities may also be fostered by implementing speech situations that are formal and, in some cases, institutionalized in governmental processes. One kind of formal civic speech situation that merits study is the public meeting (McComas, 2001). Whereas it would be valuable to study informal civic discourses like those encouraged by the Center for the Rocky Mountain West's *Headwaters News* (2002), this chapter (and the dissertation as a whole) ponders the conception, implementation, and utilities of formal public meetings between citizens and officeholders. I place particular concern on public meetings that are implemented by government officials.

As explained in Chapter 2, deliberative democrats identify needs pertaining to citizens' political efficacy, invigoration, and productive management of moral conflicts. Implementing various formal civic discourses, many of which occur in contexts of public meetings, may fulfill these needs. This chapter addresses a range of public meetings that potentially accomplish different functions to the betterment of democratic society. The bulk of the chapter fleshes out a typology of public meetings developed by Gastil and Kelshaw (2000) with the purpose of recognizing the goals and basic discursive qualities of each type. In so doing, I illuminate the different types' potentials for addressing the aforementioned civic needs.

In addition, I offer a typology of public officials who may participate in public meetings with citizens, sometimes in facilitative capacities. These different officeholders function within different organizational structures. Their experiences and responsibilities vary widely. In discriminating between types of officeholders, I acknowledge that there may be important connections between public meetings' facets—their goals, discursive processes, relationships, and outcomes—and the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of their participating (and especially facilitating) officeholders.

Describing the two typologies lays groundwork for the selection of case studies that illustrate government-initiated public meetings in practice. Thus the chapter prepares the fourth chapter's explanation of case-study selection and research methodology.

Typology of Public Meetings: Exposition

When officeholders and citizens come together to address public issues they find themselves in particular contexts built of various motivations, goals, procedures, participants, and other situational factors. No two meetings are quite alike, even in light of the formalism that may characterize certain standardized public hearings, candidate forums, and other defined and procedurally replicable civic events. However, the risk of overstating particularities and thus maintaining public meetings as the "least understood methods of public participation in community planning" (McComas, 2001, p. 36) urges recognition of general frameworks with which to classify meetings. A typology may be used to better comprehend public meetings' basic functions and qualities—to both allow descriptive understanding within general contexts and promote reflection and conscientious choices in practice. A typology may be especially useful for those who wish to forge new and various venues for political contact between officeholders and citizens.

Gastil and Kelshaw (2000) sampled a wide range of forums with the goal of "exploring the potential for direct exchanges among citizens and policymakers" (p. 2). The chief product of this study is a seven-category typology of public meetings.[17] This typology is conceived with two factors in mind.

Factor 1: Public Meeting Initiator

The first of the two factors that govern this typology is the event's initiator. Is the public meeting created, promoted, and facilitated by a government (institutional) body, citizen group, or both? This factor may affect a wide range of variables. Although there is no extant research that describes how these conditions may be affected in practice, there are several possible effects that I propose.[18]

One effect may be the degree to which citizens' recommendations and raised issues find their ways into eventual policies. Meetings initiated by government officials with the intentions of soliciting public comment, for example, might be more conducive than citizen-initiated meetings to the input's use in subsequent policy decisions. Although citizens are likely to be relegated to mere advisory roles in either case, advice that is specifically solicited by public officials may more likely be taken to heart.

The factor of public meeting initiator may also affect the relative emphases on task and relationship dimensions of group work (Benne & Sheats, 1948). This pertains to a given meeting's expressed or implied purpose. A meeting's purpose may be to decide policy or to resolve a conflict (in which cases participants strive for productivity and task-closure); to manage (but not necessarily resolve) moral conflict; or to air opinions and emotions (in which cases participants nurture relationships and group cohesiveness, but leave policymaking tasks unresolved). Although it is not my aim in this project to test the assumption, there may be connections between public meeting initiators, their goals, and the speech situations' emphases on task and relationship dimensions.

The public meeting initiator may also affect the speech situation's formality, in terms of mandated procedures and stratified roles. Government-initiated events may have formally prescribed procedures that are replicable. For instance, state officials touring towns for a series of community meetings may value uniformity of agendas and procedures. This both simplifies event preparations and guarantees fairness across localities. Some citizen-led events employ standardized, replicable procedures too. Examples are citizen forums that are prepared with the aid of National Issues Forums published guidelines and hands-on training (NIF, 2001).

Another possible effect of a public meeting's initiator may be the regularity of event recurrence (and possibly rate). Government-mandated public meetings might recur more regularly than citizen-initiated events. Whereas citizen-led public meetings have no legal mandate and are contingent on available funding, the rate and regularity of institutional public meetings are often prescribed in official procedural bylaws. For example, the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development requires communities that receive annual block grants to hold annual public meetings. These meetings are implemented to inform expenditure plans (ultimately created by public officials). Even if no citizens attend planning meetings, however, the government's requirement is fulfilled so long as the meeting has been properly advertised (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000). In this sense, favorable rate and regularity should be not assumed to correlate with effective civic participation.

The public meeting initiator may also affect the level of heterogeneity among citizen participants. Meetings that are initiated by citizen groups may, in some circumstances, attract civic participants who are affiliated with those particular groups. In such cases participating citizens may share special interests and ideological agendas, giving the citizen body a fairly homogenous voice. This is not the case in public meetings—regardless of who the initiators are—that are composed of citizens selected by random sample (Fishkin, 1995; Gastil 2000).

A related possible effect of a meeting's initiator is the level of heterogeneity in the *government* body present. When an event is initiated by a government agency for the purpose of public information campaigns, for example, it may be likely that the participating government officials' attitudes will not vary widely. They may even share prior agreements to stay "on message." This is in accordance with the assumption that diverse accounts may prevent message clarity, and interfere with any persuasive overtones the message may have.

To review, the first independent variable is the public meeting's initiator. Gastil and Kelshaw's (2000) typology of public meetings considers two distinct groups: officeholders and citizens. A public meeting may be initiated by the government, by the public, or by both groups in partnership. A public meeting's initiator may influence the potential for voiced ideas to affect public policy, the relative emphases on task and relationship dimensions of group work, the degree of formality of procedures and contextual elements, the frequency and regularity of event recurrence, and the heterogeneity of citizen and governmental participants.

Factor 2: Intended or Presumed Direction(s) of Communicative Influence

The factor of public meeting initiator has motivated prior event typologies, such as a four-type scheme conceived by Leighninger (see Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000) for the benefit of Study Circles implementation. Gastil and Kelshaw (2000), however, consider a second factor that permits a broader and more sophisticated typology. This second factor is the intended or effective direction(s) of communicative influence between citizens and officeholders.

For the sake of simplicity, Gastil and Kelshaw's (2000) typology conceives of citizens and officeholders as two distinct, unitary bodies. Communication direction is viewed as flowing between these bodies.[19] A more subtle treatment would account for interpersonal as well as intergroup communicative influence because all participants might influence (and be influenced by) each other's communication, regardless of group membership. However, the simplicity achieved by considering only intergroup communication is useful because it coincides with the intended or presumed goals, procedures, and outcomes of various public meeting-types. By limiting description to intergroup communication, it is easier to recognize citizens' and officeholders' respective roles, relationships, and communicative behaviors across meeting types.

Intended or presumed communicative influence may be understood as either fundamentally unilateral or bilateral. There are complex interpersonal interactions occurring in any speech situation that, when taken into account, would trouble the tidy bifurcation of unilateral and bilateral communicative influence. Whereas Gastil and Kelshaw (2000) do not discount such interpersonal complexities, they recognize the significance of participants' presumptions and expectations with regard to explicit meeting goals. Initiators conceive public meetings with basic goals in mind. These goals are manifested in presumptions of communicative influence between officeholders and citizens. The presumed communication direction(s), in turn, inevitably affects the quality of a public meeting's enacted communication, and its processes, relationships, and outcomes. In other words, how participants think about communication—what they assume about how it "works"—shapes the qualities of the lived communication itself (Stewart & Logan, 1998).[20]

In some public meetings, organizers presume that communication flows in a single direction from one group to the other. For example, an event may be conceived as an opportunity for citizens to voice their opinions (either at the government's request or the public's insistence), or it may permit the government to convey public information to citizens (again, either by public request or the government's initiative). In either case the communication is conceived—in accordance with the meeting's basic goal—as active (rather than interactive) and linear; i.e. unilateral. Although the public meeting may experience a degree of perceived communicative interaction, its primary goal is understood by participants to be the expressive transmission of information from one group to the other. The goal carries a presumption of causality—an understanding that the expressed information or perspectives will somehow influence the receiver.

An event's communicative influence may otherwise be presumed as bilateral, insofar as the meeting's fundamental goal requires mutual influence between officeholders and citizens. This intended reciprocity is exemplified in meetings that experience cooperative problem-solving strategies, as when participants confront pressing problems and contradictory perspectives in the context of moral conflict (Burkhalter et al., in press; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). Participants reflect on this contact as interactive and relatively non-linear, or bilateral. Although the public meeting may experience perceived bursts of information transmitted linearly from one group to the other, its primary goal is presumed to be collaborative interaction through which participants may jointly develop synthetic understandings.

As mentioned above, there is a connection between participants' assumptions about communication—what it is and how it works—and the enacted communication's qualities. From perceived unilateral to bilateral speech events the sophistication of meaning making processes varies, at least in participants' reflective understandings. Meetings that emphasize unilateral message expression are not likely to experience dialogic deliberation (as this concept was described in Chapter 2). These speech events are relatively simple—at least in terms of what participants notice about their communication—and are readily describable as message transmission and reception. Such descriptions cohere with what Deetz (1994) and O'Keefe (1998) call "expressive" conceptions of communication. On the contrary, public meetings that experience perceived bilateral interaction—as when moral conflicts are collaboratively managed—encourage synthetic negotiations of meanings and styles of interaction. These interactions are describable as "constitutive processes" (Deetz, 1994, p. 573) or "negotiations" (Stewart & Logan, 1998). They are more likely than expressive actions to foster dialogue and deliberation (as these speech genres were described in the second chapter).

The intended or presumed direction of influence affects relationships between citizen and officeholder groups, including the centrality of certain participants and resulting power relations. Consider the following three examples.

In one hypothetical public meeting, citizens sponsor a public meeting with the intention of learning information from a panel of officeholders. In this case the panelists are likely to be privileged as central participants. Perhaps they occupy a stage at the front of the room and enact roles of presenters, debaters, or discussants. Once the presentation is concluded they may respond to questions and comments from citizens in the audience. Participants' awareness of communication is generally at an expressive level.

In a second hypothetical public meeting, officeholders implement a "public hearing" to solicit public comment (Graham, 2001; McComas, 2001). As in the prior example, the officeholders reside as a panel at the front of the room, perhaps on a riser. In this case, though, the majority of the meeting's expressive talk comes from the floor. Citizens may take turns speaking for allotted periods of time. Perhaps specific comments are met with applause and cheers of agreement from other citizens. The officeholders may take written notes and are not typically expected to respond (although they may in some instances). As in the first example, participants tend to understand their communication as fulfilling an expressive function.

In a third hypothetical public meeting, citizens and officeholders sit together at a roundtable to discuss a community problem. The table is literally round. This creates a setting conducive to egalitarianism and cooperation since, proxemically, all positions are equal. The environmental setting and procedural informality (e.g., open discussion) encourage bilateral communication between officeholders and citizens, and multilateral interaction among all participants. Participants are likely to reflect on their communication as constitutive and transactional. They emerge from the interaction with new synthetic understandings, or perhaps more sophisticated commitments to their prior opinions (Gastil & Dillard, 1999b).

In review, the second of the two independent variables that affects Gastil & Kelshaw's (2000) typology of public meetings is the intended or presumed direction(s) of communicative influence. Meeting participants understand basic goals. These goals are accompanied by assumptions of which way(s) communication content is flowing between officeholders and citizens, and how expressive (non-interactively unilateral) or transactional (interactively bi- or multilateral) the communication is. Participants' assumptions about what communication is and how it works affect the meetings' communicative qualities, and thus its processes, relationships, and outcomes.

Typology of Public Meetings: Description

Identifying the two independent variables—public meeting initiator and intended or presumed direction(s) of communicative influence—permits a typology that describes seven general kinds of public meetings (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000). This typology includes only public meetings that bring officeholders and citizens together face-to-face. It excludes other kinds, such as meetings of citizens exclusively (including citizen task forces, which are bodies of citizens appointed to develop policy proposals for officials' eventual approval or rejection), electronically mediated forums, and others. I do not presume that such events are unimportant. Many do likely fulfill some important functions in American political life. However, the decision to focus only on face-to-face meetings between officeholders and citizens reflects three immediate concerns. These concerns are for the "mindfulness" that face-to-face contact allows (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992), the complex interplay of verbal and nonverbal aspects of talk that allow synthetic meaning-making (Sanders, 1987), and the bridges that may be built between citizens and government when they interact in the context of shared problems and goals.

Gastil and Kelshaw's (2000) typology identifies seven general types of forums in which citizens and officeholders come together. These seven types are listed and diagrammed below. In each diagram, the capitalization indicates the event-type's initiator, and the arrow(s) indicates the event-type's primary intended or presumed direction(s) of influence:

- "vicarious": government → PUBLIC
- "public information": GOVERNMENT → public

- "advisory": government ← PUBLIC
- "consultative": GOVERNMENT ← public
- "grassroots": government ↔ PUBLIC
- "invitational": GOVERNMENT ↔ public
- "collaborative": GOVERNMENT ↔ PUBLIC

I describe and illustrate each event-type below. Specifically, I do the following for each: define the type by identifying the initiator, the basic goal, and the presumed direction of communicative influence; describe the general behaviors of citizens and officeholders; and provide an example.

"Vicarious" Public Meetings

Vicarious public meetings are diagrammed: *government → PUBLIC*. Citizens' groups initiate and facilitate these events with the basic goal of soliciting information about government policies and/or officeholders' attitudes. Communication is presumed to flow unilaterally from the government to the public.

Citizens listen empathically (Rogers, 1980) in vicarious meetings in order to learn from the officeholders' perspectives and information bases. This is why the public meeting-type is labeled "vicarious." The label pertains to the initiating group's goal, which is to experience the knowledge, understandings, and perspectives of officeholders; to gain insight into their world, and thus build better informed understandings of public problems and policymaking. Citizens tend to act as silent listeners with the possible exception of posing brief questions or comments (typically after the officeholders' presentations). Although citizens may pose challenging questions or comments that advance their own perspectives and attitudes, participants' attention remains primarily on the content of the officeholders' responses.

Officeholders in vicarious meetings are privileged speakers. If one officeholder is featured in the event she or he is likely to attend the meeting with a prepared presentation. If two or more officeholders are involved they may deliver individual presentations or participate in a moderated discussion or debate. Typically officials occupy the front of the room and face an audience of citizens.

Citizens learn vicariously about the experiences and knowledge of officeholders in many ways, not all of them in face-to-face settings. For example, watching officials discuss policy on C-Span may satisfy citizens' informational needs. The benefit of face-to-face events, though, is that citizens have opportunities to pose questions and comments, and thus garner specific and appropriate information. Although such responsiveness is not the meeting's primary goal, a benefit of face-to-face contact is that officeholders may be reminded of their accountability to the people. Beyond the benefit of opportunities to issue feedback and specify the knowledge they seek, citizens in vicarious events (as in any face-to-face meeting) give addressable presence to the otherwise faceless constituents whom officeholders speak for in policymaking.

An example of a vicarious public meeting is when a university invites a public official to present the annual commencement address. Although much of the presentation may concern non-political topics, frequently officeholders do address current events, public issues, and policy proposals. When sitting presidents present commencement addresses, they often use the events (and the media exposure) to announce new policies.

As vicarious events, the audiences of citizens gain exposure to the speakers' attitudes on some public issues. As well, citizens have opportunities to see and hear the officeholders in person, which demystifies the public figures and provides insight into their characters as "real" people.

"Public Information" Public Meetings

Public information events are diagrammed: *GOVERNMENT* → *public*. These meetings are similar to the vicarious variety in that the presumed information flow is from the government to the public. But unlike vicarious events, officeholders or government agencies initiate public information meetings. Their goal is to inform the public on a particular topic or set of issues. Of course, information is never objective or "brute" (Taylor, 1994). Its presentation inevitably has heresthetical and rhetorical features (Riker, 1996) since there is a degree of political stake in *how* the public understands issues. Regardless, the goal of public information meetings generally concerns creating a more informed and attuned public. This goal potentially benefits democratic citizenship.

Public information events share much with vicarious meetings. Citizens fulfill roles of empathic listeners while officeholders do most of the speaking. The major difference between the two meeting types is that the government initiates the event. The change in this factor may affect a number of variables, including rigidity of the event's structure and procedures, the heterogeneity of citizen participants, event recurrence, and so on.

An example of a public information public meeting is the United States Forest Service's tour of nineteen towns and cities in Idaho to present information about its statewide "roadless area" policies. As the promotional material for this meeting tour states,

> The Forest Service will hold two rounds of public meetings on the Roadless Area Conservation DEIS. The first round of public meetings, which will be held during the last two weeks of May, will be to provide information and answer questions about the DEIS only. No verbal comments will be accepted at the first round of public meetings, although individuals can submit written comments. (USFS, 2002)

Although the subsequent round of public meetings "provide[s] an opportunity for individuals to provide verbal comments" (USFS, 2002), this first series is limited to a public information function. Whereas citizens may ask questions and provide written comments, their communicative roles largely involve listening. The government officials are the primary expressers in this kind of meeting.

"Advisory" Public Meetings

Advisory public meetings are diagrammed: *government* ← *PUBLIC*. Like vicarious public meetings, citizens' groups initiate and implement these public meetings. Advisory meetings, though, differ from vicarious events in their motivating goal and presumed direction of communicative influence. In these meetings citizens advise officeholders with the hope of informing public policy. Accordingly, the fundamental direction of intended or presumed influence is from the public to the policymakers.

Citizens are privileged as the central expressive communicators in advisory meetings. They may, though, compose an audience-like body while the officials enjoy a privileged space at the front of the room. (This condition may be due largely to citizens outnumbering officials, so the proxemic arrangement may be a product of environmental factors such as room size and layout.) Citizens' expressions may be structured in various ways. For example, citizens in advisory meetings that resemble public hearings[21] typically take speaking turns (either by waiting in line for a microphone or by registering prior to the event) and have limited time allotted for their comments (Graham, 2001). In less procedurally formal events, citizens may raise their hands to be called upon by a moderator or a public official at the front of the room. If turnout is low, there is an opportunity for a more conversational approach and proxemic arrangement; however, the focus remains on citizens expressing their opinions and ideas to officeholders rather than on mutual exchange. In some cases (such as the Gulf Coast Legislative Town Meetings, described below) citizens actually deliberate together in small groups while officeholders listen in.

Officeholders are empathic listeners in advisory meetings. They may listen attentively and take notes. They are not generally expected to issue feedback, although they may be compelled to do so by angry citizens who level criticisms or charges. Basically, citizens expect officeholders to relinquish their own voices in favor of what the citizens have to say during advisory public meetings.

An example of advisory meetings is Town Meetings convened by the Community Leadership Institute at the Gulf Coast Community College in Panama City, Florida. The motivating premise is that citizens need not just interaction with community leaders, but also direct influence on policymaking. The result is an ongoing series of public forums that "give citizens the opportunity to articulate their legislative priorities, suggest ideas for future legislation, and to discuss the pros and cons of bills that are likely to come up during the next legislative session" (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000, p. 18). As advisory meetings, officials' speaking roles are minimized in favor of citizens' articulations and—more prominent in these particular events—inter-citizen deliberation. The focus on citizens deliberating together as officials look and listen in carries "the hope . . . that citizens and legislators will leave the meetings having learned a deliberative model of public talk" (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000, p. 19). Whereas advisory public meetings in general are not necessarily founded on deliberation as the key form of discourse, the Gulf Coast Legislative Town Meetings are manifestations of the basic advisory goal: citizens' input in policymaking.

"Consultative" Public Meetings

Consultative public meetings are diagrammed: *GOVERNMENT* ← *public.* Like advisory events, consultative meetings aim to inform government officials of the public's attitudes and ideas, but government agencies or officeholders are these meetings' initiators. They implement consultative events to solicit information or advice from the citizenry. Although the government uses polls as an alternative means for soliciting civic input (both for policymaking and campaign strategizing), consultative public meetings may provide qualitative data that polls cannot capture. Consultative meetings have another chief benefit over polling: they bring citizens and officeholders into physical contact. This allows relational and community benefits beyond the basic consultative task. Putting human faces with the perspectives being articulated allows citizens and officeholders to become more familiar with each other as "real" people. Polls, surveys, and other forms of individualizing consultation cannot accomplish this.

Citizens in consultative meetings do most of the speaking. Although a government facilitator or moderator may provide background information, bring issues into focus, and ask prodding questions, attention is on what the citizens have to say. Citizens may express concerns, ideas, and opinions. They may also talk together in more conversational, dialogic, or deliberative manners.

Officeholders in consultative meetings—as in advisory events—are fundamentally empathic listeners. However, given that they are the facilitators and that they have specific goals in mind they may be more proactive in setting the agenda and framing the issues. Consultative meetings may begin with presentations given by officeholders, in manners similar to public information meetings. The presentations' content may provide a common knowledge base and motivate citizens' comments and discussion. Facilitating officeholders in some consultative meetings may, in addition to listening and asking prodding questions, list comments and ideas on a writing board or large flip pad for reference and discussion management.

An example of a consultative meeting is the King County (WA) Sheriff Office's "Community Forum on Biased Policing—Racial Profiling." The announcement for this series of meetings in various communities during July and August, 2001, reads:

> The King County Sheriff's Office Wants to Hear From You! Does the King County Sheriff's Office practice or condone racial profiling? Do deputies unfairly allow their biases and opinions to influence their police work? What has your

> experience been? Should we do something about it? Please come to a Community Forum at your local precinct to let us know. We've sheduled [sic] four public meetings, one at each of our precincts in Maple Valley, Kenmore, Burien and Shoreline. All of these community meetings begin at 6 p.m. The schedule is posted below. The meetings will be held in accessible locations and reasonable accommodations are available if you call ahead. (King County, 2001)

The focus in these meetings is largely on citizens' speech. The purpose of this series of consultative public meetings is to garner citizens' accounts of their experiences (to explore a public problem) and solicit ideas about what, if anything, the Sheriff's Office should do. There is also, perhaps, a public relations initiative below the surface goal. If so, this initiative has a rhetorical dimension, insofar as the Sheriff's Office intends to persuade the public of two things: that it is aware of a possible problem within its sphere of control, and that it is willing to address this problem proactively. Generally, consultative public meetings have merits that are byproducts of their expressed goals of soliciting public input. They may demonstrate to the public the government's willingness to reach out rather than remain insular.

"Grassroots" Public Meetings

Grassroots public meetings are diagrammed as: *government* ←→ *PUBLIC*. Citizens initiate these events with the goal of engaging officeholders in dialogue about moral conflicts or deliberation about public policy. Talk may feature either open-ended (relational) or task-related qualities, or both. Communication flow is presumed to occur bilaterally between officeholder and citizen groups, and perhaps multilaterally between all participants.

Citizens in grassroots meetings establish the agenda (the issues to be discussed) and the process. In terms of the actual speech, however, citizens and officeholders have shared responsibilities to speak and listen. Grassroots meetings mark a departure from vicarious, public information, advisory, and consultative meeting types in that they do not privilege expressive (unilateral) talk. The talk of grassroots meetings is comparatively more interactive and conversational. This makes citizens and officeholders mutually accountable for managing the interaction's content and inclusiveness.

An example of a grassroots public meeting is the Cambridge (MA) Civic Forum. Three non-profit groups (the Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center, the Cambridge Center for Adult Education, and the Center for Civic Networking) founded the Cambridge Civic Forum in 1993 in response to an apparent disconnect between citizens' concerns and public policy, planning, and agenda. The goal of the public meetings was to bring diverse community members and officials together to "learn from each other, hear and be heard, share visions and concerns, engage in constructive dialogue, collaborate on defining a common vision and participate in generating an action plan for the City's future" (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000, p. 24).

Over a period of several years, formal forums were held semi-annually. Each addressed a different specific issue. Approximately one hundred people participated in each event. Following an orientation by a citizen facilitator, participants were broken into small groups for roundtable discussions. The event then bounced back and forth between small group work and large group sessions. Scheduled breaks permitted participants to confer informally with members of other small groups, and to explore dimensions of the issues that did not come out in their particular group discussions. According to an organizer, the events had concrete outcomes. These included better-informed public officials and a general sense of satisfaction and successful civic involvement on the part of citizen-participants (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000, p. 26).

"Invitational" Public Meetings

Invitational meetings are diagrammed: *GOVERNMENT* ←→ *public*. Invitational events are similar to grassroots meetings, but are initiated by the government instead of citizens. The goal is to invite citizens into conversation with officeholders; to dialogue about moral conflicts or deliberate about public policy. Talk may be either open-ended (dialogic) or task-related (deliberative). Communication flow is presumed to be bilateral between officeholder and citizen groups, and perhaps multilateral between all participants.

Citizens and officeholders in invitational meetings share responsibility for managing content and inclusive talk. In this sense, the communicative behaviors of both groups are comparable to those in grassroots public meetings. In invitational events, though, the government is responsible for determining the agenda and the formal procedures.

An example of an invitational public meeting is Look Up Gaston (NC), a series of countywide events created to engage diverse community members in dialogue with officeholders about emergent socio-economic problems. Rick Smyre conceived this project in 1981. Smyre was then an official on the Gaston Chamber of Commerce and a local school board member. It took two years of planning to enlist 854 officials from all over the county to implement a series of local workshops. These workshops were invitational in the sense that they were conceived and implemented by government officials. They were also explicitly dialogic, in that their goals were to spur citizens and officeholders to talk collaboratively, both in the identification and understanding of problems (many involving the region's dying textile industry) and in the brainstorming of possible solutions.

The success of this series of meetings prompted Smyre to establish the Center for Communities of the Future. This ongoing network of national and international public officials and citizens forges various venues for interactive discussion about capacity building in an information age, and features the creative and facilitative work of diverse officeholders in various regions of the United States and other nations. Participants pay particular attention to the intersections of local and global issues, and many officeholders and citizens of diverse locales find opportunities to talk together (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000, pp. 14-17).

"Collaborative" Public Meetings

Collaborative public meetings are diagrammed: *GOVERNMENT* ←→ *PUBLIC*. These meetings share much with grassroots and invitational public meeting types, but they mark a much more defined partnership. Citizens and government work together in the invention and implementation of collaborative public meetings, so there is a mutual understanding of stake, goals, appropriate processes, and outcomes. As with grassroots and invitational meeting types, collaborative public meetings carry the presumption of bilateral communication flow between officeholders and citizens, and potential for multilateral flow between all participants.

Officeholders and citizens share responsibilities of event conception and facilitation. Likewise, they share responsibilities of speaking and listening in ways that manage discussion content and inclusive interaction. Participants perceive shared stake in the outcomes of the meetings. These meetings, more than other types, are potentially dialogic and/or deliberative in that they may feature either collaborative talk about open-ended moral conflicts or collaborative derivation and decision of public policy, or both.

Examples of collaborative public meetings are the Decatur (GA) Roundtables. Although this project was sparked by residents' concerns about local issues and initially conceived by a civic activist Jon Abercrombie, the Roundtables were collaboratively designed and implemented by Abercrombie, other community members, and local public officials. Whereas the citizens in this case handled much of the Roundtable design, the city provided financial support. Officials such as Mayor Elizabeth Wilson also worked energetically to mobilize citizens to participate, particularly in the African American community. Due to tensions in the community, it was crucial that the government be actively involved in the Roundtables' preparation. "In the context of [conflicts], [the government] felt that they had to do something," Abercrombie surmises. "Sometimes it's a motivation to at least be able to say, 'Look, I tried to do something'" (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000, p. 28).

The Decatur Roundtables took place over several successive sessions. In each, participants were placed in small "study circles." Group members were told, "If somebody in your group already has your point of view and another doesn't, move to another group" (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000, p. 29). Group members collaboratively analyzed problems and brainstormed about possible solutions. The meeting series culminated in an "action forum." In this event, the various study circles' policy recommendations were clustered into categories. Task forces were then created and assigned to each cluster for further investigation. A major outcome of the collaborative public meetings in Decatur was the eventual implementation of several task force recommendations. An important residual effect is that the roundtable discussion style of public talk began to replace traditional modes in Decatur's civic culture, such as public hearing formats that feature unilateral expression rather than more transactional discourses like dialogue and deliberation.

The seven categories of public meetings identified in this typology portray only general frameworks for understanding various encounters between officeholders and citizens. These frameworks, however, are helpful to throw light on public meetings, allowing clarification of different meetings' fundamental goals and expectations. This reflection can prepare one for observing public meetings in practice. Beyond goals and expectations, field observation allows description of meetings' communication processes and qualities, roles and relationships, and perceived outcomes. Such descriptions, in turn, may inform the conception and implementation of public meetings in the future.

Typology of Officeholders

There are different types of officials who have distinct roles and duties, and varying levels of transparency with regard to public accountability (Mathews, 1994, pp. 68-71). These roles and duties may limit or enhance their personal efficacy in policymaking, and, in extension, the degree to which they are capable of serving as effective conduits for citizens' voices. As well, their general accessibility and experience in talking with citizens may have bearing not only upon the manners in which they approach and understand deliberation but also the ways that they engage in it.

The typology of officeholders that I propose distinguishes among three types of public officials:

Type I: Elected legislators and executive officers

Type II: Elected administrators (typically tied to executive functions of government)

Type III: Appointed and hired administrators or assistants to elected officials (in both executive and legislative capacities)

Officials in each of these categories have various responsibilities, policy purviews, and levels of obligation to talk directly with citizens. These differences may greatly impact the immediate goals, procedural methods, and outcomes of the public meetings in which they participate.

Type I Public Officials

The first category includes elected officials who serve legislative or executive functions.[22] Examples of officeholders in this category are city council members, mayors, sheriffs, congressional representatives and senators (on state and federal levels), governors, and presidents. These officeholders generally must balance their interpretations of the public will with their autonomous impulses and technical considerations of legislative and policy issues (Bessette, 1980, 1994; Fishkin, 1995). They have a strong interest in gauging the public will (and being responsive to it, at least in appearance) because of their elected status. However, this type of officeholder is rarely charged (institutionally) with engaging in direct-democratic, deliberative contact with citizens. Although some Type I officeholders do initiate and participate in non-campaign events that bring them in contact with the citizenry—notably, so-called "Town Hall Meetings" (Gastil, 2000, pp. 99-100)—such events risk conception as public appearances rather than public meetings, regardless of labels.

Type II Public Officials

The second category of officials includes elected officials whose duties are administrative in nature. Examples of such officials are secretaries of state, state treasurers, state auditors, commissioners of public lands, transportation commissioners, and insurance commissioners. These officials are not usually as visible in the public eye as officeholders in the first category, although they are more frequently charged with consulting the public (either personally or through appointed staff members, who are most accurately categorized according to the third type, described below). As elected officials, officeholders in this category have a fundamental interest in hearing and responding to public voices. Certain positions—such as commissioners of public lands—have greater obligations to connect with citizens than others, since their decisions and policies directly affect specific regions, communities, or industries, and have higher potential for controversy.

Type III Public Officials

The third category of officeholders includes non-elected (i.e., appointed or hired) administrators who are relatively "low-level." Examples of officials in this category include public utilities managers, city clerks, arts commission directors, Bureau of Land Management agents, Department of Natural resources officials, etc., as well as assistants to elected officials in categories I and II. Of the three types, officials in this category are most likely to be charged with confronting the public, in consultative and informative capacities particularly. Especially in the cases of assistants to elected officials, this relative likelihood to meet with the public may serve to buffer elected officeholders from controversial topics and risks to public image that unscripted, potentially dialogic events may pose. Examples of institutionally mandated direct-democratic meetings involving officials in this category are regional Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Block Grant managers (who are required to consult the public prior to development of spending agendas), and some public transportation planners (see Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000).

Summary

The typological information presented in this chapter is useful for preparing an explanation of case study selection, to be accomplished in Chapter 4. The goal of the dissertation's empirical research is to sample several kinds of meetings as facilitated by different kinds of officeholders with varying goals and contextual factors. As Chapter 3 asserts, differences across types of public meetings and types of public officials may greatly affect the qualities of the meetings' communication, and thus the substance and qualities of meetings' outcomes. Improved understanding of communication in public meetings may contribute to a clearer sense of what civic needs various public meetings may fulfill. It may also permit a sense of the possibilities and constraints experienced by different officeholders in different public meetings.

Specifically, this third chapter has explained the two typologies in an effort to show how direct democratic, and sometimes expressly deliberative, discourses may be implemented in order to fill gaps in a political discursive landscape—gaps that correspond with alleged civic needs. These meetings share a valuation of face-to-face discursive contact between citizens and officeholders. Otherwise, the public meeting types differ significantly in terms of goals, procedures, discursive qualities, and potential outcomes.

To concisely review, the seven public meeting types identified by Gastil and Kelshaw (2000) are: (a) vicarious: initiated by citizens with the goal of soliciting political information from officeholders; (b) public information: initiated by government officials or agencies with the goal of raising public understanding of issues; (c) advisory: initiated by citizens with the goal of providing input on policy issues; (d) consultative: initiated by government officials or agencies with the goal of soliciting citizens' input on policy issues; (e) grassroots: initiated by citizens with the goal of engaging in collaborative problem-solving or conflict-management discussions with officeholders; (f) invitational: initiated by government officials or agencies with the goal of engaging in collaborative problem-solving or conflict-management discussions with citizens; (g) collaborative: initiated jointly by citizens and government officials or agencies with the goal of engaging in collaborative problem-solving or conflict-management discussions.

Of these seven public meeting types, the four that are relevant to the dissertation's empirical research are public information, consultative, invitational, and collaborative. These four have in common the fact that they are initiated by government (and are thus likely to be facilitated by officials). They differ, though, in their basic goals, potential outcomes, contextual elements, and communicative processes and qualities. Furthermore they may differ in the constraints and opportunities that they pose for participating officeholders.

Participating officeholders have significant differences as well. Assorting officeholders into three general categories illuminates some of these differences. These categories are: (a) Type I: Elected legislators and executive officers. This category includes mayors, city council members, senators, representatives, county executive, presidents, and so on. (b) Type II: Elected administrators (who are typically tied to the executive functions of government). This category includes sheriffs, commissioners of public lands, transportation commissioners, and so on. (c) Type III: Appointed and hired administrators or assistants to elected officials in both executive and legislative capacities. This category includes clerks, administrative assistants, departmental agents, and so on. Fundamental differences across these three categories pertain to several key variables. Among these are officeholders' perceived responsibilities to the public voice, direct efficacy in policymaking, and willingness or abilities to engage in controversial topics.

In pursuing richer understanding of officeholders' experiences, this dissertation's empirical research involves the selection of government-initiated public meetings for study. Chapter Four picks up at this point. Its goals are to explain selection of cases and to clarify the operational methods for observing public meetings and interviewing their facilitating public officials.

Chapter 4: Case Selection and Research Methods

This dissertation's empirical component concerns descriptions of face-to-face public meetings that officeholders initiate and participate in. These descriptions are based, in part, on my personal observations as a participant in the meetings. The emphasis, though, is on what officeholders have to say about their goals, procedural strategies, constraints, opportunities, and outcomes. This chapter's purpose is to explain the methods for selecting case studies, gathering descriptive interview and observational data, and analyzing/integrating these diverse data. This methodological chapter will be followed by the presentation of the case reports (Chapter 5) and an interpretive discussion (Chapter 6).

In Chapter 2, I portrayed the alleged importance of dialogic and deliberative political discourses, which deliberative democrats value toward the transformation of American politics. In Chapter 3, I focused on public meetings between citizens and officeholders as one general kind of speech situation where dialogue and deliberation may occur; or at least where citizens and officeholders may learn from each other in ways that improve civic efficacy and engagement, and communicative alignment. There are various public meeting types, and each is bound to experience many different kinds of utterances that contribute qualitatively to the meeting's range of speech events (or speech genres in Bakhtin's terminology). Even though public meetings and the contact they foster between citizens and officeholders potentially benefit American politics, not every public meeting will be dialogic or deliberative. My general research goals are to recognize how different speech genres function in the contexts of public meetings, and how officeholders experience these kinds of talk with citizens—particularly with an eye toward officeholders' perceived constraints and opportunities.

With these purposes in mind, I selected three case studies. These cases represent different kinds of officeholder-initiated public meetings and involve different kinds of public officials. What follows are explanations of how I selected these particular cases for focused study and the methodological principles that governed how I observed the meetings and garnered officeholders' experiential accounts.

Selection of Cases

The preceding chapter explained a typology of public meetings between citizens and officeholders (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000) and a typology of officeholders who may participate in such meetings. The fundamental purpose of selecting cases is to sample public meetings that are initiated and facilitated by public officials, and to thus complement the preponderance of research that concerns *citizens'* experiences in public meetings. For this reason, only four of the seven types of public meetings addressed in Chapter 3 are relevant to the selection of cases: public information, consultative, invitational, and collaborative. All of the officeholder categories are relevant.

The purpose of selecting case studies is not to garner enough cases to permit generalizations though my findings. Rather, the intention is to identify and describe only a few cases in great detail. By closely watching and listening to the communication that takes place in particular contexts, and by reflecting on officeholders' reports of their experiences in light of their motivations and goals, it is possible to learn about appropriate (and perhaps inappropriate) niches for institutionalized public meetings. For this reason, it is important that selected cases exemplify different combinations of motivations, goals, procedures, settings, and types of participating officeholders.

Over a one-year period (between June 2001 and May 2002), I sought out government-initiated public meetings. I did this by consulting government Internet pages (representing a variety of city, county, state, and federal governmental organizations), making telephone calls to government agencies, and scouring news media. During this period I observed many public meetings in different contexts, some of which overlapped in meeting type. I eventually selected three cases to examine in close detail.

Each case that I selected has specific features that distinguish it and make it worthy for study in the context of this dissertation's goals. Here, I briefly introduce each case with some rudimentary background and typological information. (I do, however, postpone thorough exposition until Chapter 5, where I present each case in a detailed report.) As well, for each case I address specific features that make it appropriate for close study with regard to my research objectives.

Case 1: Idaho Commission on the Arts, *Idaho, Idaho, Wherefore ART Thou? Community Meeting*

The Idaho Commission on the Arts (ICA) is a grant-giving government organization that facilitates cultural projects in the state of Idaho. The ICA receives subsidization from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and a provision of this funding is that the ICA develops "Long Range Plans" at five-year intervals. Although there is no specific mandate for public consultation, the ICA's Executive Director Dan

Harpole, in his first year in office, decided to base the 2002 Long Range Plan on citizens' input. The result was a five-month campaign to garner public comment through various media, including telephone, email, fax, letters, and community meetings. Such an effort had never been made by the ICA. Prior Directors had simply worked with ICA staff members to modify current Long Range Plans when new versions came due.

Toward development of the Long Range Plan, Harpole and three staff members toured various communities across Idaho, implementing fourteen public meetings between November 7, 2001 and January 24, 2002. The meetings were titled, "Idaho, Idaho, Wherefore ART Thou, Idaho?" and, in combination with input solicited through other communicative channels, were referred to as a "public comment campaign" (ICA, 2002a). The product of this campaign was a Long Range Plan draft, which was posted on the organization's Internet website in February 2002 with a request for feedback (via email, phone, letters, or fax) until March 29. On May 10, a final version of the Plan was adopted and submitted to the NEA for approval. As a participant-observer, I attended the meeting in Moscow on January 8, 2002, which was held in the City Hall Council Chambers.

The public comment campaign's motivation was to solicit public input—to hear "from Idahoans about their needs and vision for the arts in their communities, which will be useful in shaping our Long Range Plan" (ICA, 2002a). The campaign had an explicit double-barreled function, however: "The meetings are designed to share information about the Idaho Commission on the Arts and to seek community input for guidance in the development of the Commission's long-range plan" (ICA, 2002b). Each meeting was structured according to this dual goal. In the first hour, Executive Director Harpole used a PowerPoint slide program to explain the ICA's organizational structure, its current and ongoing projects across the state, and its process for allocating grant funding. After a fifteen-minute break, during which participants chatted casually with each other and the ICA staff members, the meeting resumed with an hour-long moderated discussion. This discussion proceeded according to a prepared agenda of questions/topics, and pertained to the goal of soliciting public comment.

In terms of Gastil & Kelshaw's (2000) public meeting typology, this meeting falls into two categories, tidily divided by the meeting's break. During the first hour the meeting was a public information type. During the second hour it was a consultative type. The dominant and motivating goal was consultation. As I will explain in Chapter 5, though, Harpole deemed the public information component necessary as a prerequisite for consultation.

In terms of the officeholder typology presented in Chapter 3, Executive Director Harpole is a Type III public official. He is an officeholder appointed (by Idaho's Governor Kempthorne) in an administrative capacity. The three attending staff members, whom I did not interview in any depth given their relative non-participation, are Type III officials, too—although they are hired rather than appointed.

This case is worthy of close study for three reasons. For one, it experienced an explicit shift in goals, and thus a change in procedural method and communicative tone. The duality of this meeting, and the officeholder's experience with this, is interesting. Second, differently than in the other selected case studies, this meeting was facilitated—

and the discussion moderated—by the governmental administrator who is chiefly accountable for the quality of the eventual product (the Long Range Plan). Third, the public meeting experienced an implicit relationship-building goal, which was as important to the participants as the explicit task goal. Of the meetings that I observed, this was the only case in which the relationship dimension was central, albeit implicit.

Case 2: Moscow (ID) Community Revitalization Committee, *Vision & Value Workshop*

A partnership between the City of Moscow, the Latah (County) Economic Development Council (LEDC), and the University of Idaho was formed in 2000 to address the economic and cultural decline of the city's downtown. After construction of two shopping malls on the city's east and west sides, the urban core fell into relative commercial disuse. The Community Revitalization Committee (CRC) was established in response to this problem. Composed of various officeholders and citizens in partnership, the Committee took up the specific project of developing a "Downtown Moscow Revitalization Plan." This kind of task would ordinarily be in the purview of the city's Planning and Zoning Committee. That committee, however, was already overburdened with responsibilities, so the CRC was created with this special assignment.

Although the CRC is composed of city officials, county officials, and citizens, the City of Moscow funds many of its operations and contracts. One major set of contracts, obtained in February 2001, was with the consulting firm Dufresne-Henry and the architectural firm HatchMueller. Dufresne-Henry caseworkers were charged with researching the city's situation and needs, garnering public input, and integrating findings into architectural plans for a reconstructed (commerce-friendly) downtown. The firm's caseworkers are directly answerable to the city (specifically to the City Council) and the CRC.

The CRC meets monthly. These meetings bring citizens and officeholders together, and are thus worthy of study. It was, however, not these regular sessions but a special series of events between May and December 2001 that were most interesting to me. In these various events, the CRC (via Dufresne-Henry caseworkers) reached out to the public for input. The hallmark of this campaign was a planned series of three public meetings, or "workshops," between September and November. These workshops were conceived sequentially. The first was to be a "Vision & Value/Charette" workshop; the second, an "Imagination and Exploration" workshop; and the third, a "Roll Up Your Sleeves" workshop. Unfortunately, the first—scheduled for September 11—was canceled due to that day's terrorist tragedy and the resulting transportation problems (Caseworkers lived in other parts of the country.). Hence, the October public meeting was reconceived as the "Vision & Value" workshop. It combined the September and October workshops' goals into one event. This was the public meeting that I selected for focused study. At this meeting, the caseworkers presented draft architectural plans (which were developed, in part, from public input garnered in previous surveys, meetings, and brainstorming sessions with University of Idaho architecture students). Following the informational presentation, participants enacted a "spin the dots" session. In this, they affixed red and green stickers to features of the blueprints that they disliked and liked, respectively. Caseworkers used this feedback to determine preferential "consensus" (Dufresne-Henry & Hatchmueller, 2002).

In typological terms, this meeting is explicitly consultative. That is, the city government invited citizens' participation with the stated goal of garnering input. Whereas it is normal for consultative meetings to have informational components, the caseworkers' presentation of data and architectural plans prior to the "spin the dots" speech event was substantial. For this reason, the meeting was typologically compound, involving both public information and consultative objectives. Furthermore, the meeting experienced two interesting features that made it, in shades, collaborative. For one, the CRC, which initiated the public meeting, is itself a composite group composed of both officeholders and citizens. As well, since contracted caseworkers facilitated the event, attending public officials were freed up to behave like lay citizens. In other words, public officials worked side-by-side with citizens as "regular" participants, discussing the issues in conversational and egalitarian ways. This established a collaborative quality in addition to the explicit consultative goal and public information goals. The result is a typologically complex case with some intriguing contextual features.

Various public officials participated in this meeting. Those whom I interviewed in the course of my research were City Council members Peg Hamlett and JoAnn Mack (who was also the CRC Chair), and Latah County Executive Paul Kimmell (who was also the Chamber of Commerce Executive Director). I also consulted LEDC Executive Director Barbara Richardson. Richardson was technically a "quasi" public official whose salary was paid in large part by city and county funds. Hamlett, Mack, and Kimmell are all Type I public officials. Insofar as Richardson may be considered a quasi-public official, she is of the Type III variety.

This case merits close study for three key reasons. First, like Case 1, this is a typologically complex event. Its explicit goal is consultative, but it includes a distinct public information component and an implicit collaborative aspect. The second reason why this is a worthy case is that the officeholders deferred facilitation to contracted caseworkers instead of facilitating the meeting personally. Not only is this an interesting variation on facilitative practices, but it also affects the third reason why this case is intriguing: It freed up officeholders to collaborate with citizens; to join citizens—*as* citizens—in conversation about the strengths and problems of the proposed plan. It is likely that some citizens were unaware that several of their conversational partners were, in fact, officeholders.

Case 3: Spokane (WA) *Community Assembly*

The city of Spokane has an agency called the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS). In 1996, citizen activists, members of the City Council, and the Mayor jointly created this agency. ONS officials coordinate and support citizen-led Neighborhood Councils. Independent Neighborhood Councils meet regularly (monthly, in most cases) and send representatives to monthly "Community Assemblies" at City Hall. There, Neighborhood Council Representatives talk about various items according to prepared (and jointly approved) agendas. Various officeholders attend and participate in the meetings as well, although only Neighborhood Council Representatives are permitted to sit at the roundtable. (All others—with the exception of ONS personnel—must sit in chairs at the edges of the room.) The official responsibility of the Neighborhood Councils/Community Assembly is to advise the City Council on policy matters. For this reason, many of the officials who attend are City Council members. Other public officials attend for various reasons, including providing information or formal reports, airing opinions, urging action on particular matters, bringing issues or upcoming events to the Assembly's attention, or simply listening in.

Unlike the other selected cases (and all other meetings I observed, for that matter), the Community Assembly is not a zero-history group. Neighborhood Council Representatives are appointed for renewable one-year terms, and some have served since the program's inception in 1996. Several former Representatives have since been elected to City Council, where they presently serve. Two central ONS staff members, Rod Minarik (the Public Information Officer) and Sandy Scott (the Clerk) have worked with the group throughout its existence. Because the group's relationships and tasks are longitudinal, this organization has a rich and complicated cultural life.[23]

I attended a Community Assembly on May 3, 2002. Technically, this is an example of an invitational public meeting because the city government provides all funding and technical support. But like Cases 2 and 3, there are inherent typological overlaps. The government facilitates the monthly meetings and provides ongoing support, from project funding to the recording and publishing of minutes. The meetings, on the other hand, are completely controlled by citizens (Neighborhood Council Representatives), and it is understood that others sitting outside the roundtable—attending officeholders and unaffiliated citizens—are only allowed to speak by the Assembly's invitation or permission. Because the Assembly encourages public officials to participate as actively as they do, the meetings have a strong typological characteristic of collaborative public meetings. In the case that I observed, the collaborative aspect was quite strong.

Many different officeholders contributed to this meeting in very different ways. For this reason (and given the cultural complexity of the case), I was compelled to conduct numerous interviews with various officeholders who enacted different roles. Although officeholders of all three types were present, those who participated were Type I and Type III. The ONS staff members (those who sit with the Representatives at the roundtable) are Type III officials: hired administrators and assistants. So were many of the officials who volunteered or were summoned to provide information or testimony (e.g., a deputy fire inspector, a building inspector, the Director of Planning, etc.). Several City Council members were active, most notably Al French—who, as a citizen in 1996, spearheaded the development of the ONS and the Neighborhood Councils/Community Assemblies. As a City Council member, French is a Type I public official.

This case is worthy of close study for three reasons. First, the program is believed to be the only one of its kind in the nation. Whereas many cities have Neighborhood Councils that consider public issues and, in unofficial capacities, inform public officials, this program goes a step further. In 1999 a charter was passed (by popular citywide vote) to make the Community Assembly an official quasi-governmental body, charged with advising the City Council on civic issues. Whereas the Assembly has no decision-making authority, the advice it provides is "official" in an institutional sense. This enables a grassroots, bottom-up voice for citizens that government officials are legally required to listen to. A second reason why this is a pertinent case is that, unlike the other cases, the group is longitudinal rather than zero-history. This allows the organization's complex cultural features to affect its goals, processes, and outcomes in ways that other cases do not experience. As the data in Chapter 5 will show, alliances and divisions among various participating officeholders and citizens strongly affect the group's work. A third reason for including this case is its typological designation. As a collaborative public meeting, this event exemplifies the most sophisticated form of contact between citizens and officeholders.

Methods of Data Collection

Concerns and practices endemic to the ethnography of speaking approach (Bauman & Sherzer, 1974; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Gumperz & Hymes, 1964, 1972; Hymes, 1962, 1972; Philipsen, 1997) motivate my exploration of case studies. A chief benefit of this approach is that it illuminates "how much variety there is in the social constraints of speech" (Hudson, 1980, p. 109). In relation to my research objectives, an ethnographic approach is useful because it concerns "the situations and uses, the patterns and functions, of speaking as an activity in its own right" (Hymes, 1962, p. 101). For an ethnographer, "speech" is not limited to the verbal aspect of communication, but includes an array of communicative facets including the physical arrangement of participants, the emotional and situational contexts in which talk occurs, procedural dimensions, and so on (Hymes, 1962, 1972). Accordingly, I assume that all that is meaningful for participants is communicatively—specifically, interactively—rooted.

In this section I explicate my methods of data collection by drawing on the ethnographic approach's assumptions and concerns in reporting participants' indigenous understandings. These assumptions and concerns guided my participant-observation and field-note writing, interviews with informants, case-study reports, and means for interpretive discussion. For ethnographic study, methods "determine what the field researcher sees, experiences, and learns. [I]f substance ('data,' 'findings,' 'facts') are products of the methods used, substance cannot be considered independently of method: *what* the ethnographer finds out is inherently connected with *how* she finds it out" (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 11). This is why I choose to be explicit about the assumptions that guide my methodology.

Methods of Participant-observation

Collecting field-note data sets through participant-observation entailed three stages. These stages were (a) preparatory, (b) meeting observation, and (c) transcribing field notes into write-ups.

The preparatory stage. I prepared for participant-observation of meetings in several steps. First, I studied promotional materials (e.g., brochures, fliers, media postings, etc.) for an understanding of the explicit goals, procedure and meeting structure, physical setting, and situational and emotional contexts. Next, I conducted preliminary research into the relevant political issues, organizational structures, and officeholder-participants. When possible, I conducted pre-meeting interviews with participating officials to get senses of their motivations, goals, intended procedures, and attitudes (See "methods of conducting interviews," below). These steps prepared me to be more than a mere outside observer. To be an outside observer would be to look in from an alien vantage. That would risk "imposition of outside categories [that produces] field-note descriptions that fail to *appreciate* local meanings and concerns and that tend to frame events as what they are *not* (that is, by reference to categories or standards that differ from those recognized and used by members" (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 109). By familiarizing myself as much as possible with the goals, procedures, expectations, and so on as articulated *in the language of the sponsoring governmental agencies and their officeholders*, I prepared to participate as an interactive member within the meetings' social contexts. This reduced the risk of subjecting my observations to exogenous understandings and attributions.

The meeting observation stage. During meetings I participated as an interactive group member.[24] I recorded written field notes that described the qualities of social units and speech components, as conceived by Hymes' (1962, 1972).[25] Necessarily, I based my observations in description rather than evaluation, and I anchored these in the participants' actual utterances. The purpose was to not treat members' indigenous meanings "as static categories but [in terms of] how members [invoked] those meanings in specific relations and interactions" (Emerson et al., p. 28).

The social units that guided my note-taking are:

1. The "speech situation" (Hymes, 1972, p. 56) is the meeting itself as an integral sphere of interactivity. This is the context (or set of contexts) that binds an array of communicative behaviors.

2. The "speech events" (Hymes, 1972, p. 56) are theoretically similar to speech genres (as that concept was explained in Chapter 2). Speech events (or genres) are explicitly or implicitly delineated modes of talk that are governed by coherent rules and norms. Examples include presentation, testimony, debate, deliberation, dialogue, and so on. Speech events are composed of speech acts (Hymes, 1972, pp. 56-57), which fulfill intentional and sometimes ritualized functions. Examples of speech acts are requesting permission to speak, giving permission to speak, thanking a contributor, welcoming participants, adjourning a meeting, and so on.

The components of speech that guided my note-taking are:

1. "Setting" (Hymes, 1972, p. 60) is the physical environment in which participants interact. Aspects of setting include time of day, the size and shape of the space, placement of chairs, media technology present, and so on.
2. "Scene" (Hymes, 1972, p. 60) is the psychological environment. For example, the speech situation may be affected by a heated topic or important occasion, participants who are enthusiastic or reluctant to engage, and so forth.
3. "Purposes—outcomes" concern "the conventionally recognized and expected outcomes" of a speech situation (Hymes, 1972, p. 61). This speech component coincides with the explicit teleological purpose of the meeting—to gather citizens' input toward a plan, to provide pertinent information, to improve relationships among participants, etc. In public meetings, often (but not

always) the purposes—outcomes are stated explicitly in the promotional material or in the meeting's orientation phase.

4. "Purposes—goals" (Hymes, 1972, p. 61) concern the objectives of individual participants or groups within the speech situation. These might not be the same as the purposes—outcomes. For example, whereas a speech situation's conventional purpose (outcome) may be to garner public comment, some participants may attend with goals that differ, such as to learn about grant opportunities, to heckle the facilitator, or to get free food.
5. "Key" (Hymes, 1972, p. 62) is the tone, manner, or spirit in which speech acts are done. A speech act, for example, may be grave, jovial, tedious, perfunctory, and so on. This ties in with message form—i.e., how something is said. Recognizing the key in which speech acts are committed is crucial to understanding indigenous meanings.
6. "Norms of interaction" (Hymes, 1972, pp. 63-64) concern the procedural and relational rules that govern coherent speech situations, speech events, and speech acts; constraining communicative behavior in accordance with shared understandings of appropriateness. Many such rules are explicitly provided. For example, a moderator may clarify that if one wishes to speak, she must raise her hand. A responsive nod from the moderator means that her name has been listed in a queue, and she must wait her turn. Many other rules, though, are implicit, and are not made obvious until they are broken. For example, a newcomer to a longitudinal group, arriving several minutes early, may sit in a

chair that "belongs to" a senior member. A fellow participant may advise him to relocate. Or, to provide another example, a participant may convey a joke that other participants perceive as racist. An implicit rule of valuing diversity may have been broken.

In recording observations of these social units and speech components, I used a method called "open jotting" (Emerson et al., pp. 19-26), which means that I did not conceal my note-taking. At the same time, though, I did not make a show of it, nor did I go out of my way to advertise my research agenda. For ethical reasons (and practical reasons, in that I wanted to initiate or pursue contact), I did introduce myself to facilitators and participating officeholders prior to meetings (in those cases in which I had not conducted pre-meeting interviews). In several instances, I used the opportunity of self-introduction to conduct conversational, pre-meeting interviews. In not advertising my research task to fellow citizens, my purposes were to be viewed and treated as a "normal" participant, and to avoid inhibiting candid participation. Whenever fellow participants inquired about my note-taking, I was honest and straightforward about my research efforts.[26]

Methods of Conducting Interviews

Garnering officeholders' reports of experiences in public meetings is a central mission of my research. To restate this dissertation's fundamental goal, I aim to explore what public meetings mean to the officeholders who facilitate and participate in them—in terms of their senses of constraints, opportunities, frustrations, enjoyment, failures, successes, and so forth. This research task is responsive to a preponderance of research devoted to *citizens'* experiences in public meetings; research that takes for granted that officeholders' experiences are inconsequential to public meetings' procedures and outcomes, or not tied to the health of American democracy.

I used interviews to collect officeholders' accounts. When possible (and convenient for respondents), I conducted brief pre-meeting interviews. In every case I conducted in-depth post-meeting interviews. I relied on a variety of channels (often using multiple channels across multiple follow-up interviews with a single interview subject), including face-to-face, telephone, and email.[27] The different channels permitted varying levels of conversation and probing, with face-to-face interviews the most preferable and email correspondence, the least.

I preferred semi-structured, open-ended interviews to rigidly structured, closed-ended questionnaires for three reasons. For one, the cases varied widely, so a "cookie cutter" approach to soliciting experiential accounts would have been ineffective, especially for capturing nuances. Although I asked every subject questions on the same topics (as described below), interviews permitted me to tailor my questions and comments, and to be responsive to subjects' unique characteristics and circumstances. The second reason why interviews were preferable to questionnaires (and this is especially true for face-to-face interviews) is that conversation allowed me to pursue dangling or tangential comments, as well as verbal and nonverbal inconsistencies that often led to valuable disclosure. Third, and most important, conversational interviews allowed me to use paraphrase techniques to check that my understandings of the officeholders' reports were in line with their own; to ensure that I was not imposing exogenous attributions or meanings upon their spoken accounts.

Although I had no universal script or question order, I made a point to ask each officeholder about the following three sets of topics that concern different stages of their experiences:[28]

1. Meeting preparation
    - (a) motivation for implementing the meeting
    - (b) intended goals (presumed or hoped-for outcomes)
    - (c) funding source(s)
    - (d) implementation support
    - (e) promotion
    - (f) selection of venue
    - (g) procedural conception
    - (h) foreseen challenges
    - (i) foreseen opportunities
    - (j) past experience with public meetings
    - (k) models consulted
2. Meeting enactment
    - (a) efficiency of procedure
    - (b) quantity and quality of participants
    - (c) appropriateness of tone/mood
    - (d) appropriateness of venue

(e) problems/difficulties (foreseen and unforeseen)

(f) general experience

3. Post-meeting

(a) perceived outcomes (regarding planned task/relationship goals)

(b) perceived outcomes (regarding emergent task/relationship goals)

(c) perceived consequences of aftermath

(d) perceived successes and failures

(e) what was learned (toward future meeting implementation)

Summary

This chapter has explained the methods for selecting case studies and gathering descriptive data. This task is necessary for orienting the reader in preparation for the presentation of data (Chapter 5) and the interpretive discussion with respect to the dissertation's fundamental goals and questions (Chapter 6).

I selected three cases for focused study and discussion with the goal of representing varieties of public meeting types and facilitative or participating officeholders. I chose these cases over other possible cases because each offers specific characteristics that merit special consideration. In light of the dissertation's concern for recognizing appropriate (and inappropriate) discursive niches for public meetings, each of these three cases offers an informative illustration of democracy in action—for better or worse. The following table concisely portrays the selected cases:

Table 1: Selected Case Studies

Public Meeting Title and Location	**Public Meeting Type(s)**	**Facilitating and/or Participating Officeholder Type(s)**
Idaho (State) Commission on the Arts, *Idaho, Idaho, Wherefore ART Thou, Idaho?*, Moscow, ID.	Consultative (with a public information component)	Type III: Idaho Commission on the Arts Executive Director
Community Revitalization Committee, *Implementation Workshop*, Moscow, ID.	Consultative (with public information and collaborative components)	Type I: Moscow City Council members; County Executive Type III: Latah Economic Development Council Executive Director
Spokane Office of Community Services, *Community Assembly*, Spokane, WA.	Invitational (with collaboration components)	Type I: Spokane City Council members; Type III: Deputy Fire Inspector, and various others

In addition to describing the case studies and explaining the criteria that governed their selection, this chapter presented the methodological assumptions and procedures for collecting data. The case studies' data sets have two general components: the field notes and case write-ups that emerged out of my participant-observation in public meetings (and preliminary document research), and the officeholders' reports of their experiences as collected through interviews.

As a participant-observer in public meetings, I wrote field notes for eventual transcription into case write-ups. I borrowed several so-called "social units" and "components of speech" from Hymes (1962, 1972) to guide my observations. Social units that I described are speech situations and speech events. Components of speech that I paid close attention to are setting, scene, purposes—outcomes, purposes—goals, key, and norms of interaction.

In garnering officeholders' reports of their experiences in public meetings, I relied on face-to-face, telephone, and email channels to conduct interviews (typically in combination). Conversational interviews (as opposed to questionnaires) allowed me to tailor interviews for unique individuals, pursue significant tangents and verbal/nonverbal inconsistencies, and align my interpretations of officeholders' reports with their understandings. Interview topics included—but were not limited to—aspects of meeting preparation, meeting facilitation/participation, and meeting aftermath. Following the methodological exposition provided in this chapter, attention may now be directed to thorough consideration of the case studies themselves.

Chapter 5: Case Studies

The function of this chapter is to illustrate the dissertation's three case studies. This is strictly a descriptive endeavor. I defer all interpretive assessment to Chapter 6. There I discuss key implications and issues that arise in the three cases, and apply my interpretive findings in response to the dissertation's motivating research question. The immediate goal, however, is to portray the cases using material derived through document research, participant-observation of public meetings, and interviews with facilitating and/or participating officeholders.

The chapter is structured according to the three discrete cases. I present each description in four sequential parts, which discuss each public meeting's (a) background, (b) preparation, (c) enactment, and (d) reflective observations (of participating officeholders). The content of each section is an amalgamation of information collected from relevant documents, fieldnote observations, and interview data. Under the "meeting background" heading, I provide exposition that is necessary for understanding the meeting's context. Under "meeting preparation," I explain the facilitative and participating officeholders' motives, goals, concerns, and preparatory choices pertaining to location, procedure, event promotion, and so on. Under "meeting enactment," I describe the speech situation itself. I do this in a chronological (narrative) form, drawing on those aspects of Hymes' (1962, 1972) social units and speech components identified in Chapter 4. After the narrative I concisely summarize several of the social units and speech components that play out in the narrative but require detailed attention: the speech situation and speech events (speech units); and setting, scene, purposes—outcomes, purposes—goals, key, and norms of interaction (speech components). Finally, under the "perceived outcomes" heading, I convey the officeholders' experiences and reflections on the public meetings. These include their perceived outcomes, lessons learned, senses of constraints and opportunities, and so forth.

Case 1: Idaho Commission on the Arts, *Idaho, Idaho, Wherefore ART Thou? Community Meeting*, Moscow, Idaho

This public meeting was held on January 8, 2001 in the City of Moscow's Council Chambers in City Hall. Dan Harpole, the Executive Director of the Idaho Commission on the Arts, facilitated this event. The formal meeting began at 5:30 p.m. and adjourned at 8:00 p.m., but relevant talk occurred before and after the formally defined meeting. What follows is an account of the meeting's background, preparatory considerations, enactment, and reflective observations of the facilitating officeholder, ICA Executive Director Harpole.

Meeting Background

The Idaho Commission on the Arts is an organization that, according to its 1966 founding legislation, is charged to "stimulate and encourage throughout the state the study and presentation of the performing and fine arts and public interest and participation therein . . ." (ICA, 2001b, p. 1). The grounding assumption is that "quality experiences in the arts" are crucial to communities' economic and cultural lives. To support this, the ICA's specific function involves the provision of technical and financial assistance to organizational and individual projects on local levels. Financial contributions from the State of Idaho, private donations, and the federal government's National Endowment for the Arts enable its work (ICA, 2001b, p. 1).

As a condition of financial support from the NEA, the ICA is required to create a Long Range Plan every five years (as are all state arts commissions that receive federal funding). The Long Range Plan's purpose is to "guide the work of the Commission over the years ahead" (Harpole, 2002, p. 1) and—more specifically—to flesh out the Commission's established "mission" and "value" statements by identifying goals and objectives.[29] The finalized Plan is to be presented to the NEA for review upon finalization. In addition to the statements of mission and values and the identification of goals and objectives, the document is to include a profile of Idaho, a letter from Governor Kempthorne, an Executive Summary, information about the Commission, the planning process, and a strategy for annual review (Harpole, 2002, p. 1). Of this entire document, the only components that are specifically informed by citizens' input are the goals and objectives.

In an effort to solicit public input toward the Long Range Plan, Harpole and the ICA staff coordinated efforts with local municipal arts organizations (e.g., the Moscow Arts Commission) to conceive a tour of fourteen cities and towns throughout Idaho. Prior to the January 8 meeting in Moscow, Harpole and his two staff members had conducted meetings in seven communities; there were to be six more meetings after the Moscow event. Harpole's expressed goal—stated in the Moscow meeting (see below)—was "to hear from one thousand Idahoans." This "hearing from" includes not only face-to-face contact in community meetings, but also public comment through other media. As the community meeting promotional brochure (ICA, 2001a) states, "There are many ways you can have your voice heard: attend, Web, e-mail, fax, phone, write" (with applicable contact information provided). The face-to-face community meeting tour, then, was only one of several intended methods for soliciting public input. It was, however, the primary source for public input. Throughout the public comment campaign, very few citizens used channels other than the community meetings.

Meeting Preparation

Although the NEA requires state arts commissions like the ICA to author Long Range Plans at five-year intervals, it does not require the solicitation of public input toward these documents. Previous ICA Executive Directors had simply revised extant incarnations when new versions came due, and they did this with ICA staff members in closed settings. In his first year as ICA Executive Director, Harpole resolved to demonstrate "a genuine effort to hear what the interest areas are—a genuine effort to hear what are the needs and common grounds" of Idaho's citizens. Although the NEA did not mandate this kind of contact, Harpole perceived that "the NEA wants a level of inclusivity."

Whereas consultation was Harpole's explicit "priority," he also hoped to "put the ICA in a good light" as a "byproduct." According to this "PR effort," as Harpole described it, he wanted "people [to] feel that they were listened to—that we're making a good effort." This intention had practical import in Harpole's conception. Although it was not an explicitly stated purpose, this secondary objective was nonetheless very important. In advancing public relations, Harpole hoped "to develop grassroots support and camaraderie. . . . This is one of our key roles: to get people together and nurture their advocacy." In a climate of state budget shortfalls and widespread cuts, Harpole was aware that arts funding might face crisis if citizens remain silent about their needs.

Although Harpole had previously served as a County Executive (Jefferson County, WA), City Council member (Port Townsend, WA), and State Arts Commissioner (WA), Harpole had no experience with developing this kind of public meeting tour. For this reason, he and his staff worked for nearly a year on preparations. Harpole knew that, prior to consultation, he would need to "set the table" by providing "common understanding." This need motivated a public information component of the meeting, which Harpole and his staff satisfied by composing a PowerPoint presentation that overviewed the ICA's mission, procedures, programs, and so on (as detailed below, under "meeting enactment"). They devoted much more strenuous effort to composing the questions that would guide discussion. In this "long process," Harpole and his staff created an initial generation of discussion questions, then conferred with NEA directors, state Arts Commissioners, and the National Association of State Arts before finalizing the list (detailed below, under "meeting enactment.").

To prepare specific community meetings (such as the one in Moscow), Harpole coordinated with local public arts organizations like the Moscow Arts Commission. Moscow Arts Commission Director Deena Heath served as the local host at the meeting that I observed. She promoted the event by distributing the ICA's fliers and brochures; purchased and set up food and beverages with ICA funds (Harpole emphasized the importance of food and drink as "nourishment to keep people awake" though a dinner-time meeting.); attained a room (the City Council Chambers in City Hall) and necessary equipment (e.g., a projection screen and a table on which to set literature); and arranged the room per Harpole's request. It is notable that Harpole's requests for the room layout and seating arrangement were "not too specific," and that "available seating varied a lot from one location to another." Harpole's chief concern was "to get up close. The real key was to create a level of intimacy."

Meeting Enactment

Participants entered the Council Chambers prior to the meeting's designated start time. Some milled in the hallway outside the room where a table was set with crackers, cheese, vegetables and dip, and juice. Some participants conversed casually; others sat quietly, awaiting the start of the meeting. The Council Chambers were set with chairs in rows (audience-style). There was a table at the front of the room, set off to the side, with coffee dispensers and organized stacks of literature (brochures, copies of the current Long Range Plan, grant application materials, etc.). On the opposite side of the room, at the front, was a flip board. A small screen (for PowerPoint projection) was also at the front of the room, set in the middle. Although this was the Council Chambers, and thus an institutionally formal setting, the raised Council member chairs at the extreme front of the room (facing the audience) were not occupied. The Chambers, then, seemed transformed into a less formal meeting environment.

I wanted to introduce myself to the facilitator, Executive Director Dan Harpole, but he was engaged in conversation with a citizen about support for the arts from the state's executive and legislative branches. I sat down in the third row, at the end nearest the door, writing notes in my reporter's notebook. After excusing himself from his conversation, Harpole approached me to introduce himself—perhaps (I assumed) believing that I was a journalist. We exchanged introductions, and I explained my research project. We conversed about his meeting goals, the mandate from the National Endowment for the Arts to conduct this meeting-series, and his previous experiences meeting with citizens as Jefferson County (WA) Executive, Port Townsend (WA) City Council member, and Washington State Arts Commissioner.

As the designated start time approached, participants took seats throughout the room. Twenty-eight citizens were in attendance, plus the two ICA staff members (ICA Arts Education Director Ruth Piispanen and consultant Ann Dehner). Deena Heath, the Director of the Moscow Arts Commission, stood at the front of the room and introduced Harpole with a brief impromptu speech, saying, "I am—and I bet I can speak for all of us—honored to have him here." She turned the floor over to Harpole. There was no applause, as occurs sometimes after speeches of introduction.

Harpole began the meeting by clarifying his explicit purpose in holding the meeting: to solicit public input toward construction of a Long Range Plan. "This is the eighth such meeting," he explained. "Summaries are available on the Web, under 'What's New.'" He introduced his staff (sitting in chairs at the back of the room) by name and title. He then previewed the meeting's program, specifying that the first half of the meeting was to feature a PowerPoint presentation ("designed to share information about the ICA"). There would be a fifteen-minute break, and then the second half of the meeting was to be a "discussion" about specific sequential questions. (These discussion questions were specifically listed in the promotional brochure—distributed in the weeks prior to the meeting—and on a worksheet that was to be distributed during the meeting's break.)

Harpole delineated the orientation/introduction portion of the meeting from the formal PowerPoint presentation by turning on the projection equipment and saying, "I've talked through this program seven times already. [Laughs] I think I know it by heart now."[30] In saying this, Harpole made it explicit that the presentation was not tailored specifically for this group—that it was conceived with an eye toward replication. The presentation lasted approximately one hour, in accordance with the planned time frame. During this presentation there was little verbal interaction, and there were no questions from the audience. (Specific, infrequent, moments of interaction are described below.) Although his general manner—marked by smiles, eye wide eye contact with the audience, and movement from side-to-side at the front of the room—was, perhaps, welcoming enough to permit question asking by participants, he never stated explicitly that such interruptions were permitted or encouraged. Even as he worked through the presentational content, he did not pause between points to solicit clarifying questions. Audience feedback was predominantly in the form of occasional nods and other affirming nonverbals throughout the presentation.

In terms of how the speech situation (the meeting as a whole) was composed of different speech events (i.e., speech genres), the presentational component served a public information function. The meeting summary published on-line by the ICA describes this component as featuring "a PowerPoint presentation by Director Harpole on the Idaho Commission on the Arts: history, funding profile, programs and resources, materials and contact information" (ICA, 2002c, p. 19).[31] Specifically, the presentation included these points: statement of mission; definition of art; overview of support (i.e., grants) for individuals; overview of support for organizations; overview of support for arts in education; overview of technical assistance; funding allotments from the NEA (33%), the state legislature (62%), and private/corporate donations (5%); funding distributions throughout regions of Idaho; per capita arts spending in Idaho in comparison with other states and the nation as a whole; cultural facilities (as opposed to art programs) that have been funded in part by the ICA; and explanation of the ICA's organizational structure.

During the presentation, the only moments of verbal interaction came when Harpole used local examples of ICA-funded projects in order to tailor the information to the immediate speech situation. When speaking about funding for cultural projects, for example, he referred to the city's new community center (the 1912 Center), directing the utterance to the Moscow Arts Commission Director personally. In so doing, he demonstrated his familiarity with Heath, with whom he had accomplished grant work in the past. She replied, "Yes, that's right." Other participants who were familiar with the project nodded their heads and uttered, "Uh-*huh*," and other confirming vocalics.

The presentation set a mixed emotional tone in preparation for the meeting's explicitly termed "discussion" component. Some aspects of the presentation were relatively neutral in quality—for example, the explanation of the ICA's organizational structure. Other aspects were characterized by a clear congratulatory tone, as when

Harpole described—as he explicitly deemed them—"successful" and "valuable" cultural projects, such as Moscow's 1912 Center. His effort to cite local "success stories," as he termed them, and to explain the ICA's role in the funding and technical assistance of these projects created a sense that the ICA is relevant to members of this community, and fulfills important civic functions that affect residents' daily lives. Still other aspects of the presentation advanced worries about the state of arts funding in Idaho, and thus a sense of urgency for the pending discussion. For example, he explained that the majority of funding goes to projects in the Boise area (where the ICA has its offices). This is due, he, explained, to the relative frequency of applications from the Boise area in comparison with other parts of the state—an effect, he surmised, of unfamiliarity with the ICA and its grant opportunities in more distant regions. Harpole also raised a flag when he compared per capita spending on the arts in Idaho ($0.75 annually) with spending in the nation as a whole ($1.50 annually). In part, Harpole used this sense of urgency to promote a new ICA-affiliated Visa credit card, which directs 1% of purchase values to the ICA. He encouraged participants to help themselves to brochures/applications, available on the literature/coffee table at the front for the room, during the break.

Harpole delineated his presentation from other meeting components by announcing a "short snack break." During this time, participants milled around the food table in the hallway, conversed casually in pairs and small groups in the hallway and in the Council Chambers, or sat silently awaiting the meeting's resumption. Approximately ten participants gathered their coats and other artifacts and left (not to return). One participant who left during the break told me, "I came just to learn about the grant process. I'm submitting a proposal now, and it's due at the end of the month." In terms of how "purposes—goals" differ from "purposes—outcomes," it is noteworthy that the ICA's explicit reason for meeting publicly (to garner public input) did not necessarily overlap with participants' individual goals (e.g., to learn about grant opportunities).

Harpole called participants back to their seats by making two announcements in a raised voice (loud enough to be heard distinctly over the conversational din). He told participants that they could sign up to receive the ICA's newsletter and a copy of the eventual Long Range Plan draft via mail by signing a sheet set on the literature/coffee table at the front of the room, after the meeting. He also explained that this material is available on-line under the "What's new" section of the ICA's Website.

As participants took their seats, Harpole framed the pending discussion by explaining that the current Long Range Plan expires on June 30, 2002 and that a new plan—to be adopted by the state's Arts Commission—must be developed. At this point, in accordance with the meeting's explicit consultative goal, he stated his hope for a "casual atmosphere and candid feedback." "We need to hear from you," he said, "and I mean that quite sincerely." Harpole summoned Consultant Dehrer to step up to the flip pad with a marker pen, and explained to the citizens that her job was to jot the comments. She quipped that she was "like the Vanna White," which elicited a din of laughter from the participants. During the discussion session that followed, citizens remained in their chairs (still arranged audience-style) while Harpole moderated the talk from a standing position at the front of the room.

The discussion followed a prepared agenda defined by sequential questions: (a) "Does the Commission have a presence in your community? If not, how can we improve visibility? If yes, please share your story." (b) "What area of support was of greatest benefit to your organization over the last year? Over the last three years?" (c) "What additional services do you want from the Commission?" (d) "How can the Commission better serve individual artists, arts organizations, and arts education?" (f) "What art needs are not being addressed?" (g) "Any comments on our current programs and activities and your hopes for the future of the Commission?" The procedure moved through these questions sequentially. Throughout each segment of the discussion, Dehrer recorded abbreviated comments in marker ink on the flip pad.[32]

At the beginning of the meeting's discussion portion, Harpole requested that contributors preface their comments by stating their names and affiliate organizations (if any). Immediately, the discussion—which is what Harpole explicitly labeled it—was structured into question/answer format. That is, questions and answers were more closed-ended than open, and the discussion was not very conversational. Although there was no explicitly stated turn-taking rule, citizens raised their hands to request permission (from Harpole, the moderator) to speak.

Early into the discussion, during consideration of the ICA's visibility in the Moscow community, one participant—a representative of the University of Idaho-affiliated Prichard Art Gallery—said, "Coming up here helps. In all seriousness, this is the first meeting I've attended." Another participant then said, "You folks in Boise have the power to remind [everyone] that there is a whole state." Harpole replied, "We have a role." This exchange marked a turning point in the quality and format of the discussion. Both Harpole and the citizens seemed to be drawing on the relationship dimension of the group work, and explicitly connecting the quality of citizen/government relationships with the quality of the ICA's ability to serve citizens statewide. As this relational dimension of the meeting became explicit, the format and quality of the discussion transformed. There was less hand-raising (and, thus, less governed turn-taking) and more "jumping in" by citizens, creating talk that experienced more conversational exchange—with overlaps and interruptions—than discrete questions and answers. The energy level and overall enthusiasm of the group seemed to increase—manifested in more emphatic and varied nonverbal cues (such as gestures, facial expressions, and vocalic volume, rate, and pitch) and increased overlapping of utterances.

Harpole moved the discussion along the agenda by making explicit shifts when he perceived the topics exhausted or the contributions redundant. He made these topical shifts with signposts such as, "Ok, on to a new question." In moving from the second to the third question-topic (i.e., "What additional services do you want from the Commission?), he said, "Here's the BIG question." This was followed by laughter from the citizens. The laughter marked a shared understanding among participants: the ICA operates with a limited budget that has no realistic chance of expansion during the state's current period of fiscal crisis. Instead of stymieing discussion by framing the question as inconsequential to the fiscal realities, however, the meeting experienced a spark of inventive and synthetic talk. Instead of mere consultation—in which information flows from the citizens to the public officials—there was genuine transaction. Harpole and citizens traded narratives illustrating the disconnection between legislators and community arts programs. But this was not simply about commiseration. Participants collaborated to develop concrete ideas, particularly about how to "get localities [i.e., the Moscow Arts Commission] up to speed" and in better alignment with the state Commission.

At this point there was pronounced enthusiasm for both task and relationship dimensions of the group talk. This enthusiasm manifested itself, partly, in the raising of special interests in appeals for community cooperation. When talk turned to the fifth issue ("What needs are not being addressed?"), discussion became focused on Moscow's local projects instead of the ICA's more general functioning. Citizens, when speaking, now directed their utterances to each other in the audience rather than to Harpole. "I heard there might be a meeting here tonight, so I ran up," said one woman. She explained that she was in the early stages of launching a community youth orchestra. Using the meeting as a site where local citizens with shared pro-art values were gathered, she made an appeal to participants who might wish to volunteer. In response, the Director of Moscow's Kenworthy Performing Arts Center (a non-profit organization) offered praise, then, in turn, appealed for more local emphasis on film arts. Speaking up as a moderator, Harpole brought the discussion back to the ICA's role in such local projects, without deflating participants' emerging senses of community and potentials. In summing up this topic, Harpole emphasized that community participation is the foundation of what the ICA does, and that cooperative inter-organizational work on the local level is important.

"We're running out of time, so let's move on to the last question," said Harpole. "Do you have any comments on our current programs and activities, and what hopes do you have for the future of the Commission?" "More money" [group laughter] was one response. "Keep doing what you're doing now," was another. The tone at this point was one of group commitment to the ICA's goals and to a newfound sense of potential in the Moscow community for arts-related partnerships. "I hope to get enough in my travel budget to get up here again regularly because I really learn a lot," commented Harpole as he segued into adjourning the meeting. "Just a last comment: I appreciate this input. It's been very valuable." He urged participants to "get the word out" about what the ICA does, the grant opportunities it offers, and—particularly—the ongoing public comment campaign. "We really have a goal to hear from one thousand Idahoans, and we have a long way to go."

Immediately upon adjournment (defined by Harpole's, "Thanks everyone."), several participants gathered their coats and other artifacts and left the room, but many stayed to mingle and converse with each other about various arts-related projects in Moscow. Although my research does not centrally concern the citizens' experiences, it is noteworthy that citizens found in this meeting an opportunity to network and coordinate community efforts. Whereas, prior to the meeting, the casual conversations were nonverbally subdued, now they were characterized by animated vocalics, gestures, facial expressions, and overlapping utterances. It was evident by the talk's lively tone that the event enervated participants.

Speech situation and speech events. The speech situation was the public meeting itself, as a whole. The formal beginning and adjournment did not discretely define this situation, however, since talk occurred before and after the meeting, and during the break. The situation was composed of several discrete speech events. These included: (a) informal conversations (before and after the meeting, and during break); (b) an introduction of the facilitator (an utterance of MAC Director Heath); (c) a formal presentation by the meeting facilitator; (d) a "discussion" (in part, question/answer structure; in part, open exchange); and (e) an adjournment.

Setting. The formal location (City Council Chambers) contributed an air of institutionalism, even though the facilitator addressed participants from the floor instead of the raised Council platform. The basic fact that the meeting was held in a governmental building instilled in the speech situation a degree of institutional legitimacy. The availability of finger-foods and beverages contributed to a casual atmosphere, much like a coffee klatch; however, the arrangement of chairs into rows (audience-style) enforced a division between the facilitator and the citizen-participants, who—even during the meeting's discussion portion—sat in rows, facing forward. This inhibited conversational exchanges to an extent.

Scene. The speech situation was not motivated out of any urgent problem or other shared emotional context. In preceding months, however, news of the state's worsening recession had taken a dire tone, and this contributed to participants' worries about arts funding in the next fiscal year. This worry was articulated in the appeal for "more money" in response to Harpole's question about the arts' needs. The meeting's emotional scene was punctuated by a shared optimism that heightened as the discussion progressed. This optimism was manifested in increased conversational (and even dialogic) talk. Participants' overlaps, interruptions, and emphatic use of nonverbals characterized this talk. The emotional quality of the talk was markedly different after adjournment than before the meeting or during the break. This points to participants' joint development of eagerness for artistic collaboration, which began midway through the meeting's discussion component. It is noteworthy that this enthusiasm defines the intersection of relational and task-oriented kinds of talk.

Purposes—outcomes. As stated in the promotional brochure, the meeting's *purposes—outcomes* were "to present news about the Commission and to hear from Idahoans about their needs and vision for the arts in their communities" (ICA, 2001a).

Purposes—goals. Some participants had the goal of learning information about the ICA; for example, the participant who left at the break told me that he attended in order to learn about the grant application process. Others attended with the goal of providing comments to inform the ICA's ongoing and future programs. (Of course, some participants likely had both goals.) The *purposes—goals* do overlap well with the purposes—outcomes, which is not always the case.

Key. Task-related utterances were generally enacted with seriousness, but not gravity. In other words, participants undertook their tasks conscientiously—they listened attentively to the information that Harpole presented and, during the discussion, contributed feedback earnestly. Occasional uses of humor (by Harpole, Dehner, and some contributing participants) helped to bolster relational aspects of groupwork, and temper the seriousness that characterized task-related utterances. The relatively dialogic portion of the discussion had a boisterous quality.

Norms of interaction. The meeting's process—the ordering of the speech events—was explicitly pronounced in Harpole's orienting talk early in the meeting. During the presentational event, participants (enacting audience roles) did not interrupt or ask questions. There was no explicit rule that prohibited this; however, Harpole did not explicitly encourage questions or other utterances from the participants. During the discussion portion participants generally raised their hands to gain turn-taking permission from Harpole. When the discussion became relatively more conversational the hand-raising method of turn taking was still normative, but much overlapping and interruption occurred. Harpole, perhaps sensing that the animated conversation (interaction among participants) was productive, did not reinstate formal order by explicating the hand-raising rule. Ultimately, though, Harpole did enforce his moderator's authority in closing down the open-ended discussion, citing the importance of progress along the agenda with respect to time constraints.

Officeholder's Reflective Observations

With general respect to purposes, processes, and outcomes, Harpole was "pleased with the quality of the meeting. I feel like we got really smart input and nurtured some key allegiances between arts organizations." Although the goal of hearing from "one thousand Idahoans" was not met, the 346 citizens who attended the meetings were satisfactory to Harpole, particularly in *per capita* terms. The small price tag for the meeting series (under $15,000, compared to over $75,000 spent by Washington State in a similar campaign) coupled with the "key help" from local arts commissions made the project very feasible. "We've gotten considerable positive feedback . . .[that has prompted] several follow-ups," he said, referring to a few recent trips he's taken to meet with local arts organizations. The perceived success of this meeting series has motivated Harpole to conduct regular, annual meetings with citizens (with various goals) if the budget will allow it.

Although he experienced "no glaring surprises" throughout the meeting series, Harpole "saw some patterns" and learned about how to improve specific aspects of the meeting. With regard to the meeting's public information component, Harpole said, "Part of what I learned is that we could have put together a better PowerPoint presentation. It could have been much stronger." Harpole clarified "stronger" as "more precise and more engaging." If the function of the meeting's public information component is to "set the table," then the ICA should present its *own* sense of issues, problems, and potentials in a manner that explicitly frames and energizes the subsequent discussion. With regard to the consultative component, Harpole realized that "throughout all meetings, the first three [discussion] questions yielded 90% of our usable feedback." In future consultative meetings, Harpole plans to design questions that "point to getting better specificity." As it was, discussions pertaining to the latter questions seemed to circle back to comments already made.

This does not mean that, in Harpole's sense, the latter parts of the discussions were without merit. In fact, they often became centrally important to Harpole. In many of the meetings—including the meeting that I observed—the redundancy of the discussion after the third question opened room for unplanned and fruitful things to occur: relationship and community building, and the spurring of grassroots enthusiasm. The meeting narrative, presented above, illustrates this. Citizens had been facing forward in their audience-rowed chairs, listening and speaking to Harpole at the front of the room. In discussion of the fifth question, participants suddenly turned and began to address *each other*. The discussion departed from the formal question/answer structure that had characterized it up to this point, and the question topics themselves were replaced with new content. Now citizens were telling each other about the youth orchestra and film project they envisioned, for example, and seeking community (rather than ICA) support in the form of volunteers and brainstorming feedback.

As the discourse became more dialogically interactive and spontaneous among participants, Harpole's unstated *purpose—outcome* of "developing grassroots support and camaraderie" was being fulfilled. Harpole experienced this consistently across community meetings, even though there was no planned discursive mechanism to guarantee it. "It made me realize how important our role is as a convenor," he said. "Our role is to get those people together and energize them." It is notable that this was neither an explicit *purpose—outcome* of the meeting, nor something provided for in formal, planned discourse. Regardless of its emergence, it became, for Harpole, something that "was absolutely important for us."

Case 2: Community Revitalization Committee, *Vision & Value Community Workshop*, Moscow, Idaho

This public meeting was implemented on the evening of October 16, 2001 in a meeting room of the Gritman Medical Center in Moscow, Idaho. The meeting was facilitated by three caseworkers representing Dufresne-Henry and Hatchmueller, respectively the consulting and architectural firms hired by the Community Revitalization Committee (CRC) of the Latah (County) Economic Development Council (LEDC), and paid for jointly by the City of Moscow and the University of Idaho. The project as a whole was overseen by the CRC, which is a body composed of city and county officeholders, members of the Moscow Chamber of Commerce, and University of Idaho officials. The CRC is chaired by City Council member JoAnn Mack and administered by Executive Director Barbara Richardson. The meeting's basic function was to solicit public input on design proposals toward the "Moscow Downtown Revitalization Plan" (Dufresne-Henry & Hatchmueller, 2002). This plan, which is still in draft form as of June 2002, is eventually to be adopted by Moscow's Community Development Committee and Planning and Zoning Committee as a guide for future development approvals. What follows is an account of the meeting's background, preparation, enactment, and reflective observations of CRC Chair and City Council member Joann Mack, LEDC Executive Director Barbara Richardson, City Council member Peg Hamlett, and County Executive and Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Paul Kimmell.

Meeting Background

The LEDC was formed in 1987 as a joint-controlled body—composed in equal parts by representatives of Moscow city government, Latah County government, the private (business) sector, and the University of Idaho—to consider the region's economic well being. In the LEDC's words, it is "dedicated to the future of Moscow and Latah County through collaborative and focused efforts to strengthen and broaden the region's economic base" (LEDC, 2002). In autumn 2000, as Moscow's downtown experienced reduced commercial viability after the construction of two shopping malls on the eastern and western edges of town, the CRC was established within the LEDC's purview. This committee was assigned to develop a blueprint—the Moscow Downtown Revitalization Plan—to guide future development in ways that would bolster the downtown's commercial well being.

The CRC "is charged with evaluating issues, opportunities and making recommendations for improving areas of the community with a primary focus on areas in the downtown district" (CRC 2002b). It is a collaborative body in that its board is composed of city officials, county officials, University of Idaho officials, and Moscow Chamber of Commerce members. This collaborative makeup serves the functions of including and synthesizing varied interests toward creation of the Moscow Downtown Revitalization Plan, and ensuring that no one interest—the city, the county, business, or the university—has undue control of the process and outcomes.

In February 2001, to further promote neutrality, the CRC hired an architectural firm to draft blueprints for a re-envisioned downtown (Hatchmueller) and a consulting firm to garner public input toward this plan (Dufresne-Henry).[33] The city and the university split the costs of these contracts evenly. At this point Dufresne-Henry caseworkers took charge of public consultation. They did, however, continue to answer to LEDC Executive Director Barbara Richardson, CRC Chair JoAnn Mack, various city officials (the City Supervisor, the Director of Community Development, and the City Planner), and various University of Idaho officials (Assistant Vice President of Facilities and the Planning Analyst). These officials, with the contracted caseworkers, composed "the Project Team" (Dufresne-Henry & Hatchmueller, 2002, p. i). In addition to assigning experts to the task, the goal of using outside contractors was to permit an information-gathering body that "wouldn't be swayed" by special interests, according to LEDC Executive Director Barbara Richardson.

Dufresne-Henry facilitated the first of its public meetings in May 2001. The purposes of this meeting were to explain the goal of developing a Moscow Downtown Revitalization Plan and to elicit citizens' visions in a focus group setting.[34] Through questions such as, "If Moscow were a car, what kind of car is it?" participants "were challenged to questions, metaphorical thinking, analogies and visualization images" (Dufresne-Henry & Hatchmueller, 2002, p. 2.4). At this point, as City Council member and CRC Chair JoAnn Mack said, "The CRC was ready to knock on doors, we were so excited. But we were told [by Dufresne-Henry caseworkers] to wait until we knew what we were doing. To 'Wait until we get info back [from citizens] before you go knocking on doors.'" Unfortunately, the May meeting was sparsely attended, due possibly to its scheduling during the university's exam week.

In addition to the May public meeting, Dufresne-Henry's plan for "getting info back" during the summer months of 2001 included two steps. The first of these was the distribution of surveys to residents and downtown business owners (supported with a grant from Verizon). Response from residents was strong, but only 3% of surveys distributed to owners of downtown businesses and properties responded, according to Richardson.[35] The second step, during summer months and early autumn of 2001, was a series of "meet and greet" small group meetings in social settings between downtown business and property owners, Dufresne-Henry caseworkers, and CRC members. According to Mack, Richardson, and Kimmell, there was very little involvement from the business sector. I asked Mack if she knew why downtown business and property owners were generally reluctant to participate. She responded wryly, "How could I have asked them? They never showed up."

Whereas city officials, county officials, business leaders, and university officials had great enthusiasm for the Downtown Moscow Revitalization Plan in May, by autumn their energy for the project was waning—and so was the community's. In refraining from "knocking on doors" over the summer—at the advice of Dufresne-Henry caseworkers—they missed an opportunity to spark civic involvement, believes Mack: "We could have continued the fervor over the summer instead of letting it die."

New hope for civic input—especially from downtown business and property owners—was placed in a series of three public workshops in September, October, and November 2001. The first of these—a "Visioning Workshop/Charette"—was intended to inspire group brainstorming. The second—an "Exploration Workshop"—was conceived to solicit community input toward modifying design drafts developed by Dufresne-Henry and Hatchmueller following the first workshop. The third public meeting—an "Implementation Workshop"—was intended to incorporate public response into a final blueprint for a future downtown (to be officially presented to the City Council in December).

Unfortunately, the Visioning Workshop/Charette was scheduled for the evening of September 11. Due to that day's terrorist attacks and the resulting suspension of air traffic across the country, the Dufresne-Henry facilitators were unable to make it to Moscow, and the public meeting was canceled. Regardless, the consultants proceeded to develop two alternative downtown architectural plans for consideration at the October 16 meeting. To do this, they were forced to rely on the limited public input they had garnered from surveys and the smattering of "meet and greets" with downtown business and property owners, as well as an additional charette with University of Idaho architecture students. "How [they] got to those specific maps, I don't know," Mack told me later, with a slight laugh. She was referring to the lack of public input—particularly from the downtown business owners—that would ideally have informed the plans' conception. This is where the immediate case study enters in: the October 16 Exploration Workshop, renamed the "Vision & Values Workshop" to incorporate some of the September 11 meeting goals. In this meeting, facilitators solicited participants' responses to the prepared drafts. This public meeting featured: (a) a presentation of the demographic, economic, and "visioning" data collected by Dufresne-Henry between May and October 2001; (b) a presentation of two alternative blueprints, designed by

Hatchmueller with the aid of Dufresne-Henry's data and interpretive ideas; and (c) an opportunity for participants to respond to the design proposals. It was a link in a procedural chain that would subsequently entail a final community workshop in November and the draft plan's formal unveiling (at a community meeting) in December.

Meeting Preparation

The Exploration Workshop's overt goal, as Mack described, was "to try to get a picture of what the community wanted, and particularly businesses and property owners." Kimmel and Richardson also emphasized the importance of participation among downtown business and property owners. The emphasis was due to the lack of data pertaining to those people's needs, and the related fact that they—more than other city residents—had much at stake. This goal of "getting a picture," according to Gastil and Kelshaw's (2000) typology, is consultative. As the speech situation's narrative description below suggests, though, the consultative function was prepared with the presentation of research data and architectural plans. This presentation primarily served a public information function. To further complicate this meeting's typological classification, the fact that it was enabled by the CRC—a body composed of public officials and citizens in partnership—makes it, ultimately (and technically, if not functionally), a collaborative event. The fact that officeholders participated in this meeting side-by-side with lay citizens further suggests the collaborative classification. Regardless, consideration must be given to the implementers' agreed sense of purpose: to solicit public input. In addition to the solicitation of public input, Mack understood the meeting as an effort "to get a spark going. We had a lot of spark from residents and not much from the businesses." Thus, generating enthusiasm for the project was—at least in Mack's conception—a secondary, but important, goal.

In preparing for this meeting, CRC members and other interested parties (such as city commissions and the University of Idaho) relinquished control to the contracted facilitators. Although the Dufresne-Henry and Hatchmueller caseworkers did provide the CRC Board with its presentational material prior to the workshop, the CRC did not provide specific feedback or direction in meeting-design. As Mack said, there was a sense that the meeting should be "left to the experts" since "that's what we brought them in to do. None of us had the right level of expertise" to collect and interpret data and to devise architectural plans. Thus the workshop's specific content and procedure were not informed, much less mandated, by the CRC. However, as CRC Chair, Mack embraced an opportunity to influence the meeting's tone, with an eye toward her secondary goal of instilling public enthusiasm. As the introductory speaker, Mack intended to "get a spark" by framing the event as a crucial occasion for the city's future (see below, under "meeting enactment").

The meeting was promoted primarily with funds from the LEDC. Promotions included an announcement in *the [Moscow Food] Co-op Newsletter*, posters and fliers distributed at shopping centers, newspaper articles, announcements at City Council meetings (which are televised), and postings on the community's civic email list-serve *Vision 20/20*. The Moscow Chamber of Commerce, desperate to get downtown business and property owners involved, paid personal visits to many businesses, distributing fliers and words of encouragement.

The Gritman Medical Center (Moscow's hospital) donated a meeting room for the workshop. It is noteworthy that the public meeting was not held at City Hall or another governmental site. This attests to the partnership of interests that supported the meeting and the more general project. The Moscow Food Co-op donated snack trays and beverages.

Meeting Enactment

The workshop was scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m., but participants began arriving as early as 5:30. Informal conversations in dyads and small groups formed, typically beginning as participants milled around the snack and beverage table at the back of the meeting room. Holding small paper plates filled with vegetable slices and other finger foods, participants pursued social conversations either standing or sitting in chairs that were organized in rows. Clearly, many participants knew each other well or were at least acquainted; first names were used regularly when participants greeted each other. A man wearing a baseball cap, in his mid- to late-seventies I guessed, took a chair in front of mine. Upon sitting he immediately introduced himself and asked my name, place of employment, and so on. Upon learning that I was a faculty member in the School of Communication, he explained that he was an emeritus professor (of a different department) and that he spent a great deal of time in my building, visiting with a colleague of mine. This exchange, in my impression, characterized the general tone of the pre-meeting conversations: citizens—many of whom were acquainted—coming together with a communal purpose and using the opportunity to socialize and create affiliations. Notably, I did not overhear any talk about the workshop or its topic (the Downtown

Moscow Revitalization Plan). This struck me because the workshop was the one thing—at least the most obvious thing—that every person had in common. That participants had other, relatively casual, things to converse about in this unstructured pre-meeting time implied that the occasion doubled as a social function, and that participants utilized the event to "get caught up" with friends and acquaintances, as well as to meet others and extend their social networks.

The room gradually filled with participants, many of whom took seats while they were still available. Total attendance was above seventy participants, and this—I was later told—exceeded the legal capacity, suggesting that turnout was significantly higher than organizers had predicted. City Council member/CRC member Linda Pall distributed fliers promoting an upcoming historical walking tour. She greeted most people by name as she wound through the rows of chairs. A Dufresne-Henry caseworker set up PowerPoint projection equipment at the back of the center aisle. LEDC Executive Director Barbara Richardson, CRC Chair/City Council member JoAnn Mack, County Executive/Chamber of Commerce President Paul Kimmel, and three caseworkers stood in a small group talking at the room's front right corner. Two City Council members, Linda Pall and Peg Hamlett, took seats in the audience among the citizen-participants.

Mack, still standing in her group at the front right side of the room, addressed the audience to start the meeting. Her introductory speech was impromptu and delivered in a casual tone. Her goal was to orient the participants with respect to the project and its present stage. "This is about what *we* can do," she said, appealing to senses of community and participation. She then introduced the other members of the party assembled at the front of the room: Paul Kimmel, the County Executive; Barbara Richardson. LEDC Executive Director (introduced by Mack as "Barb"); Peter Bourgois, Project Manager of Dufresne-Henry; Ted Brovitz, Planning and Economic Development researcher for Dufresne-Henry; Stephen Plunkard, Public Participation and Visioning point-person for Dufresne-Henry; and Dell Hatch, the landscape architect for Hatchmueller. After introducing each, she turned to the audience and expressed appreciation for the work that these people had put into the project. She then said, "And now I'll turn it over to Peter. who will get things going for us. Peter?" (There was no applause, as takes place in some situations after speeches of introduction.)

Peter[36] set out with a decidedly conversational tone, punctuated by light laughter at times and lighthearted bantering with his colleagues (e.g., to Ted as he fiddled with the PowerPoint equipment: "What's wrong there, Ted? Can't get it figured out? [laugh]). He told the audience that he lives in Prescott, Arizona, but that he had attended "the U of I" and that he felt a strong connection to Moscow. He walked over to a sheet of poster board fixed to the right wall bearing his name and email address, handwritten in marker pen. He urged participants to feel comfortable contacting him with whatever thoughts or questions they might have.

Peter then briefly previewed the workshop's procedural structure. The first part of the meeting was to be used for the presentation of demographic information, economic data, and the two optional design plans. Then, in the second hour, participants would break into small-group "charettes"—brainstorming sessions in architectural jargon—to discuss the plans and provide feedback. After providing this overview, Peter pointed to a group of eight or so people sitting together on the right side of the room and explained that these were "directed-study students in the College of Art and Architecture who will be scattered throughout the charettes to listen in tonight." He further explained, "They'll be consulted tomorrow by members of our team." Thus he implied that whatever feedback the team might miss that night would hopefully be picked up and later communicated by these students, serving as listening-posts. Secondarily, he used this utterance to highlight the university's involvement in the project.

After his brief orientation, Peter used PowerPoint slides to present the project's "Vision Statement" and the "Goals and Objectives." The Vision Statement read: "The downtown will become the heart of the city and region. The historic downtown will become the center of shopping, working, Living [sic] and playing—serving the needs of residents, students and visitors. It will become the regions [sic] cultural center for arts and entertainment." After reading this verbatim from the screen, Peter paused briefly. Then, with a sudden emphasis in his voice, and with conscientious eye contact across participants, he said, "These are not *our* words. These words came from you. This is what you told us in the surveys." He then switched to the "Goals and Objectives" slide, and read these words verbatim: "Leadership; Organization and management; Planning and Design; Finance and economic structuring; Marketing and promotion; and Culture."

Peter then said, "I'm going to turn things over to Ted, who'll lead you through some of what we've learned about you, from you and what you've had to say." Ted, remaining at the rear of the center aisle where he had set up the projection equipment, presented and talked through a series of slides depicting Moscow's strengths and needs as garnered through analysis of the survey data. The first slides—concerned with Moscow's present strengths—were snapshots of Moscow's most familiar and recognizable landmarks: the Friendship Square fountain, the grain elevators, the Farmers Market, Otto's Produce Stand, a sunset over the Palouse, and so on. These slides did not offer participants any new information; rather, they framed Moscow as it is seen (in its most tourist-friendly light) through the eyes of outsiders—specifically the consulting caseworkers, who lived in Massachusetts, Arizona, and other distant locales. At this point in the presentation, a telephone in the hallway adjacent to the meeting room rang. The ringing did not interrupt Ted, who continued listing Moscow's notable landmarks per the slides. A participant who had answered the telephone hollered out the name of the person for whom the phone call was directed. It is noteworthy that he did not wait for a break in Ted's speech. In fact, Ted was mid-sentence when he was interrupted. There was slight laughter among the seated participants as a man jumped up to take his call. After a pause, Ted advanced to the next slide and continued his presentation.

Ted's presentation moved from the scenic tour of Moscow to quantitative analysis of demographic and economic data. His presentational tone and overall manner was not as conscientiously interactive or humorous as Peter's, and his content was comparatively dry and analytic. During this portion of the meeting I noticed many audience members looking around the room, conversing softly in dyads, and otherwise not directing their attention to the slides and Ted's speech. The data analysis culminated in a "Market Positioning Statement," which, like the "Vision Statement" presented earlier by Peter, was "derived from the surveys" as Ted said. Here, the participants generally refocused their attention on what Ted was reading from a slide:

> While Downtown Moscow will not be able to capture all of the retail and service sales dollars that are currently going out of the district, with better connections to the student population, streetscape enhancements, strategic development, quality promotions, and aggressive retail retention and recruitment programs a percentage of recapture is achievable. To be conservative, the market analysis projects a 3-5% market recapture in the next five years. This figure could be well exceeded based on the progress of the revitalization and marketing plan.

This utterance was spoken with a stylistic quality that distinguished it from the earlier "vision statement." Ted's presentational style had comparatively less spontaneity, interactivity, and humor than Peter's. These stylistic differences mirror general differences between the quantitatively analytic and the qualitatively imaginative contents. Notably, the audience members were perceptibly more responsive (nonverbally) during Peter's "visioning" portion of the presentation.

Still speaking from his position at the projector at the rear of the center aisle, Ted provided a segue: "Ok, so Peter's going to show you the plans." Peter, standing at the front of the room, explained that the team had developed two alternative architectural plans for consideration. "The details aren't fixed. That's what we're all here to talk about," he said. "Both plans have a theme. We'd like to at least get a sense of which general theme you all prefer, and see how we can rework the details."

This portion of the presentation entailed "guided tours"—one at a time—of the two alternative renderings of a re-envisioned downtown, which varied significantly. During this portion of the meeting, the participants—still seated audience-style—became more vocal and involved. There were no explicit turn-taking rules; participants simply spoke up when they wished. I noticed a heightened amount of dyadic conversation in the audience concerning elements of the plans. Often, when participants said something to Peter (and thus to the whole group) about an aspect of a plan, others typically reinforced the utterance's content with "Yeah" or equivalent affirmations. Group laughter was a typical response to design ideas that were generally perceived as grossly inappropriate for Moscow's "character" (a word that was used frequently). This seemed to counteract the legitimate fear that some felt. As Hamlett later reflected, "Many people who saw the plan had comments such as 'that is where such and such is located, you can't demolish their building,' not realizing that the plan was not intended to next year just tear down buildings and implement 'the plan,' but to use it as a flexible outline."

There was one particularly prominent example of the use of laughter to deride an idea and vent anxiety. Participants invoked this example repeatedly throughout the remainder of the workshop as a symbol of the risk the city was taking in encouraging change. This was the proposal—in Plan A—to transform the intersection of Highways 95 and 8 into a "roundabout." When Peter pointed out this detail, the room erupted in laughter. At once, participants conversed emphatically with those sitting next to them, and many said loudly—addressed to Peter and the whole group—such overlapping utterances as, "You've got to be kidding!," "That's the stupidest thing!," and so on. One participant explicated the underlying issue in a way that defined a very important aspect of the relationship between the citizen-participants and the hired consultants. Addressing Peter directly, the participant said, "I know that you're all from other places, like Massachusetts, but that would never work here in Idaho. In Moscow. Nobody'd be able to figure it out and we'd all be in wrecks" [laughter among the participants]. This utterance pointed out participants' fundamental shared understanding, as supported by the exaggerated head-nods, verbal expressions of concurrence, and laughter: The plan developers, although demonstrating good intentions and openness to public response, were ultimately community outsiders. Peter responded by saying, "That's the kind of thing [criticism of the roundabout] that we're here to learn. This is your city, and these plans will reflect your vision." It was an important moment in the course of the workshop.

Although there was much feedback from (and conversation among) participants throughout Peter's guided tour of the Plan A and Plan B slides, Peter had not specifically solicited verbal responses during this portion of the workshop's program. According to the meeting overview he had provided at the beginning of the workshop, this was intended to be a presentation. Discussion and response were designated to take place after a break. Regardless, Peter did not discourage verbal feedback that interrupted his guided tours of the two plans.

After completing his guided tour, Peter explained that we would "take a short break, come up and have a look at the plans, and then we're going to do something fun." He explained that each person would be given five green sticker-dots and five red dots to place wherever they wished on the two plans (which were mounted on poster boards on the wall at the front of the room). He called this "spinning the dots," and he explained that "it will give us an idea of what you like and don't like. By seeing where the big groups of reds and greens are, we'll be able to get an idea of consensus."

A break commenced, during which many participants milled around the food table and conversed in dyads and small groups. Others approached the blueprints mounted on the front wall and discussed them excitedly, pointing, laughing, and so on. As opposed to the informal pre-meeting conversations, these conversations—although still informal—were clearly more task-related (that is, the plans were the dominant topic of conversation). As well, they were much louder and more nonverbally animated. As more participants left the rear of the room (where the food table was) for the front of the room (where the plans were mounted), the break gradually transformed into the workshop's feedback portion. This is to say that there was no explicit delineation or commencement. Without announcement or direction from facilitators, participants simply, at their leisure, took dot-stickers from a box at the front of the room and approached the plans. This is noteworthy because the participants were not behaving passively to the facilitators' leadership; they were themselves taking initiative with the workshop's procedure. Although there was much conversation among participants as they studied the plans and affixed their dots, there was no explicitly structured charette process. The standing space at the wall where the blueprints were posted was crammed with people, so informal small groups formed in the seats, in which participants talked about the strengths and weaknesses of the plans. These small groups approximated the facilitators' intended charettes, but without grounding in formal instruction. The volume in the room was loud; many conversations—small group and dyadic—overlapped. Participants generally supplemented their talk with animated physical and vocalic nonverbals. Punctuated by laughter, the talk appeared somewhat festive.

The meeting did not "end" in any specific manner or according to any adjourning speech act. Participants, having affixed their dots to the blueprints and conversed together about the plans, gradually left the meeting. As the group size shrank, Ted dismantled the projection equipment. Lingerers stayed on to discuss the plans with each other and the caseworkers. Notably, throughout the workshop's final stage, officeholders who were present (e.g., City Council members Joann Mack, Peg Hamlett, and Linda Pall; and County Executive Paul Kimmell) participated side-by-side with citizens, discussing the plans and placing dots. This allowed officeholders—as Mack later told me—to "behave like the citizens that we are, since we *are* citizens and business owners who have a lot of stake in the plan."

Speech situation and speech events. The *speech situation* was the workshop itself, although it included informal conversational talk before the formal start of the workshop and during its break. Several discrete *speech events* composed this situation. Chronologically, these events were: (a) informal pre-meeting conversations; (b) an impromptu speech of introduction (JoAnn Mack); (c) a speech of orientation, which segued into (d) a presentation of the "vision statement" developed from qualitative survey data (Peter Bourgois); (e) a presentation of quantitative data analysis and a "market position statement" (Ted Brovitz); (f) a guided tour of Plans A and B, which included informal verbal and nonverbal feedback from audience members (i.e., overlapping utterances and dyadic conversations); (g) a break that was marked by informal task- and relationship-oriented conversation; and (h) a "spin the dots" segment in which participants conversed in informal small groups and dyads, and individually placed colored dots on the blueprints to express likes and dislikes.

Setting. The meeting occurred in a non-governmental meeting room in the local hospital. Chairs were arranged in audience-style rows, with an aisle down the middle of the room. Even during the "spin the dots" or "charette" portion of the workshop, the chairs remained ordered in rows. (Participants conversing in small groups either turned their bodies to face each other or, in some cases, adjusted their chairs.) PowerPoint projection equipment was set up in the middle of the aisle toward the back of the room. At the extreme rear of the room there was a table spread with finger food and beverages (which, like the ICA meeting, instilled a coffee klatch atmosphere). It was an early evening meeting so many participants came straight to the event from work.

Scene. The emotional context was not characterized by any sense of urgency, but participants did bring special concerns with them to the meeting. Interest in the anticipated plan proposals was high, as were worries (e.g., that businesses might be displaced or landmarks torn down). Worry was largely trumped by sheer curiosity about the draft plans and the CRC's progress, though, which was higher than it would have been had the September workshop not been canceled. The month-long wait fueled anticipation.

Purposes—outcomes. The explicit and dominant *purpose—outcome* of the workshop was to elicit public feedback on the draft plans. Specifically, participating CRC members (e.g., Mack, Richardson, and Kimmell) wanted to garner concrete input from downtown business and property owners. To achieve this outcome, a secondary *purpose—outcome* was desired: the creation of an informed public body. To achieve this it was necessary to have a presentational component of the workshop.

Purposes—goals. Participants had several *purposes—goals* in this meeting. Coinciding with the implementers' *purposes—outcomes* of public information and consultation, many participants wished to learn about the CRC's progress and plans, and to respond with concrete feedback. Mack personally had a *purpose—goal* of creating "a spark" of civic interest in the future of Moscow's downtown, particularly among downtown business and property owners. Note that this desire for civic interest is not necessarily the same thing as civic input. The spark that Mack sought concerned long-term, continued participation rather than a one-time response within the context of this workshop.

Key. The meeting's tone varied across speech events. For example, the conversational portions of the speech situation (before the meeting and during break) were generally lighthearted and sociable. The presentation of qualitative "visioning" data (by Peter) was enthusiastic, lighthearted, interactive, and, at times, humorous. Ted's presentation of quantitative data was comparatively serious and non-interactive. During presentation of Plans A and B, audience participants became more communicatively active. The key in this portion seriousness complemented with joking. Some instances of joking—such as when participants laughed about the "roundabout" idea—had an edge that surpassed simple humor. Embedded in that humor was serious commentary on the distinction between Moscow insiders and outsiders, and a warning to the consultants that the eventual, finalized Downtown Revitalization Plan ought to conform to the aesthetic and practical needs of the people who live here. During the "spin the dots" segment (which the mid-meeting break segued into), talk—sometimes in small groups—was more carnivalistic, as participants jostled for position at the posted blueprints, laughed, socialized, derided idea, praised ideas, and so on.

Norms of interaction. Although the facilitator provided an overview of the workshop's procedures during the orientation segment, there were no explicitly prescribed *norms of interaction*. The participants were comfortable interrupting the presentational portions of the workshop with utterances. This was evident when the participant answered the ringing telephone and called out the name of the person to whom the call was directed, without regard for the fact that the presenter was mid-sentence at the time. Although there were relatively few interruptions during the presentations of data analysis, when Peter was talking through Plan A and Plan B, many participants offered verbal feedback, and many others engaged in dyadic conversations which created a din. The intended charettes—formalized small group brainstorming conversations—did not occur as such (i.e., in any formally prescribed manner) due to participants' assertion of procedure, which the facilitators were passive to. Since, during the break, many participants simply started to "spin the dots," the informal procedure for providing feedback happened spontaneously and without explicit direction or management from the facilitators.

Officeholders' Reflective Observations

After the workshop I consulted three officeholders who participated in various capacities: Moscow City Council member and CRC Chair JoAnn Mack; County Executive and Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Paul Kimmell; and Moscow City Council member Peg Hamlett[37]. Their reflections on the meeting's process and outcomes overlap in significant ways, and thus emphasize several important features of the Vision & Values Community Workshop. Two themes that run through the three accounts are: (a) the meeting's process precluded thorough civic discussion that would have aided the plan's invention; and (b) the meeting allowed officeholders to enact both citizen and officeholder roles at the same time, which was a useful opportunity. Below, I present relevant comments from each of the four officeholders.

City Council member/CRC Chair Mack. With regard to the workshop's process, Mack perceived that the meeting limited thorough civic discussion that would have contributed creativity and a sense of realistic constraints (that the caseworkers—hailing from other parts of the country—may not recognize). Mack locates her frustration with the process (which is tied to its outcomes) in three aspects: the meeting's preparation, enactment, and aftermath.

With regard to preparation, Mack believes that whatever public input there was in the meeting came simply too late. In other words, by the time of the meeting occurred, "I think there was a gap—an information gap. I think if we had that meeting in September.

What came out in the October meeting was not completely representative of a lot of people, due to [lack of prior] input and interpretive lapse [on the part of consultants]." In Mack's understanding, the absence of a "spark" over the summer months precluded involvement from the people whose input was most valuable: the downtown business and property owners. "What I was hoping for were more workshops—small groups of business owners talking with Peter. . . . There's a piece that's missing. . . . Even if it's [ultimately] a good physical plan, I'm not sure we have the catalyst to draw us together." Mack sums up her feelings about the pre-workshop inadequacies: "Woulda, coulda, shoulda. . . . I personally learned a lot from this one: Whenever you have such an excited group [referring to the CRC members who, in May, were "ready to knock on doors"] take advantage."

Regarding the workshop enactment, Mack says, "It was an interesting meeting and I think it turned out pretty good." Immediately, though, Mack becomes more critical of the meeting's process. Particularly, Mack said that the "spin the dots" section—in which participants placed green and red dots on blueprints to indicate likes and dislikes—was problematic. For one thing, instead of permitting thoughtful conversation, "it was almost a free-for-all." Whereas discussion would allow qualitative feedback and ideas, the binary "red" and "green" coding "did not provide rational [for preferences]. There was no opportunity to say, 'This is why.' More discussion was needed." Furthermore, "The red and green dots didn't do anything [to help us with a sense of practical constraints]. They gave us a sense of what we wanted the town to look like, but not a sense of how to do it." This problem is related to the fact that residents far outnumbered downtown business and property owners at the workshop. Whereas residents have the luxury of preferences for simply aesthetic reasons, downtown merchants are the ones who will ultimately have to pay for and live with the proposed changes. "The things that I questioned, as a businessperson, . . . Our main concern is to make sure that we have a healthy economic environment for our businesses to thrive."

One aspect of the facilitation that Mack did like was the fact that the outside consultants led the meeting. This freed her (and other public officials, presumably) to be normal citizens for a night, and interact with others. "I think that with Dufresne-Henry facilitating that, all of us were on an equal footing. We could all put down our ideas and that's what we were out for. Our red and green dots didn't mean much more than anyone else's." This is an aspect of the CRC (as a part of the LEDC), in general, that Mack particularly appreciates. It is a collaborative body made up of officeholders and citizens representing various interests. Thus, she (and others) can interact "as citizens, together." In conversing about this unique quasi-governmental institution, we developed a term to describe it: "a procedural escrow." It's where officeholders and citizens come together with their various perspectives and integrate them. It's a neutral territory in that sense, where "'us' and 'them' don't happen."

Regarding the workshop's outcomes, a draft plan has been submitted by Dufresne-Henry and Hatchmueller (following a poorly attended November workshop), and the CRC is hard at work to find ways to make the plans feasible. "The City Council did have a say in requesting revisions. We couldn't nix it, but we had input [after public input solicitation had ended]—and should have. The city was a significant contributor."

The CRC has grown to such a size that it—like any democratic organization that gets larger than small-group size—has broken into specific sub-committees (Building and Structure, Events and Marketing, and Publicity). "It's so exciting to be a part of it. We're all in it together. Instead of pulling in different directions we're focusing. We need to go through the action plans and start assigning tasks." When I asked Mack if she was satisfied with the Vision & Values Workshop as a useful tool for getting the CRC to where it is now, she replied emphatically, "*Uh* uh. No. Absolutely not."

County Executive/Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Kimmell. Although Kimmell's involvement with the CRC is as the Latah County Executive (an elected governmental position), his participation in the Vision & Values Workshop was in the capacity of Chamber of Commerce Executive Director. As such, his chief concern was—and remains—incorporating input from downtown business and property owners. Like Mack, Kimmell believes that "there had been plenty of community [i.e., residents'] input," but not enough input from the people who mattered most.

> It was a well-run, well conducted meeting. Great visual aids, a lot of info, good attendance. The one thing . . .. The thing that disturbed me was the lack of the small business, downtown operator. They weren't out in any great number. We had a lot of architectural students from a class. I'm not sure if they should have been the ones putting the dots on. I had hoped we'd have more business owners. The people in those little groups weren't all the right people.

I asked Kimmell if he had personally provided feedback to the consultants, perhaps as a representative of the missing downtown business and property owners. He replied,

> I was there as a Chamber representative. Not only are we concerned with the downtown operators, but we [the Chamber of Commerce] are now a property owner [downtown]. So we have a real stake in anything that happens. And downtown revitalization would bring people to the community. Our stake is protecting the business environment. The Chamber, though, typically won't take formal positions until after there is real input. That wasn't happening yet, so it was not time for a concrete position.

An interesting feature of Kimmell's attendance and participation is his dual role. In the context of the workshop, he identified himself as a Chamber of Commerce representative. I asked him if he got anything out of the meeting as County Executive, or if he had "chosen to leave that hat at home." He answered, "You know, you look at the downtowns and the main streets of other towns, and you get ideas [from the Moscow Downtown Revitalization project]. My sense is that we're letting a lot of these towns drift into bedroom communities, and losing their vitalities downtown." Kimmell let the discussions about Moscow's downtown revitalization trigger thoughts about other towns' needs and potentials.

City Council member Hamlett. City Council member Hamlett had no direct involvement with the CRC (although she did collaborate with Defresne-Henry consultants when they worked with College of Art and Architecture students at the

University of Idaho). Hamlett's interest in the Vision & Value Workshop was "as a Council member and citizen. Many downtown business owners had spoken to me regarding their concerns about the plans, cost, design, et cetera. I thought it was best that I went myself and heard the plans. Also, as a citizen who lives on the edge of downtown, I have great interest in what happens."

Hamlett's preconception of the meeting was based on what she had heard about the CRC's work, and this worried her. In attending the meeting, she

> hoped that the committee would have progressed to a point where there was some cohesion to the group. I had heard in the past that the group was fractured and could not come to a decision. This was reinforced at the meeting, that many people did not understand the progression [of the plan's development].

The result of this, Hamlett observed, was a division between participants who had differing understandings and expectations. This division was between people who "wanted to dream the big plan" and "some business owners [who] wanted to see the small steps and were put off by the twenty-year vision. It seemed to me that some initial discussion had been missed because no one seemed to know what to expect."

This division caused problems, according to Hamlett. Due to a dearth of prior public talk about the CRC's goals and progress, participants were confused. Missing from the process, Hamlett said, was "more initial discussion to hone ideas" and use of "a different format with small steps and toned down the big dream." Hamlett elaborated:

> I was disappointed in the meeting that it seemed as if one group went ahead and another was left behind. It should have been a compromise where we had a long

> vision but showed in small incremental steps how we might achieve the plan. Also [it was not clarified] how the plan was a concept not set in stone. Many people who saw the plan had comments such as "that is where such and such is located, you can't demolish their building," not realizing that the plan was not intended to next year just tear down buildings and implement "the Plan."

With regard to the workshop's result, Hamlett surmised, "I guess it's progress. People are talking, better than doing nothing, but not by much. I had hoped for a better outcome. . . . Could have been much better."

Case 3: Spokane Office of Community Services, *Community Assembly*, Spokane, Washington

This public meeting was held on the evening of May 3, 2002 at City Hall in Spokane, Washington. The event was prepared and implemented (although not led) by two staff members of Spokane's Office of Neighborhood Services—Public Information Coordinator Rod Minarik and Clerk Sandy Scott. ONS Director Susan Brudnicki was out of town and thus not in attendance—which proved to be a detail (foreknown by participants) of great significance. This meeting was a monthly Community Assembly. In these meetings, representatives of Spokane's Neighborhood Councils come together to build consensus on civic issues and prepare advisement for the City Council. Various public officials attend and listen in, and—although they are not members of the Assembly—often gain permission or invitation to contribute to the discourse. What follows is an account of the event's background, preparation, enactment, and reflective observations of various participating public officials: ONS staff members Rod Minarik and Sandy Scott; City Council member Al French; and Deputy Fire Inspector Lisa Jones.

Meeting Background

Unlike the previous two cases, the Community Assembly has a longitudinal life, and thus historically and culturally reproduced understandings and ways of speaking. This is to say that in (relatively) zero-history group meetings—such as the ICA and CRC speech situations—participants collaboratively produce meanings (e.g., norms of interaction) somewhat "on the fly," informed by their past experiences with and expectations of public meetings, and whatever explicit rules the facilitators provide. In a longitudinal group, though, cultural meanings are not only produced but also *reproduced* in serial meetings (Schwartzman, 1989). This does not mean that its norms, rules, codes, and so on are not in flux—they are—but they are brought to life in members' ongoing interactions and shared experiences. The six year-old monthly Spokane Community Assembly, then, is a richly structured speech situation that has a defined cultural life.

In 1996 several concerned citizens motivated the City Council and Mayor to collaborate with them in establishing the Neighborhood Council program. In this program, active citizens—with guidance from the city's Office of Neighborhood Services, which facilitates all Neighborhood Council/Community Assembly efforts—establish self-controlled Neighborhood Councils. A Neighborhood Council, upon formalizing its bylaws, is officially ratified by the City Council. Representatives of all Neighborhood Councils congregate monthly in Community Assemblies with the purpose of forming consensus on civic issues in order to advise the City Council.[38]

In 1999 the Mayor and City Council advanced an ordinance that would make the Neighborhood Councils and Community Assembly formal components of city government. The charter was placed on the ballot in a general election and was adopted with 72% of the public vote. The result is that the Neighborhood Councils and Community Assembly are "included as part of the governmental structure" but that they act independently and have no policymaking authority (Brudnicki, 2002). The Assembly is strictly an advisory body that reports directly to the City Council. Quarterly, the City Council and the Community Assembly meet in special sessions during which the Assembly formally advises the City Council's policymaking. This program is unique in the United States according to City Council member Al French (who, as a citizen, was a founder of the Neighborhood Councils/Community Assembly program and an Assembly Representative for four years before his election to City Council). Whereas many other cities have Neighborhood Councils (or equivalents), they have neither Community Assemblies that unite them nor official charters that institutionally require policymakers to listen.

In 2001 Spokane's governmental structure changed to a "strong mayor" conception. Whereas the Mayor had been a City Council member whose vote and voice were equal to other Council members', now the office is distinct and autonomous. This change created an official check-and-balance (akin to the relationship between the President and Congress in federal government), and thus a newly defined power relationship between the City Council and the Mayor's office. This change profoundly affects the Neighborhood Councils'/Community Assembly's advisory efficacy. Upon election, Spokane's first (and current) "strong mayor" John Powers appointed his campaign manager, Susan Brudnicki, as Director of the Office of Neighborhood Services. The effect of this appointment is a perception among Neighborhood Council and City Council members that Mayor Powers is using the ONS as a conduit for political manipulation of public opinion and public policy. The understanding is that, through specific actions of ONS Director Brudnicki to restrict and direct the Neighborhood Councils' activities during the past year, the Mayor's office has been attempting to minimize and direct the advice that the Community Assembly provides to the City Council. The Mayor's goals, it is widely believed within the Neighborhood Council's organizational culture, are to foster an oppositional relationship between the City Council and the Mayor's office; to use the ONS and the Neighborhood Councils to disseminate an ideological agenda (thus transforming the program from a bottom-up to a top-down communication channel); and to ultimately affect policymaking in the City Council. In brief, the perception is that the Mayor wants to use the ONS to control (rather than merely facilitate) the Neighborhood Councils and Community Assembly, and, in so doing, to gain an upper hand over the City Council.

This perception has fueled resentments and relational problems between the Neighborhood Councils/Community Assembly and the ONS, and between the City Council and the Mayor's office. This prompted the Community Assembly's Policies and Procedures Committee to take up the task of amending the organization's bylaws to make explicit the ONS's passive role in Assembly matters. Meanwhile, Brudnicki has busily consulted with city lawyers and issued stern memoranda asserting the ONS's selfdetermination and managerial relationship with the Assembly (e.g., Brudnicki, 2002). With ONS Director Brudnicki in attendance at monthly Assemblies, meetings over the last year have become increasingly "ugly," as ONS staff member Minarik told me, rolling his eyes. Community Assemblies have exploded into shouting matches involving Neighborhood Council Representatives, City Council members, and Brudnicki. One irate Neighborhood Council Representative resigned suddenly during the March Assembly, in protest of Brudnicki's directorship. This relational and organizational crisis has been named "the Problem" by the Assembly, and has been a regular agenda item for discussion in Community Assemblies over the past year. In the March Community Assembly, a formal decision was made to "never again place 'the Problem' on the agenda of a Community Assembly meeting," as that meeting's draft minutes show (Howard, 2002).

Meeting Preparation

ONS staff members Minarik and Scott are chiefly responsible for preparing the monthly Community Assemblies. Certain facilitative aspects—such as the location and the arrangement of table and chairs—are regular, and are handled by City Hall's custodial staff. Minarik and Scott's principle duties concern the creation and processing of relevant materials, including participant lists, agendas (which are formally approved by Community Assemblies at precedent meetings), prior meeting minutes (both draft and finalized versions), pertinent memoranda, written committee reports, policy proposals and other informational literature from various city departments, and so on. As well, they ensure that each Neighborhood Representative has a placard bearing his or her neighborhood's name, for display at the meeting.

In terms of Gastil and Kelshaw's (2000) typology of public meetings, this meeting is technically a collaborative one. It is collaborative because its enactment is due to joint initiative of citizens and officeholders, who both fulfill necessary responsibilities. Whereas the government supplies the room, support staff, and all financing, the citizens have complete control of the agenda and proceedings.

As Minarik and Scott prepared for the May 3 Community Assembly, the meeting's emotional context was an important concern. Abnormally, ONS Director Brudnicki was to be absent for this Assembly due to out-of-town business. Referring to Brudnicki's absence, Minarik said, "Today's going to be interesting," and flashed a grin. Scott cut in with a mock scolding tone: "Rod, you are *so* bad," and, turning to me said, "*I* think they'll be very civil, which might actually be easier since Susan [Brudnicki] won't be there."

Minarik moved to a location where he would be able to see anyone approaching in advance, and said to me in a hushed, conspiratorial voice, "Every time I talk about this someone walks in." He proceeded to inform me of the events since Brudnicki's appointment as ONS Director, while he occasionally disappeared into file cabinets to procure informative documents for my reference. Scott contributed to the narrative: "It's become a battle of the wills between them and Susan." In addition to Brudnicki's absence, a further twist on today's meeting was that an "ally" (Minarik's word) of Brudnicki's had, at Brudnicki's urging, appealed to the Community Assembly for ten minutes of presentation time regarding preparations for the upcoming Neighborhoods USA Convention. Minarik was unsure of how willing Representatives would be to accommodate her, given that the agenda had already been approved and that she assumedly represented Brudnicki's interests.

Both Minarik and Scott have served the Neighborhood Councils and Community Assembly since the program's inception in 1996. They fear that the current climate creates unnecessary personal antipathy between themselves and the Neighborhood Council Representatives. To fuel their sense that they will have to "walk on eggs" during this meeting, one specific and noteworthy preparatory task was to finalize and distribute the minutes of the March 1 Assembly (prior to the Assembly). The draft minutes written by Scott and submitted to the Assembly at the April meeting had been returned with significant amendment requests. The requests demonstrate the Assembly's desire to finesse official reports of discussion about "the Problem" to maintain an outward appearance of civility and coherence. This constrains Scott in her sense of professional obligation. A crucial and telling item in the amendment request (Howard, 2002) reads:

> I would strike the entire discussion of "The Problem," from page 5 through page 10. Consistent with the principle that meeting minutes should reflect what happened, as opposed to what was said, I would substitute the following:
>
> > A continued discussion of "The Problem" ensued. It was agreed that "The Problem" would never again be placed on the agenda of a Community Assembly meeting. Jay Cousins announced that he was resigning as

> Community Assembly Representative from the Emerson Garfield Neighborhood Council, effective the end of the meeting. (p. 2)

"They are telling us how to run our office," says Scott. "We're saying, 'Arrrgh.'" As she says this, she places her hand over her face in a gesture of mock horror.

Meeting Enactment

The meeting room, on the basement level of City Hall, was arranged as such:

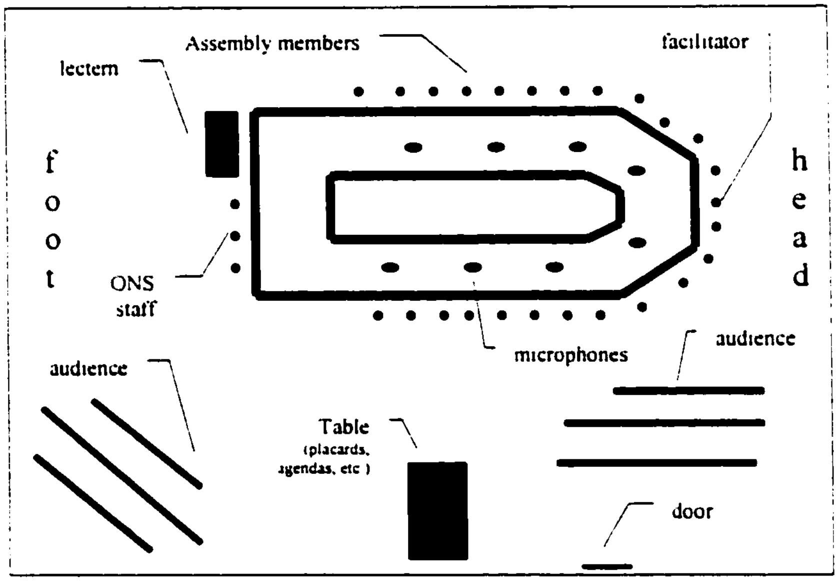
Assembly members
facilitator
lectern
f o o t
h e a d
ONS staff
microphones
audience
audience
Table (placards, agendas, etc.)
door

Figure 1: Spokane Community Assembly Room Layout

The Assembly members' chairs were set around a quasi-rectangular configuration of connected tables. The "head" of the arrangement was composed of angled tables to form an apex where the facilitating Assembly member sat. The "foot" was squared, and had a lectern and (with integrated visual media equipment) at one corner, to be used for formal testimony during Assembly meetings. Notably, microphones were placed on the table at intervals of three feet, but there were no microphones at the foot of the table where ONS staff members were assigned to sit. These microphones served the purpose of taping the proceedings (to aid ONS Clerk Scott in her recording of minutes), rather than amplifying participants' voices.

Scott, whose chief responsibility was to take notes for transcription into minutes, sat in one of three chairs at the configuration's foot with a name placard placed in front of her laptop computer. Minarik, who would later sit next to Scott at the foot of the table configuration (with an empty chair beside him where Director Brudnicki normally sat), stood at the room's door as participants gradually entered. There, he greeted participants and arranged placards (bearing the names of neighborhoods rather than individuals) and agenda packets (including various written reports and memoranda) on a table for participants to pick up as they arrived. I noticed that there were several Representatives whom Minarik did not know, and he made a point to welcome those participants and introduce himself. Representatives, having picked up their materials, chose undesignated seats around the table configuration, placed their placards on the table in front of them, and chatted quietly with one another as participants continued to arrive.

Participants such as myself who were neither Neighborhood Council Representatives nor ONS staff members took seats arranged along the walls and in small rows where space allowed. Although there were a few chairs along the wall on the far side of the room—away from the door—most chairs were set up in the area of the room closest to the door. (The table configuration took up the majority of the room's far side.)

As the designated meeting-time neared, nearly all "audience" chairs (about thirty) were occupied. A man seated behind me saw me taking notes and asked what I was doing. We exchanged introductions and I briefly explained my project, describing it as concerned with "deliberative democratic processes." "Aren't we all?" he replied, then added: "This group is so preoccupied with the consensus method of making decisions, and in all these years I've never once seen them reach consensus on anything." He then explained that he wished he could serve as a representative, but that the city "screwed up its zoning" and caused his home address to be just barely outside the city limits, even though he is still required to pay city taxes.

My conversation with this citizen, Jack Smith[39], was interrupted by the official start of the meeting. By now all Representatives were seated. The facilitator—Pam Behring, an alternate Representative of the Rockwood Neighborhood—initiated the proceedings by saying, "Welcome. We'll start by working around the table clockwise. Please tell us your name and your neighborhood."[40] The twenty-five Representatives did so very concisely by stating only their names and neighborhoods.

When the introductions had gone around the entire table, Behring nodded to the audience participant sitting immediately to her left, encouraging him to continue the introductions. Each audience member, in clockwise order, stood and uttered his or her name and affiliate organization. Behring introduced herself last, then turned to the Comstock Neighborhood Representative two seats to her right and said, "John, I believe you have some business."

"Yes," he said, "Amy Cabe of the CVB [Convention and Visitors Bureau] has requested ten minutes of speaking time since the agenda was approved last month. I offer to give up my five minutes on item nine. Does anyone else want to offer five minutes?" Instantly, a hand went up. Behring clearly knew the Representative and which agenda item he was relinquishing, and made a written note.

Behring immediately proceeded to the next issue: "Next month's agenda: You've shared it with your Councils. Any amendment proposals or is it approved?" and waited for response. This is an important procedural detail because, with every decision-making action during the meeting's course, consensus—the explicitly normative decision-making mode—was assumed to occur if nobody spoke up. After several seconds of silence, Behring pronounced, "Agenda approved. Item number three: minute revisions. Is that agreeable? Does anyone *not* agree to approve the March Assembly minutes? [silence] Then I assume that they are approved."

With this agenda item completed, Behring announced progression to agenda item number four. Representatives had read a report in advance concerning Spokane's development of a Drug House Elimination Task Force, and knew that they were being invited to appoint a representative to contribute to this project. "This is a character issue, about our character as an advisory body. The question is, do we want a role in participating in this Drug House Elimination Task Force? Do we want a representative? I'd like to open this up for questions and discussion." Turn taking among group members was decided by hand raising. Behring moderated contributions by calling on hand-raisers in order. After several discrete utterances concerning the Assembly's need to be proactive, one participant requested more information about the Task Force's structure.

At this point, a government official representing the Task Force—the Inspector Supervisor of the city's Building Division—raised his hand from where he sat in the audience and simultaneously said, "I can help out with that." (The spoken request for a turn was necessary since he was not in the facilitator's line of vision.) "Thank you," said Berhing. "That would be helpful." The Inspector Supervisor (Ardee Ableman) and his colleague Lisa Jones (a Deputy Fire Inspector, seated beside him) jointly explained the Task Force's goal and appealed for an Assembly representative. The Hillyard Neighborhood Representative raised his hand and spoke prior to being acknowledged by Behring. "Don't take what I say as not supportive of what you're trying to do, but I'm afraid that we would be stuck with an observer role, that we would want to have an advisory capacity." "That's exactly our approach as well," Jones replied. The Hillyard Representative cut in: "But I'm just trying to tell you as a citizen."

This exchange is noteworthy because, in the spatial and relational environment, the citizens are centered participants—literally "at the table"—and the officeholders are on the outside. The traditional centrality of officeholders in governmental meetings is here overturned, and the citizens have authority over the meeting's procedure and content. It is also noteworthy in the context of "the Problem." The Assembly members are sensitive to the need to enforce their advisory empowerment. This is what the utterance, "But I'm just trying to tell you as a citizen," points to. Replied Jones: "There're lots of details [being worked out] and that's why we want your input." "You'll keep us informed?" asked the Hillyard Representative. "Yes, we want your input," replied Jones.

At this point Behring interjected a warning that the allotted time for this agenda item had expired. Still, a Representative raised her hand for permission to contribute. After a nod from Behring she asked, "Would this [having representation on the Task Force] be an equal thing?" Behring (to whom the question was addressed) responded, "Yes," and further explained the Task Force's structure. Behring then asked for a volunteer to serve as a representative on the Task Force, and got one. This closed the matter and Behring announced progress to the fifth agenda item.

This item was the third discussion (over a period of three monthly meetings) on a noise ordinance being considered by City Council. After the two previous discussions, Representatives had taken the ordinance drafts back to their Neighborhood Councils for votes. Alterations had been proposed in each prior Assembly discussion. The function of this discussion was to move toward consensus. Jeanette Harras, an alternative Representative of the Logan neighborhood, rose from her seat in the audience and walked to the head of the table configuration, next to the facilitator. From this standing position she presented a brief report on the ordinance's status. Behring then said, "We're going to work through questions and comments. This may become a bit disorderly, so I want to remind you to raise your hand and I'll get to you in order." A Representative spoke up, joking, "Raise your hand and you'll get put on a committee." This was met with group laughter.

As discussion about the noise ordinance proceeded (marked by discrete utterances separated by defined speaking turns), I crossed the audience portion of the room to introduce myself to the Drug House Elimination Task Force officeholders who had contributed to the meeting in during the fourth agenda item. Whispering, I asked if they would be available after the meeting to speak with me briefly about their motivations for attending and their experiences as contributors. Deputy Fire Inspector Jones said, "I'll be staying until the bitter end," and grimaced. Meanwhile, Representatives were taking turns commenting on the process of discussion rather than the topic itself. For example, "We go around and round about this. We could go on for years." Behring reminded the Assembly about the importance of consensus as an official procedural provision. "You take this back to your Councils, and we'll see what we can do next month." She concisely reviewed the amendments that had been proposed in discussion, then closed discussion in favor of progressing to the sixth agenda item.

Latah/Hangman Neighborhood Representative Gail Howard initiated the new agenda item by speaking from her seated position about a street repair project of the city's Planning Commission. A City Council member in the audience chimed in (without first requesting permission to speak), "We worked on this issue in Monday's meeting. So this is moving." The Planning Director (a city official) in the audience then stood and said, "Gail, can I just throw something in?" "Please do," she replied. The Planning Director then strode to the podium at the foot of the table configuration. He spoke for approximately five minutes presenting what appeared to be an impromptu but well structured report on the Planning Commission's progress. One point concerned the zoning parameters of the city. Paul Smith—the man seated behind me in the audience with whom I had spoken before the meeting—suddenly used a "stage whisper" to interject, "The lines are flawed!" The Planning Director continued without pause, and, even though Smith's utterance was plainly audible, none of the Representatives whom I could see verbally or nonverbally acknowledged what was said. When the Planning Director finished he returned to his seat in the audience. Howard, addressing the Representatives, said, "The only way we're going to get all of this great work done is to participate."

At this point Smith approached the table configuration and knelt next to a Representative, whispering to her. She raised her hand for permission to speak. After Behring's acknowledgment she said, "I defer my turn to speak to Paul Smith." Behring said, "Deferral accepted." Smith, standing at the table configuration, implored participants to pay attention to the lines and the zones that are dictated by the city, some of which, he said, "are arbitrary." In light of his prior comment to me about his exclusion from the Assembly due to what he perceives as a faulty zoning line, this appeared to be a "special interest" of his. The fact that his comments elicited no further discussion from the Assembly suggested to me (although I may be wrong) that the Assembly had heard this from Smith before and did not consider the topic a priority. (In a later conversation, City Council member Al French referred to Smith as "someone who's got issues." This supported my perception of the Assembly's unconcerned reception of his utterance.) Discussion of the agenda item was closed after ONS staff member Minarik provided instructions for how to find pertinent planning documents on the Internet. Notably, he did not raise his hand or otherwise request permission to speak; I did not notice any verbal or nonverbal opposition to his contribution, however. Instead, the responses that I noticed suggested appreciation.

The move into the seventh agenda item defined a turning point in the meeting's tone and energy level. This item pertained to "the Problem," although when one Representative referred to it as "the Problem," Behring explicitly reminded him that the Assembly had earlier agreed to avoid characterizing it as such in official contexts. The talk, which had less explicit turn taking and more overlapping and interruption throughout this discussion, concerned approval of the Assembly's amended procedural bylaws, as devised by the Policies and Procedures Committee. The recurring point, emphasized by different Representatives throughout discussion, was about the relationship between the Neighborhood Councils and the ONS. Utterances generally supported the understanding that ONS has no legal right or ability to limit the Councils' and Assembly's activities; its only responsibility is "to provide staff for the Assembly meetings and to financially and technically support Council activities, as deemed legitimate by the individual Councils." Although absent, Brudnicki had earlier distributed a memo to Council Representatives asserting the Councils and Assembly's legal abilities and limitations (Brudnicki, 2002). The Assembly's proposed amendments to its procedural bylaws were tailored specifically to advance an interpretation of the legal provisions that limits the ONS's control.

The talk revolved around the Assembly's relationship with Brudnicki and the ONS throughout discussion of this agenda item. "We want to make sure that she doesn't take some of our duties and give them to the ONS," one Representative said. "That's what our procedures need to protect." From the audience, City Council member Al French stood and began to speak (without having first requested the facilitator's permission): "Remember, this is an advisory body to the City Council. The ONS is a resource provider. I urge you to keep in mind the chartered functions of the Assembly and its responsibility to the [City] Council and the city." Behring moved for approval of the draft amendments to the Policies and Procedures Guidelines. Again, she interpreted silence after her request for "a vote" as consensus approval of the draft.

Gail Howard, who had overseen discussion of the sixth agenda item, picked up agenda item number eight. As Chair of the Orientation/Training Committee, she presented a brief report on the development of a Training Manual for new Neighborhood Council members. There were two clarifying questions asked by Representatives (after raising their hands for permission to speak), to which Howard responded concisely.

Behring signaled movement to the ninth agenda item by reminding participants that Amy Cabe of the Convention and Visitors Bureau (a non-governmental agency similar to the Chamber of Commerce) had requested and been given permission to speak. Although she did not explicitly address this, there was a shared understanding among the Assembly that Cabe was allied with ONS Director Brudnicki. What was at risk was issue control. For this reason, Cabe's presentation was of great importance and had strong political undercurrents with respect to "the Problem." Having relinquished other agenda items to make room for this presentation, the Assembly put great importance on this speech event as a barometer of the relationship between Brudnicki's ONS and the Assembly.

Cabe approached the podium at the foot of the table configuration and delivered a formal presentation from prepared notes. Her hands and voice shook slightly as she spoke. The topic was preparation for a Neighborhoods USA convention in 2004; specifically, solicitation of Neighborhood Councils' participation in hosting neighborhood tours and other events. "This [the program] is to be decided by ONS, and hopefully by you guys," she said to conclude her five-minute informational presentation.

The ensuing talk resurrected the urgency of the earlier procedural bylaw discussion. A Representative said to Cabe, "There will be political changes in 2003." By this he raised the possibility that Mayor John Powers may not be in office in 2004, and thus ONS Director Brudnicki—Power's former campaign manager and now a political appointee—may not be heading the ONS. "Will this affect the plans that are being made now?" he continued. Minarik answered that question for Cabe: "No. This is to be an ongoing, developing thing." He directed attention to City Council member French, saying "Al is active on this." By this he implied that the preparations for the convention are as much in the purview of the City Council as in the Mayor's office, and that whatever actions Brudnicki had thus far taken without the Assembly's consent were not beyond rejoinder. An audience-participant rose from his seat, and—without asking the facilitator's permission to speak—proposed creation of an explicit partnership between the Assembly and the CVB, as well as a specific list of actions to be taken. Cabe replied, "Good idea."

Behring took a speaking turn at this point, saying to Cabe: "What is it you're asking of us?" Cabe replied, "I just wanted your attention." From the audience, City Council member French stood and addressed the Assembly: "You've got to understand how important this issue is to this body and the neighborhoods. This is about being on board with what's going to happen with or without us. . . . This is not just about fulfilling an advisory role in our communities. This is about being proactive. Neighborhoods have got to be there." (His used of the word "us" is important here.)

The continuing discussion did not follow explicit turn-taking rules. Instead of raising hands for permission to speak, many contributors were interrupting and overlapping—even those who were not official members of the Assembly such as Minarik and French. During this exchange it is notable that Cabe, in three different utterances, used the word "dialogue" to explain what her goals at this meeting were—e.g., "I am hoping to start a dialogue about this." There was an unacknowledged meta-conversation occurring here that had more to do with the relationship between the Assembly and the ONS (and, respectively, between the City Council and the Mayor's office) than with the Neighborhoods USA convention. French proposed taking "a straw poll to gauge support for Neighborhood Council involvement in this," but such a poll was never actualized because there was too much overlapping and ongoing talk. A Representative complained to Cabe (who was still standing at the podium), "I wish we had been consulted sooner," which was met by much head nodding, "Yeah, yeah," and other affirmative communication around the Assembly table.

Suddenly, a Representative leapt in with a firm tone of voice: "I listen to this and I wonder how Expo ever got done," referring to a past city project in which the Neighborhood Councils/Community Assembly participated. "I listen to what's going on," she continued, "and I can see that we're just nickel and diming this to death, and we're going to miss out on a good thing. I wonder how anything ever gets done." This too was met with head nodding and other affirmative utterances.

Behring stated that time for this agenda item had gone ten minutes over time, and that it was important to move on. She thanked Cabe for her presentation. Assembly members' nonverbals and verbal expressions of thanks supported this appreciation, and enforced the sense that a partnership between the Community Assembly and the CVB (rather than one between the ONS and the CVB, although this was not said explicitly) would be wise. Behring instructed Representatives to speak with their Neighborhood Councils about this matter to gauge their interest prior to further talk about specific commitments and responsibilities.

The meeting's final agenda entailed a brief presentation and discussion on the topic of city budget cuts and their effects on street repair and maintenance. During discussion a Representative asked the presenter if there was any talk about imposing a utility fee. "We don't use the 'U' word," she replied. Another Assembly member interjected, "You use the 'F' word instead." This inspired uproar of laughter among the participants, and a clean breaking point on the issue and the meeting as a whole, which had run ten minutes overtime. "Is this meeting adjourned?" asked Behring. "*I* am" chimed in one Representative. "Ok," said Behring as participants rose from their chairs.

Participants chatted socially with each other as they gathered their belongings and headed to the door.

Speech situation and speech events. The Community Assembly, which is a ritualized monthly occurrence, was the speech situation. This included a variety of speech events including: (a) informal pre-meeting conversation; (b) the facilitator's welcome and a round-robin participant introductions; (c) various formal motions and votes (in which silence was taken as consensus); (d) various formal presentations; (e) various informal presentations; (f) various "discussions"; (g) a formal adjournment.

Setting. The Assembly took place in a meeting room in City Hall, which is an institutional *setting*. Neighborhood Council Representatives and two ONS staff members sat at a rectangular configuration of connected tables. The facilitator sat at the configuration's "head" and the ONS staff members at the "foot." Also at the foot was a podium equipped with projection equipment for formal presentations. Microphones were spaced at three-foot intervals around the configuration (for recording purposes); notably, there were no microphones at the foot of the configuration where the ONS staff members sat. "Audience" chairs were arranged on the side of the room closest to the door, along the walls and in rows where space permitted. The meeting ran from 4:00 p.m. to 6:10 p.m. (ten minutes overtime).

Scene. With the exception of first-time audience members, participants came to the event aware of the Assembly's emotional context. As ONS staff member Minarik said before the meeting, "Today's going to be interesting." Although explicit reference to "the Problem" had been banned from meeting agendas, its emotional shadow hung over many agenda items and procedural details. There were two psychological twists that affected this meeting, and which participants knew about in advance: ONS Director Brudnicki's absence and CVB Convention Sales Manager Cabe's request to be given some time on the agenda.

Purposes—outcomes. The *purposes—outcomes* are the formal reason for the Assembly's convention: to conduct business according to the pre-approved agenda. This concerns approving past minutes and the next meeting's agenda, gaining information through formal reports and consultation with experts, and discussing issues toward decision making and action.

Purposes—goals. Different participants came to the meeting with various *goals*, which became evident in their talk. A prominent *goal*—advanced in utterances by City Council member Al French, for example—was to define the autonomy of the Neighborhood Councils and the Community Assembly in light of ONS Director Brudnicki's desire for more explicit oversight. Several participants—e.g., the Inspector Supervisor, the Deputy Fire Inspector, and the CVB Convention Sales Manager—attended with *goals* of informing the body and soliciting participation on certain projects. The Planning Director participated with the *goal* of informing the Assembly.

Key. The *key* varied widely across the Assembly's different speech events. Much of the discussion was serious. Anger entered in on occasion (e.g., "I wish we had been consulted sooner," and "listen to this and I wonder how Expo ever got done.) Earnestness entered in as well (e.g., "You've got to understand how important this issue is to this body and the neighborhoods."). The end of the meeting, notably, was marked by bitterly sarcastic humor (e.g., "You use the 'F' word instead," and "*I* am [adjourned].") that signified emotional exhaustion and frustration about satisfactory accomplishment of the *purposes—outcomes*.

Norms of interaction. The most fundamental rule was never made explicit, but it was understood by participants. This was the rule that only Neighborhood Council Representatives were permitted to speak, unless by invitation or special permission of the facilitator. Only three "outsider" participants broke this rule, and those acts are telling. City Council member Al French—a founder and longtime participant, who was certainly aware of the rule—spoke up to address the Assembly on several occasions without first attaining permission; as did another longtime participant, ONS staff member Minarik (seated at the table configuration, but a non-Assembly member nonetheless). Both men broke the rule without resentment from the facilitator and other Assembly members because, in these cases, seniority trumped the rule. In other words, the men's long history and familiarity with the organization gave them degrees of authority to speak up without invitation or requested permission. The third person who broke the rule was Neighborhood Council affiliate Jack Smith (who sat behind me in the audience chairs). He uttered an insurgent comment in a stage whisper during the Planning Director's presentation. It is noteworthy that, although Assembly members and the Planning Director must have heard Smith's loud utterance, I did not notice a single participant acknowledge it, verbally or nonverbally. The response—or "punishment"—for breaking the rule was verbal and nonverbal silence.

The facilitator made the turn-taking rule explicit, but only as a reminder to prevent the discussion from becoming "disorderly" at one point. This rule was that those who wish to speak must first raise their hands and await the facilitator's permission. When discussion became heated with emotion or participants' senses of urgency, this rule fell to the wayside, though. At those times there was much overlapping and interruption.

A third important *norm of interaction* that merits note was the Assembly's explicit decision making method. Consensus is the formal mode of decision making prescribed in the group's bylaws. With twenty-five Assembly members present, consensus was most efficiently reached by means of silence. In other words, to speak up during a "vote" would be to disrupt consensus; to be silent would be to support it.

Officeholders' Reflective Observations

In this meeting, various officeholders participated with different motivations, and thus different experiences. Deputy Fire Inspector Lisa Jones (with her colleague, Inspector Supervisor Ardee Ableman of Spokane's Building Division) attended with the purposes of informing the Assembly about the newly developing Drug Force Elimination Task and soliciting participation. City Council member Al Frank—who, as a citizen in 1996, co-founded the Neighborhood Councils/Community Assembly program—attended with the general goal of keeping watch over the Assembly's activities. ONS Clerk Sandy Scott (who, like French, has been involved with the program since its inception) attended fundamentally because it is a job requirement. She also, however, had the goal or aiding an amicable relationship between themselves (both as ONS staff members and as individuals) and the Assembly. Here I convey these officeholders' perceptions of the meeting's process and outcomes, as told to me in post-meeting interviews.

Deputy Fire Inspector Jones. Creation of the Drug House Elimination Task Force is a joint effort between several city departments, including the Fire Department, the Police Department, and the Building Division. As Jones explains, the effort is in response to many "complaints [about 'drug houses'] over the years, but we've had little resources to deal with it." Jones and others looked to other city's for models of programs that have been effective, and eventually found a program in Tacoma, WA. that seemed appropriate to try in Spokane. Recognizing that neighborhood involvement would be crucial to the project's success given that the issue is inherently a "neighborhood problem," Jones had consulted Rockwood Neighborhood Council member Pam Behring (who by coincidence was this meeting's facilitator) and asked her if the Assembly would be interested in providing a Task Force member. "Pam Behring told me that it would be good to be here [tonight], told me strongly."

Jones attended the Assembly for this reason, with the goal of informing the Assembly about the Task Force and "to at least get a representative from the Assembly." She did not know whether she would have an opportunity to speak, and she had not prepared a formal presentation. This is why, after her colleague Ableman spoke up to offer information to the Assembly, she remained seated in the audience rather than rising to the podium to speak as other contributors had done throughout the meeting.

Jones was satisfied with her opportunity to contribute, and emphasized how important citizen involvement is to public projects like the Drug House Elimination Task

Force. "From my point of view as a city person, we work for the citizens and residents," she said. "I really listen to people when they have complaints. . . . It's vitally important to connect with the people who pay our salaries." I asked her if she sensed the Assembly's interest in and support for the Task Force, as well as its ability to contribute productively in its conception and operations. "I don't know the group well enough to gauge that," she replied. Referring to the Assembly's clear concern that Representatives would like active and equal voice if they were to participate, Jones said, "I was mirroring that right back."

City Council member French. Whereas this was Deputy Fire Inspector Jones' first interaction with the Assembly, City Council member Al French has a long history with the body. For this reason his reflections on the Assembly meeting were grounded in a sense that it is valuable to consider what happened that evening as merely one episode within a complex history and relational structure. Thus, his comments about the meeting gravitated to the larger picture. When reflecting on his own utterances during the meeting, he situated them as relevant to an ongoing struggle that exceeds this one event.

"The Community Assembly is a grassroots, bottom-up organization," he said. "The purity is upheld when you maintain the upward direction of influence." French described the change in government to a strong mayor conception as a pivotal event in the Assembly's history. Whereas the City Council had been the city's main policymaking body, and the Assembly had worked directly with the City Council, now the Mayor's office—positioned in opposition to the City Council—has a powerful hand in the Assembly's operations. This hand is embodied in Mayor Powers' political appointment of ONS Director Brudnicki.

"Susan [Brudnicki] has two problems" in the eyes of the Assembly, said French. "One: She was a political appointee and had no qualifications. Two: She doesn't understand the philosophy of the Assembly." French describes the difference between the Assembly and a task force. "Out of this body, nobody's appointed." Task forces, on the other hand, are composed of mayoral appointees, who—French assert—are appointed because their attitudes are pre-aligned with the mayor who appoints them. Thus, a task force's ultimate advice is pre-destined to be acceptable to a mayor. Differently, the Assembly is an autonomous body. Its advice cannot be easily predicted, and there is no guarantee that officeholders will like it. Yet, there is enormous political risk in discounting the Assembly's advice. The presumption is, as French says, "If you're not willing to take the advice, don't seek it." The problem for Mayor Powers, according to French, is control.

The struggle is over who controls the activities and capacities of the Neighborhood Councils and Community Assembly. "If it's ONS's [control], then it's a top-down system," says French. "You do not answer to her [Brudnicki]," he continues, meaning that the Assembly's charter explicitly establishes it as an autonomous body. "The [ONS] staff's job is to implement that ordinance. They are to provide support services—to facilitate the Assembly's work and provide staff support. And that's all."

In the meeting, French had said to the Assembly, "You've got to understand how important this issue is [establishing partnership with the CVB] to this body and the neighborhoods. This is about being on board with what's going to happen with or without us. . . . This is not just about fulfilling an advisory role in our communities. This is about being proactive. Neighborhoods have got to be there." He explained that the issue of "Who's going to take a lead role in this? The Assembly or Susan [Brudnicki]?" is at the heart of "the Problem." It is about preserving citizens' "institutional buy-in," he clarified. "I'm elected to serve the people of my district and of Spokane, and that's who these people are. . . The beauty of this model is that you get a much more balanced perspective" than if a specific government office—namely, the Mayor—controlled policy advocacy. "[The Assembly] is a cross-section. . . . By charter, they [the Neighborhood Councils and the Community Assembly] are a conduit. I [would] have to go out into the community to find out what they provide."

ONS Clerk Sandy Scott. Like French, ONS staff member Sandy Scott has worked with the Neighborhood Councils and Community Assembly since its inception. Also like French, her reflections on the meeting focused less on the meeting as a specific event and more on its contextual significance within an ongoing struggle. But Scott's perspective and experience differ from French's since she is caught between "the Problem's" opposing forces.

She sees the Community Assembly as not necessarily representative of Spokane's general citizenry since it "is made up of the loudest of voices and the strongest of opinions." The Neighborhood Council Representatives who compose the Assembly "feel like they are the grandfathers of this movement and they want to run it. . . . Their attitude is, 'We pay your salary.' . . . But Susan [Brudnicki]'s attitude is, 'You will not tell us what to do.'" This is how Scott understands "the Problem" in its most rudimentary form.

In Scott's perception, Cabe's contribution to the Assembly—and the resulting discussion—underscores the struggle for control between ONS Director Brudnicki and the Assembly. Recognized as an ally of Brudnicki, her presence in the meeting (and the revelation that Brudnicki had been working with Cabe on the Neighborhoods USA convention without having informed the Assembly) perpetuated the heightening sense of opposition between citizens and officeholders. The result is an approach that is competitive rather than collaborative, says Scott.

The problem of competition for control is one aspect of a more general problem that Scott recognizes. The larger problem is an arbitrary distinction between officeholders and citizens, misconceived as different breeds. When I explained my research project to Scott—saying that my goal is to ask government officials about their experiences in public meetings—Scott said emphatically, "Bless you! Nobody ever stops to ask us what we think, what we feel. . . . We have to remain faceless and voiceless, and that's so hard to do. Because I'm a citizen too, and they don't treat me that way. . . . We are here to serve them as citizens, but you know what? I'm a citizen too. Sometimes they go past the limit because they are so committed."

Summary

This chapter has provided illustrations of the three case studies. The goal has been fundamentally descriptive. I have relied on data garnered through document research, participant-observations, and interviews to describe the cases; specifically, to describe the historical and cultural context surrounding the meetings, the preparatory considerations of participating officeholders, the meeting's talk, and officeholders' reflections.

The three cases are comparatively different. The first case—the Idaho Commission on the Arts' *Idaho, Idaho, Wherefore ART Thou? Community Meeting*—concerns an officeholder's effort to solicit public input toward drafting a Long Range Plan. His public consultation was motivated by federal requirements. The second case—Moscow, Idaho's Community Revitalization Committee's *Vision & Values Community Workshop*—concerns the effort of a joint governmental/citizen body to garner citizens' feedback on a Downtown Revitalization Plan, drafted by contracted consultants and architects. The third case—Spokane, Washington's *Community Assembly*—concerns a longitudinal citizen group's effort to discuss civic issues, derive positions by consensus method, and ultimately advise the City Council.

The descriptive presentation of these cases prepares the way for discussion, with particular regard for the research questions posed in this dissertation's first chapter. The following chapter ponders these cases, teasing out implications in order to advance understanding of public meetings' functions, potentials, and limitations. This discussion is intended to tie together this dissertation's various threads, and to draw some conclusions about public meetings that neglect for officeholders' experiences might otherwise preclude.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

The preceding chapter laid out three case reports. Now it is now necessary to interpret these cases and link the particularistic findings to the dissertation's more general thematic concerns. This chapter is devoted to a search for implications that might inform our understanding of democratic public meetings, particularly with regard to their utilities, potentials, and limitations. Such implications are exposed in the meetings' contexts, enacted talk, and officeholders' reported experiences (as described in Chapter 5). By teasing out significant potentials and problems raised in the three speech situations, it is possible to respond to the dissertation's motivating research question: What are some of the ways in which public meetings—particularly deliberative public meetings—might take place given our civic milieu and the practical experiences of officeholders?

This final chapter is divided into three major sections. The first provides discrete discussions of each case study. These discussions address noteworthy features pertaining to the cases' contexts, enacted talk, and officeholders' experiences—with emphases on implicated problems and potentials for a deliberative democracy. The second section extends the case discussions' insights to consider the dissertation's motivating research questions. Finally, the third section draws the dissertation to a close by summarizing its major points, addressing the project's strengths and limitations, and identifying implications for future relevant research.

Case Study Discussions

Here I explore each case discretely to illuminate significant features and their implications for deliberative democratic practices. The features on which I focus do not complete an exhaustive list of the cases' interesting and important phenomena, however. I privilege these particular features for discussion because they, in combination, portray a rounded characterization of face-to-face democracy's potentials and limitations. Some features that I address pertain to the meetings' contexts, some to the meetings' communication processes, and others to officeholders' reported experiences. I structure the individual case discussions accordingly. For each feature that I identify, I explain its significance and, when appropriate, address its potential benefits and limitations with regard to democratic organizational needs.

Case 1: Idaho, Idaho, Wherefore ART Thou?

In this case discussion I address features pertaining to the meeting's context, communication processes, and officeholders' reported experiences. Features related to the meeting's context include: the meeting's experimental nature, in that it was the first meeting series of its kind conducted by the Idaho Commission on the Arts (ICA); and the meeting's capability for bridging state and local organizational levels. Features related to the meeting's communication processes include: its use of two formally defined speech events to support its two explicit *purposes—outcomes*; and the use of informal, undefined speech events to support its unstated (but important nonetheless) *purpose—outcome*. Features pertaining to the facilitating officeholder's reported experiences include Executive Director Harpole's senses that he was "speaking to the choir" and that the meeting's unstated *purpose—outcome* (which was a byproduct of informal speech events) was more valuable than the meeting's explicit *purposes—outcomes*.

Noteworthy contextual features. The first of two significant contextual features is that this meeting series was experimental in that it was the ICA's first attempt to garner public input toward developing a Long Range Plan. To receive grant support from the NEA, the ICA (as are all state arts commissions) is required to produce and submit a Long Range Plan every five years. Unlike some other federal grant-giving agencies such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (see Gastil & Kelshaw, 2000), the NEA does not require public consultation in Long Range Plan development. Past ICA Directors simply developed five-year Long Range Plans by re-working prior Plan incarnations with ICA staff members in closed settings. They did not solicit any public input. In his first year as ICA Executive Director, though, Dan Harpole was committed to bringing the people whom the ICA serves into the process of identifying the Commission's goals and objectives.

With the stated goal of "hearing from one thousand Idahoans," Harpole conceived the campaign as not only a way to hear from citizens about their communities' needs and concerns but also to make the Commission more visible. The entire "public comment" campaign requested input through various communication media, including letters, phone, fax, and email in addition to the face-to-face community meetings. The public meetings differed from the other channels in that they uniquely permitted community gathering rather than individualism, and interaction rather than sheer expression. Although the "one thousand Idahoans" mark was not reached—and "only a few" citizens utilized non-meeting communication channels—Harpole was pleased with the campaign's success. The 346 citizens who attended the fourteen meetings statewide translate well in *per capita* terms, and Harpole kept the budget under $15,000. In Washington State, where Harpole was once Arts Commissioner, $75,000 was recently spent on a similar campaign, with smaller turnout *per capita*. So, in Harpole's assessment, the ICA campaign was comparatively successful.

What is notable about this is Harpole's intention to reinvent the ICA as a publicly engaged state agency rather than an abstract entity—and his decision to use public meetings to do so. Before interviewing Harpole, I had assumed that the community meetings had been conceived in response to federal requirements. Whereas there was no federal mandate, Harpole did "sense that the NEA [wanted] a level of inclusivity." In this sense, he did respond to perceived federal preferences. But his deeper motivation was different. He wanted to change the way things were done at the ICA to make it more accountable and visible to Idaho's citizens. The project was thus an experiment. He and the ICA staff members did not know what to expect, especially since none of them had ever designed or facilitated a public meeting tour in this vein.

The meeting's second noteworthy contextual feature was its means for bridging otherwise distinct organizational levels. In this case, representatives of the state-level ICA coordinated their activity with the local Moscow Arts Commission to promote and implement the meeting. Instead of having the people come to them, the state officials went to the people. Unlike with communication media such as telephone, fax, and email, the localized public meeting permitted interactive contact between citizens and officeholders on the citizens' turf. For Harpole, the "local host was a key" in motivating attendance and concern for the ICA's goals.

Benefits of this inter-level connection are twofold. For one thing, bringing community members together in their own locale allowed contact and affiliations that might otherwise not have happened. "In one meeting, Sandpoint, in the middle of active dialogue, I had this discovery," Harpole said. "One small organization had *never* met with any of the other organizations present." The meeting became an opportunity for Sandpoint's organizations to familiarize themselves and coordinate their activities. "We [the ICA] facilitated *their* meeting," reported Harpole. "It was a powerful thing that happened." If the ICA is a statewide umbrella that all local arts organizations have in common, then gathering together beneath that umbrella—that is, meeting per the ICA's invitation—allowed coordination that otherwise may not have occurred. This kind of coordination took place in the Moscow meeting as well, at the point when participants began addressing each other rather than Harpole, informing each other about projects like the youth orchestra and coordinating interests. Whereas participants had earlier been facing forward, listening and speaking to Harpole at the front of the room, at that point in the meeting they turned in their chairs to speak with each. It was also at this point that conversational enthusiasm and interaction—characterized by overlapping speaking turns, interruptions, and emphatic gestures, facial expressions, and vocalics—increased significantly among participants.

The second benefit of this inter-level connection is that the ICA was given a "face." The meeting's unstated *purpose—outcome* (but an important one, nonetheless) pertained in part, as Harpole said, to "public relations . . . to put the agency in a good light." Previous ICA Directors had never conducted a tour of Idaho's communities, so for community residents, this was the first opportunity to meet the ICA staff in a face-to-face setting. For Harpole, in his first year as ICA Executive Director, this was an important objective. Unlike past Directors, Harpole was resolved not to remain faceless and abstract to the citizens whom the Commission serves. By facilitating community meetings, the ICA enacted a "genuine effort to hear what are the [citizens'] needs and common grounds," as Harpole told me. At the same time, the citizens learned about the goals, methods, resources, and people that compose the ICA, making the government agency less abstract. In this sense, the meeting was an interpersonal and inter-organizational bridge between citizens and officeholders.

Noteworthy communication features. There are two key features related to this meeting's communication processes, and they are tied together. The first important feature is the meeting's enactment of two formally defined speech events that corresponded with the meeting's two explicit *purposes—outcomes*. ICA Executive Director Harpole designed the meeting with three goals in mind, only two of which were explicitly stated. The two explicit goals were public information and consultation. As the promotional brochure explained, "The Idaho Commission on the Arts is touring the state to present news about the Commission and to hear from Idahoans about their needs and vision for the arts in their communities" (ICA, 2001a). It is notable that the explicit public information and consultative goals coincided tidily with the meeting's two defined speech events—respectively, the PowerPoint presentation before the break and the "discussion" after the break. These explicitly defined speech events can be distinguished from other, informally enacted speech events (such as spontaneous conversation during the break, flashes of dialogue within the discussion section, and so on). What distinguished the formal speech events was that they coincided directly with the meeting's formal *purposes—outcomes*, as understood by participants, whereas the informal speech events did not.

In their motivations to attend the meeting and throughout their participation, citizens understood the two explicit *purposes—outcomes*. Accordingly, the functions of the formally defined speech events (informational presentation and discussion) were obvious, as were the *norms of interaction* that accompanied them. In all matters pertaining to the explicit goals, participants listened and talked in ways that were supportive and in accordance with understood *norms of interaction* and *purposes—outcomes*. They "got" the information without interrupting the presenter, and they responded to the formally listed questions, sequentially, during the discussion. Such explicitly structured discourse had utility in this speech situation—utility that corresponded with a cognitive model of group-work participation (Ritchie & Miles, 1970). According to this model, group members' levels of satisfaction are tied to "their participation in important organizational decisions" and other explicitly defined tasks (Ritchie & Miles, 1970, p. 348). Particularly with regard to the consultative goal, citizens contributed to the discourse with a sense that their input would have bearing on the ICA's Long Range Plan, and, in extension, the quality of the state's arts support in their community.

The meeting's second noteworthy communication feature is related to the first—but markedly different. Whereas the two explicit goals were approached through the implementation of two formally defined speech events, Harpole's third *purpose—outcome*—what he described as a "public relations" effort infused with a desire to "get people together and energize them . . . to develop grassroots support and camaraderie"—was achieved through informal speech events. These informal discourses tended toward dialogue, and were manifested in spontaneous conversations (before and after the meeting, and during the break) and in flashes of overlapping, rule-breaking, and emphatic talk (within the formal discussion) that was, content-wise, extraneous to the formal consultative *purpose—outcome*. Whereas the meeting's procedural design lent some control and predictability to the kinds and qualities of talk that occurred in relation to the two explicit *purposes—outcomes*, the talk that supported the third, unstated *purpose—outcome* was beyond anyone's control and prediction.

The utility of "surprise" was evident in the meeting's informal talk—increasingly so in those moments when talk became more dialogic. A chief reason why Harpole did not explicate his goal of fostering camaraderie and support for the ICA on the grassroots level is that there was no formal method for achieving such a goal, given its non-concrete and emergent nature. Whereas the explicit public information and consultative *purposes—outcomes* concerned the task dimension of group work and pointed to concrete products, the unstated *purpose—outcome* concerned the group's relationship-maintenance dimension. This coheres with an affective model of group work (Ritchie & Miles, 1970) in which the "products" take the form of intangible emotional social support—affiliations and senses of community that arise in participants' emergent interactions. Whereas such emergent interactions were helped along by tone setting—the "level of intimacy" that Harpole hoped to establish with an intentionally "casual approach," as he said—they could not be dictated by design. In this sense, it is appropriate and significant that participants' heightened enthusiasm and shared sense of community arose most poignantly in informal, undefined speech events and that such informal speech events supported a *purpose-outcome* that was never explicitly articulated.

Noteworthy features of the officeholder's experience. There are two significant features of Harpole's reflections on this speech situation. The first is his sense that he was "speaking to the choir." By this he meant that, throughout the public meeting series, he experienced very little "challenging" talk. Differently, in public meetings he had facilitated as a City Council member and County Executive in Port Townsend, WA, citizens typically attended meetings "out of fear" and brought their grave concerns about pressing public problems with them. Those meetings, he said, were typically "heated" and "ugly." In this meeting, though, citizens attended because they supported (and felt supported by) the ICA and its efforts. Participants wanted to learn more about the ICA's grant opportunities and/or inform the ICA of community needs.

On one hand, this allowed participants to be attitudinally "open sensitive" (Stewart & Logan, 1998) and thus to express and listen provisionally rather than stubbornly. On the other hand, though, this voluntary attendance by like-minded participants limited diversity, which might have allowed richer input. Regardless, the friendly scene and participants' open sensitive attitudes enabled Harpole to "really enjoy" this meeting (and the tour as a whole), which marked an important difference between this and meetings he had facilitated as a City Council member and County Executive. Harpole's enjoyment is not something that should be overlooked or dismissed as insignificant.

If officeholders dread public meetings they are likely to be less willing to implement and participate in them. In terms of an affective model of group work versus a cognitive model (Ritchie & Miles, 1970), this enjoyment marks some degree of success. Importantly, the "feel-good" quality that Harpole sensed in this meeting has motivated him to facilitate community meeting tours annually (budget allowing) instead of only when the five-year Long Range Plans come due. As long as public meetings are well implemented and serve useful functions, regularity is good according to participatory democratic ideals—but frequency is even better.

The second noteworthy feature of Harpole's experience is this: his sense that the fulfillment of his unstated *purpose—outcome* (to "develop grassroots support and camaraderie") was ultimately more valuable than the meeting's overt *purposes—outcomes*. The implications of this are enormous, since the meeting's explicit reason for being was to inform and consult. This does not mean that the ICA was unsuccessful in providing information and garnering/incorporating public comment into the Long Range Plan. It means, rather, that Harpole sensed more lasting importance in the *quality* of the interaction than in its tangible *outcomes*. "It made me realize how important my role is as a convener," Harpole said. "Our role is to get those people together and energize them."

Harpole reported that he typically elicited "90% of our usable feedback in the first three questions" of discussion. As the discussion continued over subsequent questions, it became less task-related and more dialogic. This is exemplified in the meeting narrative in Chapter 5. The dialogue that occurred in this meeting was valuable to Harpole, who recognized that, in a time of fiscal challenges in Idaho, grassroots arts advocacy and affiliation with the ICA are crucial to maintaining the legislature's arts funding. "This is one of our key roles: to get people together and nurture their advocacy." This goal is satisfied in affective rather than cognitive approaches to group work (Ritchie & Miles, 1970), and in emphases on relationship rather than task dimensions (Benne & Sheats, 1948). The ironic thing is that these emphases were neither part of the meeting's explicit *purposes—outcomes* nor central to its structured, pre-planned speech events.

Case 2: Vision & Value Community Workshop

In this discussion I address features pertaining to the meeting's context, communication processes, and officeholders' reported experiences. Features pertaining to the meeting's context include: the institutionalized collaboration between public officials and citizens; the use of outside consultants in meeting conception and facilitation; and the meeting's role as a link in a procedural chain. Features pertaining to communication processes include: the meeting's combination of public information, consultative, and collaborative speech events; discursive divisions between community members and facilitators; and facilitators' focus on quantitative citizen input. Features pertaining to the participating officeholder's reported experiences include their complex roles as citizens and officeholders and missed opportunities to engage with the public throughout the larger consultative process.

Noteworthy contextual features. The first of three important features pertaining to this meeting's context is the facilitating body's synthetic composition. The Latah Economic Development Council (LEDC) and its Community Revitalization Committee (CRC) are innovative civic bodies that unite government officials and citizens. Funded jointly by public and private sources, the enterprise reflects these different interests by bringing county, city, university, and business representatives together to consider civic issues and develop action plans. In monthly meetings and special project work, diverse members collaborate on equal footing. As the Moscow Downtown Revitalization Plan's driving force, the CRC enjoys a synthetic composition that ensures inclusion of various interests.

This collaborative setting for civic issue management has some potential benefits for democratic processes and outcomes. For one, it serves as a "procedural escrow," as that term was used in a conversation with CRC Chair and City Council member Mack. This metaphor suggests that no specific interests have undue power or voice in the process. The collaborative setting is also valuable because it fosters productive relationships between officeholders and citizens. In this way officeholders and citizens—at least those who participate directly—are demystified for each other. Meetings provide channels for inter-organizational information exchange and collaborative meaning making.

Limitations endemic to this kind of collaborative body are minor, and they are of the sort commonly faced by decision-making groups set within larger systems. Because the CRC's outcomes have consequence for the larger civic organization and its various interest groups, they are subject to evaluation and refinement by other bodies. In the case of the Moscow Downtown Revitalization Plan, the Moscow City Council had a great deal of autonomous say in translating the draft into a final plan. As Mack stated, "The Plan did not address everything that we [the City Council] wanted. The City Council did have say in requesting revisions, we couldn't nix it, [but] we had input—and should have. The City was a significant [financial] contributor." This suggests that collaborative, quasi-governmental bodies like the CRC may ultimately be restricted to procedural and advisory capabilities in lieu of decision-making authority; or, at best, be passive to more "official" bodies that impose evaluative review and final say.

This meeting's second noteworthy contextual feature was its facilitation by an outside consulting firm. The decision to contract Dufresne-Henry to solicit public comment, provide public information, and ultimately develop the Downtown Revitalization Plan was due to CRC members' agreed sense that they did not have the necessary expertise to accomplish all three tasks competently. This rationale and practice is increasingly commonplace in cities and towns across the United States, and the result is an intriguing business niche filled by consulting firms like Dufresne-Henry. Governments hire such contractors to bridge procedural gaps between public will and public action.[41] The fact that these are private firms paid with public funds is notable in light of a contemporary nationwide inclination toward "smaller government" and privatization. It is also noteworthy because governments, facing increasing pressure from civic groups to communicatively engage with the public, are in some cases relying on mediators to do so.

Two benefits of bringing in an outside consulting group were in line with the CRC's explicit goals in contracting Dufresne-Henry. For one, as an outside group, Dufresne-Henry did not represent any particular local interest and was, thus, unlikely to "be swayed," as Mack put it. Also, because the firm's professional specialization is helping towns and cities forge revitalization plans, the caseworkers came to Moscow with a level of expertise in this area that CRC members did not have.

At the same time, contracting an outside firm posed problems. For one (as the meeting's talk, discussed below, exemplifies), rhetorical and practical divisions between "inside" community members and "outside" consultants developed. This created an inter-group distance—and perhaps even distrust—between community members and the consultants. A second problem posed by contracting an outside consultant was that, since the caseworkers did not live locally (or even in the same general region of the country), they were hindered in their ability to garner consistent and thorough citizen input. As well, they were unable to respond flexibly to circumstances that disrupted their process of consultation and Plan development. This is tied to a third problem of bringing in an outside consultant: The strategies that caseworkers implemented—including the calendar, workshop titles, surveys, and so forth—were largely replicated from previous and similar projects in other communities, and modeled on focus-group marketing tactics. The procedure was not exactly a "cookie-cutter," but it did rely on best-practices that the firm had implemented (successfully, one assumes) in other cities.[42] This reliance on replication diminished capacities for tailoring the process to Moscow's specific needs and characteristics. This resulted in a degree of inflexibility and unresponsiveness to unique needs and community characteristics.

The third noteworthy feature that pertains to the meeting's context is its conception as a link in a procedural chain. Although some of the workshop's participants had worked together on this project for some time, the workshop collective was technically a zero-history group. Despite this, the meeting was a conceived as a procedural step in a longitudinal project that had begun nearly a year earlier, and which would continue though May 2002 (and, in ramifications, beyond). The workshop followed an initial public meeting in May, the collection of survey data in June, limited small group "meet and greets" with downtown business and property owners throughout the summer, a charette with University of Idaho architecture students in September, and the aborted September "Vision & Value" workshop. It preceded November's "Roll Up Your Sleeves" workshop and the Downtown Revitalization Draft Plan's formal unveiling in December.

Although conceived as one link in a longitudinal chain, the event's significance is more discrete and prominent when considered in retrospect. With the general lack of responsiveness from downtown business and property owners during the summer, the cancellation of September's workshop, and a severe lack of participation in November's "Roll Up Your Sleeves" workshop, the October meeting became—by default—more of a pinnacle than a link. Although facilitators renamed the October workshop "Vision &

Value" (replacing the original name, "Imagination/Exploration") to cover some of September's intended content, something was lost. Whereas September's workshop had been conceived around the idea of brainstorming small groups ("charettes"), such a conception had no use in October. With caseworkers completing blueprints according to fixed timetables, the October meeting required only feedback—not invention. As Mack told me, the maps had been developed with only minor input from citizens, and most of that input had come from residents rather than downtown business and property owners. As a pinnacle instead of a link in a procedural chain, this meeting's communicative qualities take on great significance for understanding this meeting's function and limitations.

Noteworthy communication features. There are three significant features related to the meeting's enacted talk. The first concerns the workshop's speech events as they pertain to the combination of public information, consultative, and collaborative meeting types. The workshop's explicit *purposes—outcomes* fit with the first two meeting types: providing information and soliciting public input on the alternative plan drafts. The speech genres that represented these were, respectively, presentation (before the break) and "spinning the dots" (after the break). But, technically and qualitatively, this meeting was also of the collaborative variety. It was collaborative because it had been enabled through a partnership of public and private interests, as brought together in the CRC. Furthermore, since a neutral third party (Dufresne-Henry) facilitated the workshop, officeholders were freed up to participate collaboratively alongside citizens. This characteristic of the meeting was manifested in speech events that were extraneous to the meeting's explicit *purposes—outcomes*. Whereas the informative and consultative goals were manifested in presentation and "spinning the dots," respectively, the collaborative dimension was manifested in informal conversation.

The meeting's collaborative dimension was important for building relationships between citizens and government officials. As they participated in the meeting side by side they were equal contributors to the discourse; there was no clear way of distinguishing them. As Mack told me, "Our [the officeholders'] red and green dots didn't mean much more than anyone else's." Interpersonally, the side-by-side work opened up a communication channel that is not present in other institutional settings, such as a City Council meeting (in which Council members face out from a raised platform at the front of the Council Chambers, and citizens sit in audience-style seating on the floor). Here, citizens and officeholders *together* composed the public body, and participated on equal footing. The affiliations that took place among this public body in informal conversations were important characteristics of this meeting. There was no sense of "us" and "them" between officeholders and citizens. (I discuss the implications of this more thoroughly below, under the "noteworthy features of officeholders' experiences" heading.)

There were, however, us/them distinctions between the Moscow community members (including citizens and officeholders) and the outside consultants. This was the second noteworthy feature of the meeting's talk. These distinctions were made primarily in the workshops' informal speech events—the spontaneous conversations during break and insurgent comments, deriding laughter, and side-conversations during the blueprints' presentation. A key example of this is when Peter, during his presentation, pointed out the proposed roundabout to replace the intersection of Highways 8 and 95 on the south side of town. "You've got to be kidding!," "That's the stupidest thing!," and general deriding laughter were some of the responses. The participants' generally-shared sentiment was summed up in one participant's utterance from the audience: "I know that you're all from other places, like Massachusetts, but that would never work here in Idaho. In Moscow. Nobody'd be able to figure it out and we'd all be in wrecks" [laughter among the participants].

At first glance, the division between insiders and outsiders is easily interpreted as a destructive thing. Certainly there were undeniable negative effects of this division, including participants' (mild, perhaps) distrust of the facilitators and distaste for the proposed plans they had conceived with limited civic input and no long-term community experience. There was, however, a more significant benefit to the distinction between community insiders and outsiders. The demarcation served to galvanize the community and encourage members to talk and think together about *their* visions of a revitalized Moscow *vis-à-vis* the consultants'. Once the Downtown Revitalization Plan was to be completed the consultants would return to their homes in other parts of the country and perhaps never return. The community members, though, had some real stake in the Plan and their city's future. This stake was realized in the informal talk that occurred during the meeting; in the spontaneous conversations during break and the insurgent comments and conversations during the blueprints' presentation.

This meeting's third noteworthy communicative feature was the facilitators' solicitation of quantitative public input. This input was collected during the "spinning the dots" speech event, in which participants placed green and red circular stickers on details of the three plans that they liked and disliked, respectively. (Each participant was given five of each color.) The expressed purpose of the workshop's public input portion was to foster small group conversation (listened-in-on by several architectural students, who would later report what they heard to the consultants). This discussion was conceived as a means to develop participant's individual preferences, which they would then articulate independently with the use of their green and red dots. Instead of structured small group conversations, though, the speech event became "almost a free-for-all," as Mack described it. Whereas some informal dyadic and small group conversations did occur, these conversations were not aided by the facilitators' explicit guidance. The result was a crush of individual participants at the wall where the blueprints were posted. Individuals' choices reflected their gut reactions rather than deliberatively prepared opinions.

The consultants used the data—the conglomerations of green and red dots—to infer "consensus" about participants' preferences. This "consensus" was used to guide revisions (Dufresene-Henry & Hatchmueller, 2002). The reliance on this method demonstrates a privileging of quantitative rather than qualitative input. Coupled with the lack of structured small group discussion, the solicited feedback was devoid of deliberation. As Mack reported, the red and green dots only expressed dichotomous likes and dislikes, without room for middle ground, rationale, or suggestions for revision. "There was no opportunity to say, 'This is why,'" she reported, emphasizing her opinion that the process needed "more discussion." "The red and green dots . . . gave us a sense of what we wanted the town to look like, but not a sense of how to do it." The need for more discussion was not limited to this meeting only, but—as Mack said—"between May and December." With the cancellation of September's meeting and the low attendance at November's "Roll Up Your Sleeves" workshop, this meeting (and the process as a whole) may have benefited from thorough, structured, deliberative discussion. Without it, participants were deprived of opportunities to creatively synthesize and articulate ideas, and facilitators were given only black and white—literally, green and red—indicators of the community's vision. Further, without an opportunity for formal deliberation, community members had no ability to develop a community vision. All they had to go on were individual preferences, articulated formally with green and red dots.

Noteworthy features of the officeholders' experiences. The first of two significant features pertaining to officeholders' reported experiences was the opportunity to "wear different hats" in this meeting. This opportunity was due to two factors: the workshop's facilitation by an outside consulting group (which freed the officeholders to interact as "normal" participants) and the fact that the officeholders' concerns were tied to their fundamental citizenship of Moscow. All three officeholders whom I consulted—City Council member and CRC Chair Mack, County Executive (and Chamber of Commerce Executive Director) Kimmell, and City Council member Hamlett—described their experiences in this meeting as synthesizing different civic roles. Mack said that her concern for this meeting's outcomes were not just from the perspective of her governmental and CRC positions, but also from the perspective of a downtown business owner. (She and her husband own a car dealership.) The facilitation by caseworkers allowed her to celebrate this perspective: "I think with Dufresne-Henry facilitating that, all of us were on an equal footing." Kimmell, although the County Executive (Latah County is a co-sponsor of the LEDC and its CRC), attended the workshop as a representative of the Chamber of Commerce. At the same time, though, the meeting informed him of potentials for other cities and towns in the county that "are losing their vitalities downtown." In this sense, he wore different hats in the meeting. Hamlett said that she "went [to the workshop] as a [City] Council member and citizen." She, like Kimmell and Mack, wore different hats (at once) in this meeting: "[As a City Council member,] many downtown business owners had spoken with me regarding their concerns about the plans, cost, design, et cetera. I thought it was best that I went myself and heard the plans. Also as a citizen who lives on the edge of downtown, I have great interest in what happens."

This ability to wear different hats is interesting in light of the dichotomous rifts that may be forged between citizens and officeholders. (This problem is exemplified in the discussion of the Spokane Community Assembly below, under the heading, "noteworthy features of officeholders' experiences.") When officeholders conceive themselves as citizens as well as public officials and have opportunities to collaboratively work "on an equal footing" with fellow community members (as Mack said), the dichotomy may be dismantled. This may not only improve civic relations between citizens and government offices, but also help officeholders and citizens to listen to each other more empathically than they otherwise might.

The second noteworthy feature of officeholders' reported experiences is their sense that the consulting caseworkers restricted their activities, and thus precluded much-need civic discussion that the officeholders wanted to implement. All three officeholders whom I consulted asserted that there had not been enough open-ended discussion in the period between May and December, especially among downtown business and property owners. Mack said, "The CRC was ready to knock on doors [in May], we were so excited. We could have continued the fervor over the summer instead of letting it die. We were told [by Dufresne-Henry caseworkers] to wait until we knew what we were doing—to wait until we get information back before we go knocking on doors."

What is interesting here is that, despite the common deliberative democratic complaint that officeholders are reluctant to talk with citizens and are partial to autonomy (Frederickson, 1999; Harwood Group, 1995), in this case something different occurred. Here, public officials (and civilian CRC members) were excited to engage the public but were instructed to "wait" by the consultants whom they had contracted, ironically, to lead the charge on soliciting public input. The perceived result of this waiting was a lost opportunity to motivate and include the public in the Downtown Revitalization Plan's creative invention. "I personally learned a lot from this one," sighed Mack. "When you have such an excited group, take advantage. . . . Woulda, coulda, shoulda." Ultimately—as Mack, Kimmell, Hamlett, and CRC Executive Director Richardson all asserted strongly—the entire process suffered from lack of "discussion to hone ideas" (in Hamlett's words). "Discussion" was the common term used by these four officials, and its usage connotes deliberative collaboration among citizens, public officials, and Dufresne-Henry caseworkers.

What took the place of deliberation were surveys, "meet and greet" small group meetings with downtown stakeholders, charettes with University of Idaho architectural students (who Kimmell said, "weren't the right people"), and the October "Vision & Value" workshop's "spin the dots" speech event. With lackluster response on surveys (especially from downtown stakeholders), poor attendance at "meet and greets," and a focus on quantitative feedback in the October workshop, the process allegedly suffered from a dearth of deliberative interactivity. The result was widespread dissatisfaction with the eventual Downtown Revitalization Plan, which was perceived (by the officeholders whom I interviewed, at least) as unresponsive to the community's needs—needs that had never been deliberatively conceived to begin with. What is notable, in light of deliberative democrats' general criticisms of pervasive governmental autonomy, is that these are officeholders who level this criticism.

Case 3: Spokane Community Assembly

In this discussion I address features pertaining to the meeting's context, communication processes, and officeholders' reported experiences. The meeting's noteworthy contextual features include the Assembly's institutional means for permitting citizen participation in government, longitudinal "life" (which involves significant historical and cultural facets), and heated emotional scene. The meeting's noteworthy communication-related features include the discursive use of inclusion and exclusion to define group membership and power relations, and the group's conception and use of "consensus" as a decision making method. Noteworthy features pertaining to officeholders' experiences include perceptions of perpetuated inter-organizational struggles, and widening rifts between officeholders and citizens.

Noteworthy contextual features. The first of three significant features concerning this meeting's context is its institutional means for permitting citizen engagement in governmental activities. The conception of the Neighborhood Councils program in 1996 was a collaborative effort between citizens and officeholders (i.e., City Council members and the Mayor). With the establishment of the Community Assembly (in which representatives of the Neighborhood Councils convene monthly) and the charter (by popular city-wide vote) that deemed the Assembly an official quasi-governmental advisory body, this program became unique in the United States. Whereas many other cities have Neighborhood Councils, none have Community Assemblies to unite them or charters to institutionally legitimate their advocacy and activities (and ensure public funding and technical support). The program, conceived as a channel for bottom-up political communication, is innovative and worthy of deliberative democratic scholars' attention.

It is important to emphasize the advisory capacity of the Assembly, especially as this definition of its role in Spokane's government is at the heart of "the Problem" (which underlies many, if not all, of its present discourses). Whereas the Community Assembly provides citizens means to institutionally participate in government (specifically in partnership with the City Council), they ultimately have no decision-making authority. Furthermore, they are caught in a system of power relations that has consequences for their autonomy and grassroots quality. Whereas they work in partnership with the City Council, they operate under the auspice of the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS)—an agency controlled by the Mayor's office. Since the advent of a strong mayor governmental conception, the Mayor's office and the City Council have enacted a power struggle. This has made Community Assembly members (and City Council members) sensitive to what they perceive as the ONS's bureaucratic management (verses mere support) of the Assembly, curtailment of Assembly activities, and use of the Assembly to propagate the Mayor's policy agenda. In brief, this conflict is what the Assembly calls "the Problem."

This immersion in a system of power relations is an aspect of the Community Assembly's quasi-governmental status. It is also part of the second noteworthy feature pertaining to the Assembly's context. This feature is its longitudinal organizational life. Many participants who are active today have been involved since 1996, such as ONS staff members Minarik and Scott, and City Council member (and former Assembly member) Al French. Assembly members are elected by their Neighborhood Councils to serve renewable one-year terms. Many have served for many years. The result is a cultural environment that is not found in zero-history public meetings, and which involves complex patterns of relationships and reinscribed meanings. As well, it allows the group to work with issues over long periods of time, bouncing them back and forth between the various Neighborhood Councils and the monthly Assembly as they work toward consensus. The Assembly's ever-developing culture and longitudinal issue management distinguish the body from a zero-history group in significant ways.

The first two contextual features that I addressed are general conditions. The third noteworthy contextual feature is tied to these, but it is more specific to the particular meeting that I observed. This concerns recent developments pertaining to "the Problem," as it is called within the organizational culture. "The Problem," as I explained above, pertains to official and practical definitions of roles and relationships between the ONS and the Community Assembly; and, in parallel, between the Mayor's office and the City Council. It is manifested in inter-organizational power struggles and, ultimately, a confrontation of values over how much agency lay-citizens should have in government functions and which primary direction political communication should flow.

At this particular Community Assembly meeting, the absence of ONS Director (and mayoral appointee) Susan Brudnicki was of enormous significance to participants. Prior to the meeting, ONS staff member Minarik foresaw an "interesting" meeting, saying, "When the cat is away . . ." and rolling his eyes. This statement illustrates the power relationship and struggle between Brudnicki and the Assembly. In the March Assembly (two months before the meeting that I observed), a Neighborhood Council Representative resigned mid-meeting in anger and the Assembly resolved to never again place "the Problem" on the agenda due to the topic's destructive and emotional force. Since then, the Assembly's Policies and Procedures Committee had been working to rewrite the organization's bylaws in ways that would explicate the Assembly's autonomy and the ONS's supportive (rather than managerial) role. Brudnicki, in turn, had responded with memoranda stating legal interpretations of the Assembly's charter that preserved a degree of ONS authority and reinforced the body's advisory role. With

Brudnicki absent and one of her perceived "allies" from the Convention and Visitors Bureau requesting an agenda slot, participants were emotionally keyed up. This emotional scene affected the communication that occurred in the speech situation.

Noteworthy communication features. The first of two significant features that pertain to this meeting's enacted talk is the participants' discursive use of inclusion and exclusion to define group membership and power relations. In part, this delineation was communicated in the physical layout of the room. Assembly members sat at conjoined tables in a rectangular configuration whereas non-members (including Neighborhood Council members who were not Representatives, public officials, and other attendees like myself) were relegated to chairs on the room's outskirts. Even though ONS staff members Minarik and Scott were included at the Assembly table, they were distinguished and subjugated by their placement at the foot of the table next to the audiovisual equipment and lectern. As well, whereas microphones (for recording purposes) were spaced evenly around the table configuration, there were no microphones placed before Minarik and Scott at the table's foot.

Distinctions between Assembly members and others were enforced in other communicative ways. For example, when non-Assembly members such as the Planning Director and CVB staff member Cabe issued formal presentations to the Assembly, they stood behind the lectern at the configuration's foot. When Assembly members made formal presentations, however, they stood at the head of the table next to the facilitator. Although this is a subtle detail, it demonstrates the different values attributed to the table configuration's head and foot, as this distinction was unspoken but understood by participants.

A second example of the communicative distinction between Assembly members and others was the use of turn-taking rules. As the facilitator made explicit at one point, Assembly members wishing to speak during discussion portions of the meeting were required to raise their hands for the facilitator's permission to speak. Although this rule did fall by the wayside during periods of conversational excitement, it was generally adhered to. Tied to this was the implicit rule that only Assembly members were permitted to speak according to the conventional hand-raising rule. Outsiders who wished to contribute were required to add the second step of requesting special permission. In an extreme instance of this, Neighborhood Council member Jack Smith, who sat in the "audience" seating because he was not a Representative, asked his designated Representative to request a speaking turn for him. She raised her hand, received acknowledgement from the facilitator, and said, "I defer my turn to speak to Jack Smith." The facilitator granted permission and Smith, standing beside his Representative at the table, spoke. Notable rule-breakers were City Council member French and ONS staff member Minarik. Both, as non-members, spoke up several times without first attaining permission. In these cases, seniority trumped the rule. (They had both been involved with the Assembly since its inception in 1996.) The facilitator and other Assembly members did not issue verbal or nonverbal "punishment," and even expressed thanks (to Minarik, for information provided) on one occasion.

The significance of the discursive distinction between insiders and outsiders concerns the Assembly as an institutional setting in which traditional power differences between citizens and officeholders are overturned. Whereas in traditional governmental settings officeholders reside in the privileged chairs (e.g., in City Council meetings and public hearings), the Assembly is a speech situation in which citizens are centralized. Especially in light of "the Problem"—in which the ONS is perceived as attempting to wrest control of the Assembly—maintaining institutional centrality is very important to Assembly members. In this sense, the physical setting and implicit procedural rules were significant in their delineation of in- and out-group members, and thus their definition of power relations.

The second noteworthy feature of the meeting's enacted talk is the procedural valuation of consensus-based decision making, as that concept is understood and enacted by the body. The term "consensus" arose repeatedly during my participant-observation. In conversation with Smith prior to the meeting, he complained, "This group is so preoccupied with the consensus method of making decisions, and in all these years I've never once seen them reach consensus on anything." During the meeting, the facilitator specifically stated that decisions must be made by "consensus method," as stated in the procedural bylaws. In conversation with City Council member French after the meeting, he made a point that the Assembly's valuation of inclusion and grassroots empowerment is manifested in the group's commitment to consensus.

With this concern for consensus, it is notable how the Assembly enacts it, as well as how deliberation—rather, the absence of deliberation—plays out. In every decision or attempted decision, the facilitator asked the group if the motion (e.g., accepting the June Assembly's proposed agenda) was to be passed. Silence was assumed to represent consensual agreement. This is important, since it reveals something about the relationship between democracy and organizational size. At twenty-five members, the Assembly exceeded what can be labeled a small group. Remembering Cheney's (1995) principle, direct democratic talk (including deliberative interaction) becomes difficult when a group exceeds fifteen or so members. After that, spin-off organizations develop. The Assembly attempts to operate like a small group, and in a sense it is. In it, twenty-five neighborhoods are represented. The organization's procedure, then, calls for each Neighborhood Council to achieve consensus independently; for Representatives to speak for their neighborhoods in the Assembly; and for the Assembly to reach a "macro" consensus. Accordingly, the Neighborhood Councils are likely to be much more deliberative than the Assembly is. In those instances when consensus was not reached during the Assembly meeting, the facilitator summarized proposed amendments or other issues raised by Representatives and instructed participants to "take this back to your Councils, and we'll see what we can do next month." This was a charge for individual Neighborhood Councils to deliberate individually, and it was in lieu of enacting deliberation during the Assembly meeting itself.

Noteworthy features of the officeholders' experiences. There are two important features of officeholders' reported experiences, and they both fly in the face the idealizations of public meetings posed by deliberative democrats. The first of these is the sense among the three officeholders whom I consulted that the Assembly's enactment perpetuates inter-organizational conflict within the government. I interviewed the ONS staff members Minarik and Scott, and City Council member French. French is on a different "side" of this conflict than Minarik and Scott (who may be more accurately described as stuck in the middle), but their accounts supported each other.

Following Spokane's transition to a strong mayor governmental conception, the Mayor's office and the City Council—previously united—were set as opponents in a system of checks and balances. The alliance of the Community Assembly and the City Council functions as a power currency. However, the ONS—and, in extension, the Neighborhood Council program—is under the purview of the Mayor's office. Having served on Mayor Powers' mayoral campaign, Susan Brudnicki was appointed to the Directorship of the ONS in 2001 after Powers' election. The Assembly and City Council members perceived that Brudnicki had neither qualifications nor appreciation for the grassroots philosophy behind the program. After some allegedly heavy-handed attempts by Brudnicki to manage and restrict the Community Assembly's operations, tensions flared between City Council and the Mayor's office. A system of power relations and a heated conflict was thus established. Although this conflict is, in a large sense, between the City Council and the Mayor, the Assembly meetings are the grounds on which the battle has been repeatedly fought during the last year. In this sense, it is not the "fault" of the Assembly, but the Assembly provides a site for inter-organizational conflict between competing government offices.

The second noteworthy feature pertaining to the officeholders' reported experiences also troubles deliberative democratic idealizations of public meetings. This feature is the dichotomization of citizens and officeholders, and it is closely tied to the rift between the City Council and the Mayor's office. One hope for public meetings is that they may bridge rifts between citizens and officeholders, and allow them to understand each other more empathically. In the second case study—involving Moscow's Community Revitalization Committee—the public meeting helped to eradicate dichotomous conceptions of officeholders and citizens, as well as communicative divides between government and the public. In the case of the Spokane Community Assembly, though, the distinction between citizens and public officials is a significant one for participants. Accompanied by a sense of competitive opposition, the division is reinscribed in the interactions among Assembly members and between the Assembly and the ONS.

On the "pro-citizen" side, French—a founding citizen member of the Neighborhood Council program and current City Council member—is committed to preserving the integrity of the Assembly's conception as a "grassroots, bottom-up organization." The question for him is, Whose organization is this? "If it's ONS's, then it's top-down," he said. French is sensitive to the parallel conflicts between the ONS and the Community Assembly, and between the Mayor and the City Council. Since the Assembly is an advisory body that answers to the City Council, French sees a clear alliance—and thus, a proud sense that the City Council follows a bottom-up model of political communication whereas the Mayor's office follows a top-down model. "I'm elected to serve the people of my district and of Spokane, and that's who these people are," he said. Accordingly, the divide that French recognizes is not between citizens and officeholders in general, but between citizens and Mayor Powers/Susan Brudnicki/the ONS.

On the other side of this conflict—at least *placed* on "the other side" by Assembly members—are ONS staff members Minarik and Scott. They are torn because they have professional responsibilities in line with what their boss—Brudnicki—tells them to do, but they do not want to be cast as the opposition. In their senses, though, Assembly members *have* cast them as "the enemy." Scott said, "We have to remain faceless and voiceless, and that's so hard to do. Because I'm a citizen too, and they don't treat me that way. . . . We are here to serve them as citizens, but you know what? I'm a citizen too. Sometimes they go past the limit because they are so committed." Her anger is in response to a perceived dichotomy between citizens and public officials, perpetuated by Assembly members and their allies, like French. "Their attitude is, "We pay your salary," complains Scott.

What is taking place in this opposition of Community Assembly citizens versus Mayor Powers/Brudnicki/the ONS has much to do with the Assembly's commitments to overturning traditional power relations between government and citizens and challenging the traditional top-down model of political communication. As a revolutionary act, the approach preserves existing structural dichotomies; it simply redistributes the power and redirects the communication flow. In other words, the Assembly keeps the structure intact but turns it upside-down without eradicating it. If the structure were to be dismantled or eradicated, the dichotomy would be done away with. This would allow for a sense that public officials are "citizens too," as Scott asserts, and allow for collaboration instead of competition between citizens and officeholders. In lieu of such a radical transformation of democratic political structure and process, the divisions become further etched and the communication flow remains unilateral, whether bottom-up or top-down.

Responses to the Dissertation's Motivating Research Questions

The theoretical and empirical efforts in this project revolve around one central question: What are some of the ways in which public meetings—particularly deliberative public meetings—might take place given our civic milieu and the practical experiences of officeholders? As I asserted in the first chapter, this question is best addressed by breaking it into four specific research questions: (a) Where in the scope of American political talk are there appropriate ecological niches for institutionalizing public meetings? (b) Discursively, what distinguishes public meetings from other kinds of political speech situations? (c) What diverse civic needs might different kinds of public meetings (with different discursive qualities) fulfill? (d) How may officeholders' accounts inform understanding of public meetings' democratic potentials and restrictions?

I have reviewed this project's empirical studies with these questions in mind. Having illuminated several prominent issues relevant to the meetings' contexts, enacted talk, and officeholders' experiences, it is important now to connect these insights directly with the dissertation's research questions. With the three case studies in mind, what follows is a discussion of how public meetings may function both to the benefit and detriment of deliberative democratic relationships, processes, and outcomes.

Research Question 1: Ecological Niches

Toward explaining how public meetings may take place in American democracy, the first research question asks, Where in the scope of American political talk are there appropriate ecological niches for institutionalizing public meetings? The notion of ecological niches pertains to organizational needs, opportunities, and discursive gaps. Ecological niches are sites where "social capital" (networks and norms of civic engagement) has suffered "silent erosion" (Putnam, 1993, p. 106) but where "serious public discourse" may be implemented as "the seedbed, the wellspring, of democratic politics (Mathews, 1994, p. 40). Recognizing that "the quality of democracy depends on the quality of . . . public talk" (Mathews, 1994, p. 40), ecological niches are important opportunities for innovating balance and connectedness between democracy's local and participatory practices on one hand, and representational mechanisms on the other (O'Leary, 1996).

A fundamental assumption held by deliberative democrats is that many public issues and procedures that are withheld from public engagement may be better managed if citizens were given opportunities to contribute and collaborate (Mathews & McAfee, 2001). Recent ideas for providing such opportunities include "town meeting forms of government, neighborhood assemblies to discuss public issues, the initiative and referendum process of direct citizen lawmaking, and more recently, the use of electronic media, such as two-way television, to establish a kind of electronic democracy" (Bessette, 1994, p. 44). Thinking about institutional public meetings as one general category of democratic innovation, it is necessary to identify issues that are appropriate for public engagement, assess whether the current institutional procedures and discourses have room for a public meeting component, and motivate (and prepare) officeholders to implement public meetings effectively.

Public meetings may be implemented either to fill existing discursive gaps or to replace existing discourses that are inadequate. A gap is where public issues are not being managed in public ways. An example of this is the 1997 ICA Long Range Plan that was composed by ICA staff members, who simply revised the 1992 edition behind closed doors. Despite the absence of a federal mandate to solicit input toward the Plan, Harpole—upon becoming the Commission's Executive Director—decided that this was a discursive gap: a public issue that had no public communicative exposure. He saw in this an opportunity to use community meetings for public information, public input, relationship and community building, and infusing grassroots enthusiasm for the arts in Idaho.

Similarly, public meetings may be implemented to replace or supplement existing public discourses that are somehow inadequate. CRC Chair and Moscow City Council member Mack reflected on the use of surveys and badly attended "meet and greets" during the summer of 2001 and decided (in "Woulda, coulda, shoulda," fashion) that more public involvement was necessary to lay the inventive foundations of the Downtown Revitalization Plan. All three officeholders whom I interviewed about the project agreed that more workshops, earlier in the planning process, would have been helpful; they suggested convening workshops that would not have focused on citizen reaction to the pre-drawn plans, but which would have enabled more inventive "discussion" (as this term was used by all three respondents).

Regardless of the presence of discursive gaps or inadequacies, the potential for institutionalizing public meetings is hampered, in some cases, by officeholders' reluctant attitudes (Frederickson, 1999; Freeman, 1999; Harwood Group, 1995). In part, reluctant attitudes are tied to officeholders' penchants for control over procedures and issues—which unscripted meetings with citizens put at risk. This penchant was illustrated for me in research conducted toward a potential case study for this project. The case never came to fruition as a site of study because the public meeting was never implemented. In this situation, set in Livingston, Montana, the public was divided and angry about a decision by the Superintendent and School Board to close an elementary school for budgetary reasons. Trustee Storrs Bishop urged fellow School Board members to conceive and implement an open public meeting with citizens in which "dialogue" could occur (Bishop, 2002). Fellow officials argued that the state's open meeting laws already permit the public to attend and contribute in regular Board meetings. As Bishop notes, though, those are "safe" situations in which Trustees have control.

> There is no requirement for us to engage *with* the public, and no process that encourages us to find a way to do that. We're meeting, you can talk at us, but we're not required to talk *with* you. What we're telling [citizens] is that they're a pain in the ass, and they should speak their peace and be quiet. (Bishop, 2002)

In addition to a penchant for control, officeholders' reluctance to forge interactive settings for public talk is due to a limited sense of what public meetings may accomplish.

Bishop (2002) describes an understanding among the Livingston School Board Trustees that a public meeting's chief function is to derive "input," understood according to a "vending machine metaphor." According to this conception, Bishop (2002) said, "You put [public input] in and you don't get it back [laughs]." The implication is that some officeholders view input as a one-way street (i.e., from citizens to officeholders) without mandate for officials to incorporate input into policy, much less respond. As the Superintendent told Bishop (in Bishop's words), "Doing that [meeting interactively with the public] is not going to tell us something that we don't already know" (Bishop, 2002). This attitude not only limits the deliberative potentials of public meetings but also encourages reliance on less challenging and more controllable ways to collect public input, such as surveys and polls.

In contrast to the Livingston, Montana example, how do this project's three case studies inform us about ecological niches with regard to appropriate topics, discursive "room," and officeholders' attitudes about public meetings? Each of the three cases that I studied is innovative in certain ways, and each involves officeholders who reject the vending machine conception of public input. ICA Executive Director Harpole hoped to build relationships, strengthen community, and motivate grassroots activism in addition to the explicit tasks of public information and public input. Officials involved with the CRC Downtown Revitalization Plan regretted that the public was not tapped for creative contribution, and was instead relegated to a "feedback" role. (They attributed this missed opportunity to procedural decisions made by contracted consultants.) Spokane officials who worked to institutionalize the Community Assembly envisioned an official capacity for citizens in city government, in which residents of the city's neighborhoods could join forces to build consensus on public issues and advise the City Council. In all of these cases, public contribution to the maintenance of civic issues *could* have been allowed in other communicative ways that were less interactive and more individualistic (such as polls, surveys, etc.). The impulse to utilize public meetings, though, reflected officeholders' willingness to reconceive citizens' capabilities and roles in political processes and community building.

Research Question 2: Distinctiveness

The project's second research question asks, Discursively, what distinguishes public meetings from other kinds of political speech situations? This question responds to the deliberative democratic assumption that public meetings are potentially beneficial because they bring citizens and officeholders together in communicative settings. It also attempts to bridge the gap between this assumption and the realities of public meetings in practice.

As I set forth in the second chapter, large democratic organizations require wide arrays of public discourses and discursive qualities. Various speech events—or speech genres in Bakhtin's (1986) terms—experience different qualities, ranging from centripetally monologic (emphasizing control, closure, unilateral expressiveness, etc.) to centrifugally dialogic (emphasizing surprise, open-endedness, bi- or multilateral interactivity, etc.) (Bakhtin, 1981; Buber, 1965). Democratic organizations are heteroglossic in that they, ideally, experience many different speech situations, speech events, and qualities that vary widely. These qualities, in ideal combination, tend toward balance between centripetal and centrifugal poles. If an organization were to employ only a limited range of discourses—either on the monologic or dialogic side of the continuum—it would not be a democracy, or, at least, not a *healthy* democracy. It is the qualitative combination of diverse talk that makes a healthy democracy what it is. If the talk is diverse and dynamic, a rough balance may be attained between decision-making closure (on the monologic side) and inventive openness (on the dialogic side): or, in other words, between the organization's *unum* and *pluribus*, respectively. It is the procedural, communicative balance between *unum* and *pluribus* that fundamentally characterizes a democracy *vis-à-vis* other kinds of organizations (e.g., dictatorships and anarchies).

In this sense, public meetings are potentially microcosms of the larger democratic organizations in which they occur. It might be an easy mistake to assume that, because public meetings bring citizens and officeholders together in face-to-face communicative settings, they fulfill democracy's dialogic (centrifugal) needs only or primarily. The cases portrayed and examined in this study illustrate the heteroglossic realities of public meetings. Although broadly different in contextual and discursive ways, all three of the speech situations entailed various speech events that spanned wide qualitative ranges. Some of these speech events were highly structured and expressively conceived, such as formal presentations. Others were highly unstructured and collaboratively constitutive, such as informal conversations and flashes of dialogue. Still others were somewhere in the middle, having elements of structure and control but also hints of disruption and surprise. It was these speech events' complementary relationships that made the meetings inherently democratic, with many of the successes and challenges that the concept invokes.

Different speech events with different qualities may complement one another in productive ways. For example, ICA Executive Director Harpole justified the use of informative presentation as a precursor to discussion in order to, as he said, "set the table. We needed to get people on common ground before we can ask any questions." In this example, monologic presentation served as a prerequisite for discussion. The discussion could not have been successful without first having specific, controlled information laid out in a tidy format. Similarly, formal presentation was necessary as a precursor to feedback in the CRC "Vision & Value" workshop. Without the expression of brute information, feedback (and informal conversation about the civic issues, for that matter) would not have been possible. The Spokane Community Assembly's talk bounced around between formal presentation (at the monologic or centripetal end), structured discussion (in the middle), and overlapping, spontaneous, and informal conversation (at the dialogic or centrifugal end). All of these forms of talk were useful for participants as discrete speech events, but their enactments and outcomes were only meaningful in combination.

Public meetings, then, differ from other democratic speech situations because they are potentially (and uniquely) heteroglossic and functionally versatile. Other speech situations—such as press conferences, public address, debate, political protests, and even riots—experience comparatively truncated ranges of discourse qualities. This is because their integral speech events emphasize an expressiveness conception of communication (Deetz, 1994), or, in Buber's (1965) language, "I/It" kinds of relating. Any one of these speech situations is a singular aspect of democracy that, in partnership with other speech situations, contributes to the public sphere as a whole. In many public meetings, though, organizational democracy is enacted in miniature. Public meetings may experience various speech events and qualities in combination, and thus bridge society's *pluribus* and *unum* in ways that other, relatively simple and non-versatile speech situations may not. In public meetings, individual and community horizons may fuse together, enacting the crucial tensional interplay between *pluribus* and *unum* through both interactive and expressive discourses.

Research Question 3: Civic Needs

The dissertation's third motivating research question is, What diverse civic needs might different kinds of public meetings (with different discursive qualities) fulfill? As supported by the three cases, the answer to this question concerns the task and relationship maintenance dimensions of group work (Benne & Sheats, 1948), and cognitive and affective approaches (Ritchie & Miles, 1970), respectively. Each public meeting was motivated by explicit *outcomes—purposes* that concerned the production of tangible products—e.g., public feedback toward the ICA's Long Range Plan, feedback on the CRC's alternative Downtown Revitalization Plan blueprints (in the form of colored dots), and formal decisions reached by consensus among Neighborhood Council Representatives. At once, though, each public meeting was motivated by implicit *outcomes—purposes* (or, at least, each experienced residual by-products) that concerned intangible products—participants' affiliations, senses of satisfaction with their participation, the strengthening of community, and so on. As gatherings that are characterized by both tasks and social features, public meetings potentially fulfill diverse civic needs.

Different public meetings experience different kinds of talk, and different kinds of talk may fulfill different kinds of needs. Task dimensions of group work require some degrees of closure and thus monologically leaning (centripetal) kinds of talk (Benne & Sheats, 1948). Specific tasks across the three cases included public information, citizens' advisory input, and (in the Spokane Community Assembly) consensus-based decision making. In all cases the speech events that were conceived, implemented, and enacted toward task-closure had explicit procedural structures. Presentations in the ICA community meeting and the CRC workshop were choreographed according to slide programs, for example. Whereas the CRC presentation was conceived for one-time enactment, the ICA presentation was designed for replication across fourteen meetings. This exemplifies the connections between task goals, highly structured speech events, and monologic (centripetal) qualities that manifest control, closure, predictability, and so on.

Relationship maintenance dimensions of group work, on the other hand, require relative open-endedness and, thus, dialogically leaning (centrifugal) kinds of talk (Benne & Sheats, 1948). Relational goals or aspects across meetings include community building, energizing, collaborative meaning making, and managing power relations and identities. For example, community building and energizing were obvious outcomes of the ICA community workshop, although they were extraneous to the meeting's explicit goals. These relational "products" emerged out of informal, unplanned, and surprising speech events such as conversation during the break and the dialogic flash that occurred during the discussion. For another example, despite explicit measures to keep "the Problem" off the Spokane Community Assembly's agenda, the topic was a meta-discursive undercurrent of many speech events. In direct and indirect talk about "the Problem," participants constructed understandings about the organization's power relations and identities. It is important that discourse pertaining to "the Problem" was more often than not manifested in unstructured, overlapping talk that threw formal turn-taking rules by the wayside. The dialogically inclined (centrifugal) qualities of this talk included insurgence, disruption, surprise, spontaneity, and so on.

Public meetings, as potentially heteroglossic and versatile speech situations, are sites where participants may enact different speech events in order to manage different dimensions of group work. Both task and relationship maintenance dimensions (Benne & Sheats, 1948) are important to democratic collective processes, and these are reflected in the kinds of satisfaction (or lack of) that participants may experience. According to the cognitive model of group participation (Ritchie & Miles, 1970), satisfaction is tied to perceived efficacy in decisions or other tangible products. Differently, according to the affective model (Ritchie & Miles, 1970), satisfaction is tied to participants' perceived relational and emotional outcomes. Both kinds of satisfaction—and both kinds of dimensions—are crucial democratic needs that public meetings may fulfill.

Research Question 4: Implementation

The dissertation's fourth research question asks, How might officeholders' experiential accounts inform the implementation of public meetings to the benefit of a deliberative democracy? Part of this question is simply a request for justification of the question itself—that is, Why ask officeholders? A second aspect of this research question inquires about the officeholders' roles in a deliberative democracy and about how their goals and perceptions of potentials and constraints play out in face-to-face meetings with citizens.

Why ask officeholders? For one thing, officeholders have specific understandings of constraints that citizens do not have, pertaining, for example, to budget and time limitations, power relations among and between government offices, legal or bureaucratic restrictions on uses of citizen input, etc. Officeholders also have ideas of *whom* to meet with, and citizens might not recognize such distinctions. For example, despite moderately substantial input from Moscow residents and architectural students toward the Downtown Revitalization Plan, every official with whom I spoke complained that there was not enough input from those who had the most stake: downtown business and property owners. To ask the participating residents and architectural students about their experiences and satisfaction would only tell part of the story about the public meeting's successes and shortfalls. In asking officeholders, on the other hand, I learned that distinctions among participants—as officeholders made—are important.

Officeholders' accounts are also informative because officeholders are the ones who ultimately must use public input and other communicative products in concrete ways. Even institutionalized citizen groups like the Spokane Community Assembly have only advisory capabilities, regardless of how efficacious participating citizens might feel (or how efficacious their advice may be). When talking with citizens in public meetings, officeholders understand that whereas citizens might leave the meeting feeling satisfied (or otherwise) and sensing closure of some sort, the officeholders' work continues until decisions are made and policies are enacted. Often those decisions and actions face organizational hurdles that citizens may be unaware of (Harwood Group, 1995). These differences in perspectives and roles mark differences between what citizens' and officeholders' accounts may provide. This is why officeholders' experiences should not be ignored as they traditionally have been in participatory and deliberative democratic scholarship.[43] Whereas the aim of celebrating participatory citizenship is laudable, doing so should not cast officeholders' goals, roles, and senses of potentials and constraints in public meetings as extraneous or inconsequential.

Considering officeholders' goals, roles, and senses of potentials and constraints in public meetings, the subsequent question is, how do these play out in face-to-face public meetings? To respond, it is crucial to recognize that participating officials have some control but also experience some surprise in public meetings. This is what makes them "public" in the strictest sense of the word. Unlike in tightly controlled speech situations like public address, officeholders, to an extent, work "without a net" in public meetings, and the group dynamics may overpower whatever designs the facilitator inscribed into the meeting. Whereas facilitating officeholders do structure speech situations in ways that suit their *purposes—outcomes*, they cannot control the emergence of informal speech events and how those affect the meeting as a whole. In the case of the ICA community meeting, the emergent, informal speech events were welcomed by the facilitating officeholder because they "accidentally" supported his unstated goal of "energizing" participants on the grassroots level. In the cases of the CRC "Vision & Value" workshop and the Spokane Community Assembly, though, emergent, informal discourses forged social divisions and, to extents, hampered both cognitive and affective sources of participation satisfaction (Ritchie & Miles, 1970).

Despite the inevitability of surprise in public meetings, officeholders may strongly affect a meeting's predominate discursive qualities through their structural and procedural conceptions. With this in mind, it is notable that none of the meetings that I observed (including those that I excluded as case studies in this dissertation) were prominently deliberative. As the second chapter described, deliberation is a task-related cousin of dialogue (which is more open-ended). Whereas it is motivated by a concrete goal—such as a group decision—it has more dialogic surprise than what was called "discussion" in all three cases. Discussion, as conceived and implemented in the three studied cases, was a highly structured series of utterances marked by obvious (if inexplicit) turn-taking rules. This process individualized utterances in ways that deliberation does not. The line between discussion and deliberation in these cases was set by facilitating officeholders' senses of contextual constraints—e.g., time limits—in light of their goals. As Burkhalter et al. (in press) point out, deliberation takes time and participants' shared commitment. These might not be available to every public meeting, or even necessary with regard to officeholders' goals. In this sense officeholders' perceptions and implementations affect the discourse to fit perceived contextual constraints and task-related goals. To learn what these contextual constraints and goals are is informative for recognizing the dialogic and deliberative potentials (or lack of) in government-initiated public meetings.

Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation has been to describe public meetings' functions and potentials in contemporary American political life. To conclude this project, I aim to accomplish three objectives. First, I revisit the dissertation's major points and show how they contribute to a thorough understanding of democratic public meetings. Second, I address the project's strengths and limitations, especially with regard to its empirical dimension. Finally, in an effort to build upon my recognition of project limitations, I identify potentials for future research in the area of democratic public meetings.

Dissertation Summary

The dissertation is built out of a developmentally structured series of theoretical and empirical moves. These moves are generally grouped into conceptual (Chapters 1 through 3) and empirical (Chapters 4 through 6) topics. Conceptually, I began by describing the deliberative democratic orientation. This description provided context for understanding the project's motivating issues and questions, which are grounded in the deliberative democratic argument for increased and improved dialogue and deliberation (in face-to-face settings, among citizens and between citizens and officeholders). After articulating that argument, I defined dialogue and deliberation with conceptual and practical moorings, and cast them as speech genres (Bakhtin, 1986) that contribute in particular ways to democratic organizations' heteroglossic requirements. Focusing attention on public meetings, I provided typologies of public meeting and the officeholders who may participate in them.

The presentation of typologies prepared the dissertation's empirical component. I initiated this with methodological explanations of case selection and data collection. I then presented the project's three case studies in a descriptive manner. With descriptive case reports laid out, I was able to interpret the cases by exploring features related to the public meetings' contexts, enacted talk, and officeholders' reported experiences. I then applied insights drawn from these discussions in responses to the dissertation's motivating questions.

What follows is a concise paraphrase of these conceptual and empirical points, with emphasis on their developmental coherence. The project's starting point is in its deliberative democratic orientation. This orientation resides in the political communication discipline, which bridges the political science and communication fields. Deliberative democratic scholars and practitioners share a particular moral and ideological framework. This framework values citizen participation, community membership, and constitutive conceptions of political talk while devaluing officeholder autonomy, individualism, and expressive conceptions of political talk (Bessette, 1994; Burkhalter et al., in press; Cohen, 1997; Gastil, 2000; Ryfe, 1998).

Deliberative democrats recognize problems in contemporary American democracy that concern citizen inefficacy (Crosby, 1995; Fishkin, 1995; Gastil, 2000), apathy and cynicism (Mathews, 1994; Snyder, 1999), and cultural fragmentation (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997; Ryfe, 1998). The causes of these problems, which range from low voter turnout to the inability to manage moral conflicts productively, exist in structural and attitudinal features of American political culture. These features are manifest in public discourses that promote individualism and competition (Kohn, 1992; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997; Tannen, 1998). The proposed solutions to these problems concern a general re-conception of democratic citizenship, enabled by the infusion of collaborative public discourses, including dialogue and deliberation, into political processes (Cohen, 1997; Crosby, 1995; Fishkin, 1995; Gastil, 2000; O'Leary, 1996; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997).

Although prominent contemporary venues for public meetings among citizens and between citizens and public officials are citizen-initiated (e.g., National Issues Forums, Study Circles, and Citizen Juries), citizens groups like the League of Women Voters (2002) and the Kettering Foundation (2002) are currently pushing for more institutionalized public meetings that have regularity and official bearing. This push is generally manifested in pressure upon public officials and government agencies to be more inclusive, accountable, and responsive (Snyder, 1999). Public officials in such meetings would experience relational, managerial, and decision making needs that would affect their participation. For the sake of productive events, it would be wise to consider officeholders' roles, goals, attitudes, practices, and overall experiences in public meetings.

Public meetings are communicative settings where individuals and their communities converge and where collaborative public discourses like dialogue and deliberation may occur (Mathews & McAfee, 2001). Dialogue and deliberation share some specific qualities that are in line with Bakhtin's (1981) conception of centrifugal (decentralizing) forces and Buber's (1965) conception of "I/Thou" relating; and some attitudes that promote availability, flexibility, and commitment to the conversation (Stewart & Logan, 1998). The key differences are that dialogue emphasizes open-endedness and emotional appeals whereas deliberation emphasizes movement toward task-closure (e.g., decision making) and rational weighing of evidence.

I have argued herein that dialogue and deliberation fulfill functions in democratic organizations, but only in complement to other speech genres. To function well, a large-scale democracy requires a wide range of speech genres with a wide range of qualities, ranging on a continuum from monologic (or centripetal) qualities at one extreme to dialogic (or centrifugal) qualities at the other. Democracies are heteroglossic in this sense (Bakhtin, 1981; Hirschkop, 1999). They require different discursive qualities to balance the tension between closure and unity on one hand (*unum*) and open-ended pluralism on the other (*pluribus*). In this sense, dialogue and deliberation are to be valued only insofar as they complement other kinds of discourses that are less provisional and more authoritative. Yet their important utilities should be recognized, especially in light of their traditional neglect in American democratic discursive practices (Mathews & McAfee, 2001; Snyder, 1999).

Public meetings are a general kind of speech situation in which dialogue and deliberation (as well as a wide range of other speech genres) may occur. The third chapter focused attention on public meetings that bring citizens and officeholders together. There, I presented a typology adapted from Gastil and Kelshaw (2000). This typology categorizes events according to two primary variables that concern the explicit motivations behind meetings: (a) meeting initiator (citizens or government) and (b) presumed direction of communication influence (from the government to the citizens; from the citizens to the government; or in both directions). Additionally, I portrayed a typology of officeholders who may participate in public meetings. According to this typology, there are three general kinds of officeholders: (a) elected executive and legislative officials, (b) elected administrative officials, and (c) appointed administrative officials. The two typologies are informative for thinking about public meetings—specifically, about their explicit goals and presumed communication characteristics, and the roles of the officeholders who may participate in them.

The empirical research project around which this dissertation revolves is concerned with officeholders' experiences in public meetings. This concern is in response to the predominant theoretical and empirical interest in *citizens'* experiences in public meetings, and the comparative lack of attention to officeholders' attitudes, practices, and reflections. I have been motivated in this research by the central question, What are some of the ways in which public meetings—particularly deliberative public meetings—might take place given our civic milieu and the practical experiences of officeholders? This broad question is best approached through four specific research questions: (a) Where in the scope of American political talk are there appropriate ecological niches for institutionalizing public meetings? (b) Discursively, what distinguishes public meetings from other kinds of political speech situations? (c) What diverse civic needs might different kinds of public meetings (with different discursive qualities) fulfill? (d) How may officeholders' accounts inform understanding of public meetings' democratic potentials and restrictions?

With this concern for officeholders' perspectives, only four of the seven types of public meetings identified in the third chapter are relevant to the dissertation's empirical research: public information (GOVERNMENT→citizens), consultative (GOVERNMENT←citizens), invitational (GOVERNMENT←→citizens), and collaborative (GOVERNMENT←→CITIZENS). My research relied on participant-observation and ethnographic description of communication in various public meetings; as well as interviews with participating officeholders. My goal in this research was to describe the meetings' culturally inscribed meanings pertaining to contexts, enacted talk, and officeholders' experiences.

The three cases that I selected for close study were described in Chapter 5 and interpreted in the present chapter. The first case was the "Idaho, Idaho, Wherefore ART Thou? Community Meeting" implemented by the Idaho Commission on the Arts in Moscow, ID. The explicit *purposes—outcomes* of this meeting had public information and consultative dimensions. The second case was the "Vision & Value Workshop" implemented by contracted caseworkers for the Community Revitalization Committee of Moscow, ID. The explicit *purposes—outcomes* of this meeting, like the ICA event, had public information and consultative dimensions (with more explicit emphasis on consultation). As well, this meeting had a collaborative component for two reasons: the meeting was funded jointly be public and private sources, and officeholders and citizens worked side-by-side on equal footing. The third case was the "Spokane Community

Assembly." This was, strictly, an invitational kind of public meeting in that the government supported it financially and technically. However, it had collaborative aspects as well: the event was initially conceived by mutual efforts of citizens and government officials, and, although government provided all technical and financial support, citizens autonomously devised the agenda and facilitated the meeting.

The dissertation's grounding idea—based on findings from empirical research—may be articulated as an amalgamation of responses to the project's motivating research questions. The main point is this: Public meetings are potentially microcosms of the larger democratic organizations in which they occur. As speech situations, they are inherently (or at least potentially) heteroglossic and versatile in their fulfillment of task and relational needs, and temperance of centralizing and de-centralizing discursive forces. This does not mean that every public meeting will balance these tensions so well or fulfill the full range of complementary discourse qualities. But public meetings, unlike any other speech situations in democratic public life, have the potential for doing so in communicatively dynamic ways.

Project Strengths and Limitations

There are two explicit goals that motivate and justify this dissertation's empirical component. The first is to provide an empirical supplement to the large body of theoretical literature that propels deliberative democratic ideals. Through observation and reflection, I have attempted to see how deliberative democratic concepts play out (and face constraints) in "real life" public meetings. If such face-to-face meetings are alleged to be the sites where dialogue, deliberation, and other participatory kinds of democratic talk may best flourish, it is important to observe how so, and to what extent democracy is (or is not) strengthened.

The second research goal is to complement and temper prior empirical research that has idealized the participatory roles of citizens in public meetings, and has thus inadvertently ignored or devalued officeholders' experiences in such meetings. I assume that officeholders' goals, inventive and facilitative efforts, perceptions, and so on profoundly affect public meetings' ongoing utilities, qualities, and potentials. Especially as government officials are increasingly faced with public pressure to meet directly with citizens, it is important to add officeholders' accounts to the extant body of empirical research.

The particular project that I have undertaken has some notable strengths that pertain to the two goals stated above. For one, it has described public meetings as contextually and discursively complex cultural settings. Instead of focusing simply on the goals and outcomes of public meetings, it has included description of the talk itself. Thus it has been possible to illustrate the heteroglossic interplay of discursive forces in public meetings, and to ground interpretations (including those of officeholders' reported experiences) in the lived communication.

Another strength is the investigation's focus on officeholders' experiences, which have traditionally been ignored or over-simplified in deliberative democratic accounts of public meetings. The result of this focus is a sharpened insight into aspects of public meetings that might otherwise be invisible or taken for granted, including implicit *purposes—outcomes*, preparatory decisions, technical and procedural challenges, perceptions of power relations, and so forth.

The ultimate strength of this study, though, is its marriage of theory and observed practice. Public meetings occur at distinct philosophical junctures, however invisible these junctures may be to participants. Participants enact communication in public meetings according to expectations and ideals of citizenship and democratic governance, and assumptions of their individual relationships with their communities. Public meetings' potentials and enactments are tied to what participants bring with them in this sense. The opportunity to learn from officeholders about their expectations, ideals, and assumptions is helpful for understanding the condition and potentials of American democracy.

This empirical project also has some limitations. For one, I did not specifically seek out public meetings that employ dialogue and deliberation. Instead, I sought a sample variety of meetings according to the typologies presented in Chapter 3. The result, whether by sheer accident or by actual scarcity of dialogue and deliberation in public life, was that dialogue and deliberation were not prominent features of any meetings that I observed, including those that were excluded as case studies in this dissertation. Whereas this is not a problem in light of my goal to describe a sampling of public meetings in practice, it does limit the kinds of insights I am able to draw about dialogue and deliberation as two specific kinds of speech events.

A second limitation of this study is that I did not find appropriate cases that varied across organizational levels (federal, state, county, and city) and officeholder types.

Many of the cases that I observed were on city levels; one was on city and county levels; and one was on the state level. I did not find any public meetings that were implemented on the federal level. Likewise, many of the officeholders who facilitated and participated in the meetings were Type I (elected executive and legislative officials) and Type III (appointed administrators). I did not find any meetings facilitated by Type II officeholders (elected administrators). These limit the kinds of insights I am able to draw about how officeholders' roles curtail and enable their participation in public meetings.

A third limitation of the empirical research is due to a trade-off. My decision to focus attention on a limited number of cases allowed me to study those meetings' talk and cultural lives in close detail, and this contributed to the dissertation's strengths as described above. The trade-off, though, is that I was unable to extract generalized findings from the three cases that I observed. To sample a large enough (and varied enough) body of cases to determine general insights about public meetings would hinder my ability to study the meetings' talk in close detail. Thus I would surrender the possibility of celebrating the studied cases' unique qualities. What I gave up, though, was an opportunity to generate concrete and universal advice toward the improvement of deliberative democratic practices in public meetings.

Implications for Relevant Future Research

From the project limitations identified above, I recognize several possibilities for extending the research initiated by this project. The possible research tasks concern the following: focused inquiries into dialogic and deliberative practices; broader assessments of public meetings across organizational levels of government and across officeholder types, and more comprehensive studies of public meetings with an eye toward universal constraints and possibilities; and more involved participant-observation in longitudinal democratic groups that meet publicly.

Instead of simply studying a sampling of public meetings with different contextual and discursive features, it may be useful to focus attention on public meetings that explicitly employ dialogue and deliberation. This would allow one to recognize the various conceptions and understandings of dialogue and deliberation and how these relate to the speech events' enactments. Certain questions might be asked: How do variables such as goals, participants, group size, and so on affect the qualities of dialogue and deliberation? How do dialogue and deliberation, in practice, overlap or depart? What are the benefits and drawbacks of dialogue and deliberation for democratic functioning? How do dialogue and deliberation complement other democratic speech events? A study along any of these lines would ultimately consider how centrifugal discourse qualities play out in tension with more centripetally leaning discourses to affect democratic processes and outcomes.

It may also be useful to study larger and broader samples of public meetings, taking into account how the variables of governmental level (e.g., city, county, state, federal) and officeholder type affect public meetings' enactments. Such a study would allow one to recognize universals or tendencies with regard to these variables, and thus to better understand the niches that public meetings occupy in American political life. A study of this scope would benefit from quantitative research methods instead of an ethnographic approach, which considers the unique cultural environments that communication in specific settings reflects and inscribes. Quantitative analysis would permit recognition of tendencies and themes across a large body and wide range of cases, and thus provide generalized findings that may inform practices in ways that benefit democracy.

A final potential for future research that I recognize is not tied to one of this project's limitations, but does pertain to a variable that I found interesting in the course of my research. This concerns the differences between zero-history and longitudinal public-meeting groups. My experiences studying the Spokane Community Assembly demonstrated to me some of the striking distinctions between this body and other public meeting groups I had observed. As one participant remarked, "You could spend years studying this group, and make it your life's work if you wanted to. It's fascinating."

As a longitudinal group's meanings and ways of speaking are reinscribed over repeated conventions, certain complexities develop that pertain to relational systems and organizational hierarchies, speech codes, norms and rules, value and belief frameworks, and so on. In line with the conception of "bona fide groups" (Putnam & Stohl, 1996), longitudinal organizations like the Spokane Community Assembly have fluid boundaries (in that their group roles, membership, and identities change over time) and interdependence with outside organizations.

Whereas zero-history groups are in ways quite complex, longitudinal groups offer views into the workings of organisms and the larger systems they compose. As public meetings in general may be understood as potential microcosms of democracies, longitudinally enacted public meetings offer the greatest opportunities for understanding a democratic culture's subtle, and often concealed, workings—its relational and power systems, structures and processes, value and belief frameworks, emergent norms, rules, speech codes, and so on. If zero-history public meetings offer valuable snapshots of democracy, longitudinal public meetings offer motion pictures. For this reason, more involved ethnographic study of longitudinal democratic groups may provide useful insights into participatory and deliberative democratic life as an emergent process.

There are a variety of useful approaches for better understanding public officials' experiences in public meetings, and public meetings in general. For example, conducting textual analyses of "handbooks" (prepared by state leagues) for officeholders may offer insights about institutional concerns (Freeman, 1999). As well, interviewing officeholders about "their relationship with citizens, what role they see for the public in the policy process, and how their views have changed, if all, over the past few years" (Harwood Group, 1995, p. 1) may provide useful depictions of institutional attitudes. In my project, I have approached public meetings as communicative enactments that occur within cultural and situational contexts. In drawing connections between the events' contextual features, enacted talk, and officeholders' reflections I have strived to provide coherent illustrations of public meetings' complexities, as well as their versatile utilities within government processes. The product of this effort is not in the form of hard and fast answers, such as prescriptions of "good" and "bad" public meeting features. Rather, it is in the general recognition of public meetings' meaningfulness to those who participate in them, and the implications that these meanings have for envisioning and living democracy.

End Notes

[1] The assumption that the particular curriculum referenced here is "typical" is supported by a nonscientific on-line survey of program descriptions across national public and private research universities. All programs reviewed offer undergraduate, masters, and doctoral curricula. I deem the quotation, taken from an on-line description of the Department of Political Science at the University of Washington, as fairly representative ("typical") of the surveyed program descriptions.

[2] See Riker (1996), who conceived the term "heresthetic" to label "the art of setting up situations—composing the alternatives among which political actors must choose—in such a way that even those who do not wish to do so are compelled by the structure of the situation to support the heresthetician's purpose" (p. 9).

[3] The quotations provided are drawn from a 1997 interview. Contact with the informant in December, 2001 confirmed that he remains purposefully politically inactive.

[4] As it is discussed in Chapter 2, dialogue differs connotatively from deliberation in that the former is comparatively open-ended, and the latter is task-related, toward the goal of decision and policy making (Gastil & Kelshaw, 2002).

[5] Frederickson (1999) authored a study of officeholders' perspectives on "selfgoverning" communities. This is an informative paper, and valuable as a rare instance of scholarly focus on officeholders' attitudes toward civic participation. This study, however, explores officeholders' perspectives on community participation as something that occurs outside of their own realms. Whereas, in this paper, officials report on their senses of citizens talking deliberatively with one another, there is no attention paid to ctizens and officeholders talking *together*. Such "talking together" is my project's focus.

[6] See Benne and Sheats (1948), where the "task" and "maintenance" dimensions of group work are described as dialectical and complementary.

[7] Hirschkop (1999) here is paraphrasing Bakhtin's general approach, which asserts the centrality of communication in all things political. Note that I have altered the first part of Hirschkop's quotation with punctuation. The quotation actually reads: "Isn't it a matter of institutions and political structures first and language, if ever, afterwards?" (p. 26). Given that Bakhtin's presumed answer to this rhetorical question is "no," changing the question into a statement does not detract from its intended significance.

[8] It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a systematic survey of the literature that locates the blame for American democracy's problems. My goal here is to provide a general sense of the liberal inclinations that deliberative democrats recognize and respond to in American democracy. Doing so may explicate the deliberative democratic movement's core values and provide a basis for understanding public deliberation's asserted worth in American political culture.

[9] I have selected these features of debate from a larger list (Chasin et al. 1996, p. 326). I have ordered them in an alphabetized list for the sake of coherence out of context, since these features are originally set in a table that contrasts them with features of dialogue.

[10] Held (1987) and Gastil (2000) distinguish between "participatory," "deliberative," and other models of democracy. Participatory conceptions emphasize referenda and initiatives as ways in which citizens may be empowered. Deliberative models "go a step further and encourage regular dialogue among citizens to bring their many views and voices together in search of an elusive moral consensus" (Gastil, 2000, p. 12).

[11] Chaffee (1991) and Hempel (1952) treat "primitive terms" as words that are "accepted as commonly understood or as given" (Chaffee, 1991, p. 7) within a particular conceptual scheme. Within the general

body of deliberative democratic literature, dialogue and deliberation are often treated as primitive terms. Despite some extremely specific expository treatments of dialogue and deliberation (e.g., Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997), some primitive applications of the term are incongruent. This leads to diverse appropriations, and conceptual and practical vagueness.

[12] Buber (1965) understands communication as occurring along a dialectical continuum. Therefore, "I/It" and "I/Thou" forms of relating should not be mistaken as binary categories, but rather as opposed poles on a sliding scale.

[13] In Western culture, logic has historically trumped emotion and other forms of reason in legitimating public policy. Aristotle (1991), for one, distinguished between three bases of persuasion in civic space—ethos (appeals to authority), pathos (appeals to emotion), and logos (appeals to reason)—and deemed logos to be the most effective and sound.

[14] In some contexts, juridical deliberation is referred to as "deliberations." This usage replaces concern for the group process with concern for the individual decisions of each juror, privileging individual over group work.

[15] Bakhtin (1981) considers all communication "dialogic" in that it is always relational and contextualized within ongoing communicative relationships. For the sake of maintaining a clear sense of the term dialogue as a specific kind of interpersonal talk, I do not adopt Bakhtin's all-inclusive sense of the word. I do, however, retain his understanding that all communication—even that which is centripetally active and unilateral—is relational.

[16] Given that the present discussion concerns the sphere of political discourse, I apply the term "speech genre" in reference to the so-called "secondary" kind identified by Bakhtin (1986). To simplify terminology and keep it consistent in this discussion, I refer to the "primary" kind of speech genres as "spheres."

[17] Gastil and Kelshaw (2000) describe the categorized events as "deliberative forums" (p. 2). In further developing this typology I choose to recast the event-types more generally as "public meetings" that may or may not be deliberative as the term is defined in Chapter 2. I apply theterm public meetings in a fairly sweeping sense, as it includes any forum in which citizens and officeholders come together to address public issues. This sense differs somewhat from the conception of public meetings advanced by McComas (2001) who distinguishes "public hearings" as inherently more formal than public meetings, and thus discrete (p. 37). I agree with McComas' characterization of public hearings but include them as a particular genre of public meeting within Gastil and Kelshaw's typology (specifically, as an example of a "consultative" public meeting).

[18] Whereas I hypothesize these potential effects and cast them as dependent variables, I do so only for the purpose of demonstrating the possible significance of the public meeting initiator asa key factor. It is not my aim in this project to test these proposed connections.

[19] I understand that a conception of communication as "flowing between" participants may face trappings endemic to causal-linear communication models. I remind the reader that this "flow," as treated in Gastil & Kelshaw's (2000) typology, refers to the *intended* or *presumed* direction of communication influence. I do not pretend that there is not "more happening" in communication or even that it is a simple process that is inherently measurable. The direction of communicative influence that participants intend or presume, though, is an aspect of communication that is central to the typology of public meetings presented here. Presumed direction of communicative influence coincides with perceived goals, processes, and outcomes.

[20] In their interpersonal communication textbook, Stewart and Logan (1998) assert: "Even though most of us don't often think directly about how we define or understand communication, we do operate with implicit, unspoken definitions that leak out in our communicating, especially in conflict. . . . Since the way you think about something determines what you see, and what you see determines the responses you make, it's important to have an accurate definition of communication so you can make responses that help you communicate effectively" (p. 12). I do not necessarily support Stewart and Logan's tidy distinction between "accurate" and "inaccurate" definitions of communication (since different definitions focus attention on different phenomena), but I do borrow and extend their fundamental point: The way participants conceive and understand their communication affects the communication's lived qualities.

[21] So-called "public hearings" are government-initiated rather than citizen-initiated meetings. Thus public hearings are instances of consultative (rather than advisory) public meetings. Regardless, citizens may design advisory public meetings to resemble public hearings in structure and procedure.

[22] Certain judicial officeholders may be elected public officials (depending on regional laws). However, these officeholders' responsibilities typically involve technical interpretation of existing legislative policies, presumably without regard for the publicly perceived merits of such laws. Issues of merit are normally in the purview of legislatures, and such issues are appropriate for deliberative public consideration. Judicial issues, comparatively, are not appropriate for public deliberation. So, I omit judicial officeholders from this typology. The same rationale applies with regard to appointed judicial officeholders, who are omitted from the Type III category.

[23] As the observational and interview data in Chapter 5 will demonstrate, the cultural life of this organization is extraordinarily rich. As one citizen-participant (a member, but not a representative, of a Neighborhood Council) told me, "You could spend years studying this group, and make it your life's work if you wanted to. It's fascinating."

[24] In participating as a group member, I assumed contextually appropriate roles and contributed accordingly. In the Spokane Community Assembly meeting, for example, I enacted an audience role. In this role, I only contributed verbally when summoned to—e.g., during the round-robin introductions at the meeting's commencement.

[25] I did not systematically address all of Hymes' social units and components of speech in my note taking. For a complete list of these concepts, refer to Hymes, 1972, pp. 53-70.

[26] The pad I typically used to record field notes is a small 3x6 inch "reporter's notebook." Very often, participants assumed that I was a journalist. I did, of course, explain what I was doing. In several cases prior to meetings' start-times, facilitators—assuming that I was a reporter—made special efforts to approach *me*, which made my task of self-introduction quite easy.

[27] Given the inadequacy of email for conversation, I only used email to supplement face-to-face and telephone conversations.

[28] In the Spokane Community Assembly case, I interviewed several public officials who asked permission to speak or who were invited to speak by the Assembly Facilitator. Those interviews did not entail the whole range of topics listed here, but were narrowed around basic goals, reasons for attending, and some details about their particular experiences.

[29] According to Harpole (2002), goals are general—e.g., "to support the creation, presentation, and excellence of the arts" (p. 3)—and objectives are specific aspects of goals—e.g. "to recognize, fund, and make more visible the achievements of the state's finest artists, arts organizations, and arts supporters" (p. 3). The solicited public input was applied specifically to the Plan's goals and objectives.

[30] Records indicate that Harpole was unable to participate in the third community meeting (November 27, 2001 in Pocatello, Idaho) due to a flight delay. Harpole had thus facilitated only six meetings prior to the Moscow event (instead of seven, as he claimed).

[31] The description of this portion of each of the fourteen meetings is identical. In the meeting summaries, only the minutes of the discussion portions differ.

[32] See ICA (2002c), where Dehrer's written record of participants' abbreviated comments is reproduced.

[33] Although the CRC spearheaded the campaign to hire consultants, a committee of ten, representing Moscow's Community Development Committee and the University of Idaho, conducted interviews and hired the firms. This was appropriate since these two organizations supplied fundingfor the contracts (50% each).

[34] Although my research focus is on officeholders' facilitative and participatory experiences in public meetings (and thus I avoid exploring contracted caseworkers' experiences), it is noteworthy that Dufresne Henry caseworkers used focus group facilitation techniques. In so doing, they implemented practices that are endemic to marketing in a political context.

[35] The 3% survey response rate from downtown business and property owners is well below the academic standard of 50%.

[36] The two key facilitators, Peter Bourgois AND Ted Brovitz, referred to each other by their first names throughout the event. For this reason I identify them by their first names in this account.

[37] City Council member Hamlett has no direct involvement with the CRC and its downtown revitalization project. Her participation in the meeting, thus, was not facilitative. Still, as a city official, she had great interest in the meeting's outcomes, and her experience is relevant to this study.

[38] There are presently twenty-five Neighborhood Councils. Representatives are elected by their Councils and serve one-year renewable appointments.

[39] Jack Smith is a pseudonym.

[40] Facilitators enact their roles on a one-time, rotational basis.

[41] See the Dufresne-Henry Website (http://www.dufresne-henry.com/) for more information about this consultation niche and how private firms work with cities on public problems.

[42] See Frederickson (2000) for a discussion of best-practices and their inherent pitfalls.

[43] The predominant deliberative democratic research on officeholders' attitudes and behaviors is grounded in criticism and demands (both explicit and implicit) for officeholders' to change. For example, see Frederickson (1999) and the Harwood Group (1995).

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Vita

Todd Spencer Kelshaw

Degrees Earned:

B.S. English and Textual Studies
B.S. Speech Communication
Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
1992

M.A. Speech Communication
University of Washington, Seattle, WA
1997

Ph.D. Communication
University of Washington, Seattle, WA
2002