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Theorizing Dialogic Deliberation: Everyday Political Talk as Communicative Action and Dialogue

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The paradox of deliberative democracy is that the prerequisites of deliberation must be produced through deliberation itself. This essay, thus, proposes that deliberative democracy requires two levels of deliberation: One is instrumental deliberation, a procedural tool, through which people negotiate and make decisions; the other is dialogic deliberation, or dialogue, through which people construct the concept of the self and other, the sense of community, and public reason. Relying on Habermas's theory of communicative action, Buber's concept of dialogue, and Giddens's theory of structuration, we propose that informal and nonpurposive everyday political talk, the practical form of dialogic deliberation, is the fundamental underpinning of deliberative democracy. Through everyday political talk, citizens construct their identities, achieve mutual understanding, produce public reason, form considered opinions, and produce rules and resources for deliberative democracy.

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Most scholars have defined deliberative democracy as a collective decision-making system through public deliberation (Asen, 2004; Bohman & Rehg, 1997; Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004; Elster, 1998; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Hicks, 2002; Neblo, 2005). Deliberation in democracy, however, is more than a decision-making process. Deliberative democracy involves public deliberation not only as a tool of using public reasons and making collective decisions (i.e., *instrumental deliberation*) but also as a process of producing public reasons and reaching mutual understanding (i.e., *dialogic deliberation*). The purpose of this essay is twofold: (a) to theorize the dialogic dimension of deliberation based on the theories of Habermas, Buber, and Giddens and (b) to elaborate on the significance of everyday political talk, through which the concept of self is constructed, public reason and rationality are produced, public opinions are formed, and rules and resources for deliberations are produced.

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Many scholars have focused exclusively on the instrumental function of deliberation, assuming that the ultimate goal of democracy is to make legitimate and efficient political decisions. Elster (1998), for example, argues that deliberation is mainly about “instrumental beliefs and induced preferences” regarding making decisions (p. 9) and that deliberation is the best method of collective decision making in terms of “efficiency, equity, or intrinsic appropriateness” (p. 5). Gambetta (1998), too, defines deliberation as a conversation “before making a collective decision,” which falls somewhere between bargaining and arguing (p. 19). Schudson (1997) also views public deliberation as a “problem-solving talk,” which serves certain goals such as resolving conflicts, making collective decisions, and protecting one’s interests.

Based on the instrumental view of deliberative democracy, scholars have sought empirical as well as normative prescriptions that may promote the “pure procedural justice” (Elster, 1998, pp. 116–117). The normative theorists of deliberation maintain that in order to begin public deliberation, participants should be qualified with certain requirements. For example, Cohen (1997) specifies the institutional preconditions of the “ideal deliberative procedure” (pp. 74–75): Ideal deliberation is free and reasoned; its parties are both formally and substantively equal; and it aims to arrive at a rationally motivated consensus. Cohen’s model presupposes a “background consensus” and a shared “wide view of public reason.” These requirements are the rules and the resources for instrumental deliberations. In the same vein, Rawls (1997) also emphasizes the “substantial requirement” that participants should base their arguments on widely accepted “plain truth” and on shared political values.

Some scholars, however, criticize the instrumental view of deliberation and emphasize the dialogic dimension. Young (1997), for example, refuses to view democratic process as an “adversarial process of competition among self-regarding interests” (p. 400) and argues that in discussion-based politics, “participants aim to cooperate, reach understanding, and do justice” (p. 385). For Christiano (1997), too, deliberation is less about informed, epistemic, instrumental, or legitimate decision making and more about the intrinsic standard of morality.

The instrumental view of deliberative democracy is based on a set of optimistic but unrealistic assumptions: The public good and the shared values of the community are clearly understood by every reasonable citizen; moral disagreements can be resolved through deliberation, even though the disagreements may be rooted in sociocultural differences; and before starting deliberation, the people know what they want, what their interests are, what others want, what is reasonable, what is justifiable, and what fits the common good. Behind all these, of course, there is the self who presumably chooses and decides rationally (Kim, 1999).

Consider public deliberations at a town meeting. Public meetings usually have explicit goals and rules. In order to participate in a town meeting, citizens should be equipped with the prerequisites for deliberation because “they must negotiate the tension between unity, tying them to a public good and community values, and their own legitimate individual interests” (Tracy & Dimock, 2004, p. 147). In other words,

the participants must understand to which group they belong, what would fit their own self-interests, what the community values and background consensus are, and what the public good is. Furthermore, they should have communication skills and competencies, ideally backed up by argumentative reasons. As Schudson (1997) points out, although citizens should fight against the “fear of criticism” and the “fear of ridicule” in order to speak out at a town meeting, only a fraction of people can overcome such fears (pp. 301–302).

The paradox of deliberative democracy is that the prerequisites of deliberations (shared values, procedural rules, public reasons, communicative competence, etc.) are not given a priori or from outside the system. Democracy is a self-regulating system and these prerequisites must be produced through deliberation itself. Thus, we would argue, deliberative democracy involves two dimensions of deliberation. One is instrumental deliberation, through which experts in the political system and rational citizens in the public sphere make collective decisions based on public reasons and shared values. The other is dialogic deliberation, through which citizens, without specific purposes and goals, freely interact with one another to understand mutually the self and others, resulting in the production and reproduction of rules, shared values, and public reasons for deliberation.

Our suggestion that deliberation has these two dimensions, however, does not mean that there are two clear-cut types of deliberation. A public deliberation may simultaneously have both dialogic and instrumental functions. At a town meeting, for example, participants may develop personal relationships with discussants after a long, rational argumentation on public issues, whereas a casual and informal conversation with friends may develop into a rational argument. However, public deliberations in formal settings, such as at organizational work and public meetings, function mostly as instrumental deliberation, and nonpurposive informal political talk in everyday life functions mostly as dialogic deliberation.

Recently, Habermas (2005) also distinguished between two types of political deliberation: “(a) among citizens within the informal public sphere and (b) among politicians or representatives within formal settings” (p. 388). This distinction is akin to our concept of dialogic and instrumental deliberations, where dialogic deliberation takes place as informal everyday political talk and instrumental deliberation takes place within formal settings. These two types of deliberation are the essential processes of deliberative democracy.

Everyday political talk as communicative action

By “everyday political talk,” we mean nonpurposive, informal, casual, and spontaneous political conversation voluntarily carried out by free citizens, without being constrained by formal procedural rules and predetermined agenda. Everyday political talk practically as well as logically precedes formal and instrumental deliberation. Consider the example Barber (1984) provides:

Think of two neighbors talking for the first time over a fence, or two college freshmen talking over a first cup of coffee: there are no debates, no arguments, no challenges, no setting of priorities, no staking out of positions, no inventorying of interests . . . There is only a “getting to know you” and thereby “getting to know us”—exploring the common context, traits, circumstances, or passions that make of two separate identities one single we. World leaders meeting at a summit will frequently devote an initial session to getting to know one another in very much this fashion, before they get down to the business of bargaining and exchange. (p. 184)

Barber (1984) strongly advocates that such everyday political talk undertakes the essential functions of a strong democracy. He contends that “the exploration of mutuality through conversation is a function of talk” (p. 185) and “conversation gives life to a notion of citizen” (p. 184). Through everyday political talk, Barber argues, “the *I* of private self-interest can be reconceptualized and reconstituted as a *we* that makes possible civility and common political action” (p. 190).

It is through this kind of everyday political talk, according to the theory of communicative action (Habermas, 1984), that citizens produce communicative reasons and achieve mutual understanding of the self and others. It is through this everyday political talk that people come to understand what their own interests are, what others want, and what fits the common good; without this understanding, citizens may not be able to participate in instrumental deliberations in a meaningful way to make rational decisions. In a nutshell, informal everyday talk—which, at its essence is dialogic deliberation—is the prerequisite to purposive and rational deliberations.

The theory of communicative action suggests that everyday political talk, seemingly trivial and irrational as it may be, is the fundamental basis of rational public deliberation. The theory maintains that reason is not given from outside the society nor does it preexist in individuals’ subjective minds; rather, reason is to be produced by nonpurposive, nonstrategic, nonsuccess-oriented social interactions called communicative action. Habermas regards rationality not as a pregiven logical necessity but as a collective construction produced by social interaction. Communicative action itself is not necessarily rational. It is, however, always the generator of public reason, as it is oriented to mutual understanding. Communicative action can be found in many discursive forms, or speech acts, including discussions, debates, argumentations, and deliberations—but the archetype of communicative action is informal everyday conversation.

In establishing the concept of communicative action, Habermas (1984) distinguishes four types of social actions: teleological (strategic), normative, dramaturgical, and communicative. The teleological (strategic) action model presupposes that there is only one world, namely, the objective world; society is a part of the objective world where others are conceived as either competitors or friends depending on the actor’s interest. Teleological action is evaluated by its success or failure, whether it could “achieve or fail to achieve the intended effect in the world” (p. 87).

Consequently, it is directed by effectiveness and purposiveness. Various conceptions of instrumental deliberation, such as Schudson's (1997) problem-solving talk and Buber's (1958) communication in I-It relation, belong to this type.

Normative action refers to a situation where members of a social group orient their actions to common values. It is evaluated by whether it complies or violates norms. It presupposes two worlds: the objective and the social. This model of action can be found in the sociology of Durkheim and Parsons and lies behind role theory, which is widespread in sociology. Rule-governed public deliberation, such as Cohen's (1997) "ideal deliberative procedure" and Elster's (1998) "pure procedural justice," belong to this category.

Dramaturgical action refers to the "presentation of self" or participating in interactions that constitute "a public for one another, before whom they present themselves" (Habermas, 1984, p. 86). Actors check their own intentions, thoughts, attitudes, and desires when they present themselves to the public. This type of action is often associated with Goffman (1959), whose key concept is "performance." Examples may include Schudson's (1997) "discomfortable democratic talk" in front of a large audience at a town meeting.

Finally, Habermas conceptualizes communicative action, which refers to "the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations" (1984, p. 85). It is a nonstrategic and noninstrumental action oriented to mutual understanding. From the perspective of "communicative action," society is a lifeworld where each person interacts intersubjectively and cooperatively with others to understand one another. The best example of communicative action is informal and spontaneous conversations through which people establish interpersonal relations.

These four types of actions are crucial in understanding the dialogic nature of everyday conversation in democracy because (a) conversation can carry out the four types of actions and (b) communicative action is carried out through conversation. The teleological, the normative, and the dramaturgical models, maintains Habermas, can capture only partially the functions of communication because the teleological model focuses on "the release of perlocutionary effects," the normative model on "the establishment of interpersonal relations," and the dramaturgical model on "the expression of subjective experiences." Only the communicative model, and thus conversation, can cover all of these (1984, p. 95).

According to Habermas (1984), informal and general conversation—"chatting, conversing, and arguing" (p. 327)—is the practical form of communicative action, which does not primarily serve purposive activities. Through nonpurposive, informal conversation, we achieve mutual understanding and establish an interpretive community, which is the fundamental basis of rationality. Habermas (1984) emphasizes that the origin of rationality is not the subject consciousness but the communicatively interconnected community, where nonpurposive conversation is the basic form of interaction: "I shall speak of 'conversation' when the weight is shifted in this way from purposive activity to communication" (p. 327).

Besides Habermas, many other theorists have pointed out the significance of nonpurposive conversation. One hundred years ago, the French sociologist Tarde (1898/1989) conceived of conversation as communication whose main purpose is not “immediate utility” of information exchange or decision making: “By conversation I mean any dialogue without direct and immediate utility, in which one talks primarily to talk, for pleasure, as a game, out of politeness” (p. 87). Moscovici (1985) expands on this, stating that “a country where people do not talk for the sake of talking is simply one where people do not talk at all” (p. 187).

Everyday political talk as dialogue

Dialogue theorists have shown a great deal of interest in Habermas (see Anderson, Baxter, & Cissna, 2004), but relatively little attention has been paid to his theory of communicative action, much less to its conceptual similarities with Buber’s dialogue. Instead, Habermas has been continuously criticized for the concept of “ideal speech situation,” which he has seldom mentioned, much less advocated, in his major works (1984, 1989, 1996). With regard to the significance of everyday informal talk, Buber’s concept of dialogue squares well with that of communicative action. Just like communicative action, dialogue in the I-Thou relation has no specific purpose or goal: “No aim, no lust, and no anticipation intervene between *I* and *Thou*” (Buber, 1958, p. 11). Lipari (2004) also points out that the I-Thou relation is “utterly without telos, aim, or intention. Speaking emerges fully from the present moment, not from prior intensions or future aims” (p. 126).

Just as communicative action is oriented to mutual understanding, mutuality and reciprocity are crucial elements for Buber’s concept of dialogue (Cissna & Anderson, 1998). Lipari (2004), for example, emphasizes that Buber’s “I-Thou relation is mutual in so far as I utters Thou to an other” (p. 126). Freire also maintains that “the goal of dialogue is not to persuade the other but, through understanding of another as other, to transform the issue and the quality of contact” (in Stewart, Zediker, & Black, 2004, p. 34).

Furthermore, Buber’s I-It relation corresponds with Habermas’s strategic action model and the I-Thou relation with the communicative action model. The relation of I-Thou is intersubjective, ethical, and dialogical, whereas the relation of I-It is instrumental, goal-oriented, and monological (Lipari, 2004). Buber (1958) contends that the primary word *I-Thou* precedes the primary word *I-It*. In Habermas’s terms, communicative action precedes strategic action; in our terms, dialogic deliberation precedes instrumental deliberation.

Informal everyday conversation is the practical form of dialogue as well as communicative action. This does not mean that every conversation is dialogue; rather, that dialogue emerges from conversations. We argue that what Buber calls “dialogic moments” take place only through conversation. Although dialogic moments may occur without words, say, through silent glances or smiles with tears, even then, the glances and the smiles are condensed forms of all possible conversations between the

two parties. Without promises of conversation, such facial expressions could never be elevated to dialogic moments. Opportunities for dialogue exist routinely, Buber (1965) insists, on the shop floor, in the bus, in the classroom, in the office of the physician or counselor, at home, “in the darkened opera-house,” and even “in the deadly crush of an air-raid shelter” (p. 204). In other words, opportunities for dialogue exist in everyday conversational situations or in informal talk of “the events of the personal everyday life” (Buber, 1965, p. 16).

Stewart and Zediker (2000) distinguish two approaches to the concepts of dialogue: Descriptive approaches consider all human interactions are inherently dialogic and prescriptive approaches reserve the term dialogue for a particular quality of relating. In this essay, we take the prescriptive approach: We do not insist that every conversation is dialogue; at a special dialogic moment, when each of the participants participates in the “flow” of the joint action, the conversation can be elevated to dialogue. At the same time, we also argue that every dialogue always happens in conversations. Casual, informal, spontaneous, nonpurposive conversation, or conversation for the sake of conversation, is the womb for dialogic moments. Thus, in a dialogue, all participants share a responsibility of “keeping the conversation going” (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996, p. 237).

Just like communicative action produces communicative reason, dialogue also produces, in a moment of quality of human contact, something like “the sphere of between” (Buber, 1965), “shared meaning” (Bohm, 1996), “fusion of horizons” (Gadamer, 1989), or simply, “*we*” (Bakhtin, 1986). Both Buber and Habermas attempt to deconstruct Cartesian *ego cogito*. Buber maintains that the essence of human beings lies not in the single subjective mind but between two minds that meet and interact. Habermas also contends that human rationality does not exist in a single subjective mind but exists in human interactions as an emerging product of communicative action. Like Habermas, Buber’s primary focus was on the intersubjective relation between persons in everyday life (Lipari, 2004). In Buber’s dialogue, “direct person to person relationship” (Cissna & Anderson, 1998) is an essential element, just as “establishing interpersonal relations” (Habermas, 1984, p. 85) is an essential process of communicative action. The significance of the intersubjective and direct relations has been especially recognized in the field of education (Boschki, 2005; Hendley, 1978). Freire (1990), who suggests the concept of dialogic education, contends that developing mutual and dialogic relations between teachers and students is crucial for educating citizens for democracy.

In dialogue, the person whom I talk to is not an object of my experience: “I do not experience the man to whom I say *Thou*” (Buber, 1958, p. 9). I do not experience “You,” but I just meet You. By “meeting” the other, I also become another “You” for the other party. Through dialogue, the self is always renewed and changed. Thus, dialogue refers to “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” (Cissna & Anderson, 1994, p. 10). And, as Habermas maintains, only through the dialogic process of communicative action can people develop the sense of the self.

The concept of the self has been a daunting problem for the instrumental view of deliberation because the instrumental view presupposes a rational agent, or the self, who already knows the highest common ends and is able to make rational choices to secure his or her own interests. With regard to this point, Sandel's (1982) concept of "the priority of the self over its ends" is insightful. Criticizing Rawls's theory of justice, Sandel argues that the self is a prerequisite to all kinds of social choices: The self is "always, irreducibly, an active, willing agent, distinguishable from my surroundings, and capable of choice" (p. 19).

Then, the question is: Where does the self come from? Many communication theories with dialogic orientations (see Anderson, Cissna, & Arnett, 1994; Anderson et al., 2004), including symbolic interactionism and the coordinated management of meaning (Pearce & Pearce, 2004), answer it like this: The self is an outcome of social interactions or dialogue. Pearce and Cronen's (1980) concept of "persons-in-conversation" suggests that dialogue is the process where the self is conceived and constructed; the responsive, ethical "I" is possible only through dialogue (Arnett, 2004). Mead's (1934) concept of "me" (the "generalized other") is the product of social interactions with other members of the society. It is not a coincidence that Habermas (1984) mainly relies on Mead's idea of symbolic interactionism for the theory of communicative action.

Considering the similarities between communicative action and dialogue, we argue that everyday political talk might be one of the most readily available opportunities for ordinary citizens to construct the concept of the sociopolitical self in their daily lives. With regard to this point, the findings of Conover, Searing, and Crewe's (2002) study are insightful. Through a series of focus group interviews recruited from six British and American communities, they found that citizens understood political discussion as an act of "self-expression." Citizens recognized well that informal political talk was a rare moment for them to reveal their genuine identities and understand others in their daily lives. In this sense, political talk is a part of a "politics of recognition" or "an opportunity to unveil to other citizens your basic identities, and to have them recognized, judged and received with respect or not" (p. 56).

Traditionally, scholars holding the instrumental view of political deliberation have assumed that people are motivated to talk politics primarily by political desires: to gain political information, to express their issue positions, and to persuade others (Elster, 1998; Mutz, 2006; Schudson, 1997). According to the Conover et al. (2002) focus group interviews, however, the ordinary citizen considered the political motives of expressing issue preferences and persuading others as the least important; instead, social and personal motives were more important in their minds:

Citizens are motivated to gain information not so much for political advantage or to persuade others, but to learn about the lives of others and to understand better different perspectives. Thus social motives—the desire to listen and to show respect for others, and the desire to uncover common ground—may be much more important than we have thought in motivating political discussion. (p. 52)

Similar findings were reported by Gamson (1992), who studied actual political talk among ordinary citizens. Gamson contends that people construct meanings of their world by talking about political issues provided by the mass media. Talking politics in everyday life, like dialogue, produces the concept of *we*, or in Gamson's terms, "the collective action frame." These findings support our proposition that everyday political talk is communicative action oriented to mutual understandings, and as such, it is a gateway to the dialogic moments for ordinary citizens in their daily lives.

Everyday political talk: Rules and resources for deliberative democracy

Deliberative democracy is a self-regulating system that must produce its own rules and resources through deliberation. With regard to this point, Giddens's theory of structuration is insightful, as it allows us to conceptualize democracy as a "structuration" or the "rules and resources, recursively drawn upon and reconstituted in processes of interaction" (Giddens, 1991, p. 253).

With the concept of the duality of structure, Giddens (1976) maintains that "social structures are both constituted by human agency, and yet at the same time are the very medium of this constitution" (p. 121). As rules and resources, structure enables as well as constrains social actions. Giddens (1984) suggests that the best example for the duality of structure is language use. In order to speak English, for example, we need to (a) follow certain rules such as English grammar and (b) learn certain resources such as English vocabularies. However, a linguistic grammar (the rules) and vocabularies (the resources) can be produced only through recursive language use behavior. "Structural properties of social systems are both the medium as well as the outcome of the practices which they recursively organize" (Giddens, 1984, p. 25). Only language users can produce rules for language use. Similarly, the rules for deliberation are to be produced only through deliberation.

Extending the concept of the duality of structure, we propose two types of rules that govern social actions: regulatory and conventional. Regulatory rules are imposed by an external system. For example, traffic regulations are created by a legislative body not by the actions (driving) of drivers. Drivers' actions are regulated by the rules and they have no direct influence on the rules. Conventional rules, by contrast, are internally produced (and reproduced) by actions that are governed by the rules. For example, English grammar is a set of rules that English speakers should follow; there is no legislative body that creates the linguistic grammar. A linguistic grammar is a set of conventional rules produced by speakers' actions themselves—as such, it is always in flux. A conventional rule may be retrospectively "discovered," but it cannot be prospectively designed or planned. If there are any written rules for deliberation, the rules would have been retrospectively confirmed by the legislative body, just as linguists "discover" and retrospectively describe grammatical rules based on how people actually speak; there should be no creator of rules and resources for deliberation, just as there is no creator of English grammar. In this sense, deliberative democracy is a structure that simultaneously enables and constrains instrumental and dialogic deliberations.

And yet, scholars holding an instrumental view assert that rules for deliberation should be provided to ordinary citizens. Take Mutz (2006) for example. She investigates everyday political talk, particularly among those who have nonlike-minded political views. What she found was that most informal conversations fall well short of deliberative ideals. “When real people argue about politics with friends and associates, they probably will not formulate new arguments or articulate reasons entirely by themselves” (p. 149). She does not, however, entirely discard the importance of everyday political talk among citizens. Instead, Mutz concludes her book by contending that instructions should be given to citizens for “a set of norms” (rules) and “practical skills” (resources) for informal political discourse. As we have seen above, however, those norms (rules) and skills (resources) for political talk cannot be injected effectively from outside; rather, social actors (political discussants) themselves would produce and reproduce those rules and resources through their social interactions or everyday political talk. Citizens in democracy need more opportunities for political conversations rather than instructions on how to deliberate.

Political conversation in everyday life is what Giddens calls a “habit-forming” process, or “basic structuration,” the process whereby a social practice is deemed appropriate and reinforced through repetitive habits (Giddens, 1984). In an attempt to conceptualize public deliberation relying on the structuration theory, Burkhalter, Gastil, and Kelshaw (2002) contend that deliberation is habit forming in a basic structuration sense and that the practice of deliberation makes the behavior understandable and normal. We, however, argue that institutionalized public deliberation is already a social structure that requires certain rules and resources. In order to participate in public deliberations, therefore, citizens need to engage in the habit-forming basic structuration process—that is, everyday political talk.

Everyday political talk: The origin of public reason

Scholars have pointed out that everyday political talk lacks a rational exchange of reasons and is not as deliberative as it should be (Dryzek, 2000; Eliasoph, 1998, 2000; Mutz, 2006; Walsh, 2004). Although everyday political talk itself may not be deliberative enough, it is still communicative action, as we have seen, through which citizens produce and achieve the necessary requirements for public deliberations such as public reason. The question is, then, how can seemingly trivial and irrational informal talk produce public reason?

The idea that dialogue would enhance the public mind is not new. According to Gordon (1989), 18th-century conversation theorists firmly believed in the “progressive power of conversation to improve the minds of those who participate in it,” though they held the view that “the principal end of conversation is to amuse (*divertir*)” (p. 321). Dialogue has been believed to foster enlarged minds, cultivate representative minds, provide opportunities to view the world from others’ standpoints, and help people liberate themselves from their own private interests (Button, 2005). Arendt (1967) elaborated on this process:

The more people's standpoints I have present in my mind while pondering a given issue and the better I can imagine how I would feel and think if I were in their place, the stronger will be my capacity for representative thinking and the more valid my final conclusions, my opinion. . . . The very process of opinion formation is determined by those in whose places somebody thinks and uses his own mind, and the only condition for this exertion of imagination is disinterestedness, the liberation from one's own private interests. (p. 115)

The significance of "representative thinking" has been widely recognized by advocates of deliberative democracy (Chambers, 1996; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; O'Neill, 1997), as well as by theorists of dialogue (see Anderson et al., 2004). Indeed, dialogue has traditionally been described as having no agenda or specific purpose other than "thinking together" (Pearce & Pearce, 2004, p. 44).

Public opinion researchers and political psychologists, too, appreciate the work of political talk, though from a slightly different theoretical perspective (Mutz, Sniderman, & Brody, 1996; Price, 1992; Zaller, 1992; Zaller & Feldman, 1992). These scholars believe that talk provides people with the opportunity to think through their "idea elements" and reduce cognitive inconsistency, thus enhancing the quality of an individual's opinions and arguments. The rationale for this hypothesis is that (a) people do not have preformed opinions, but rather multiple and often conflicting opinion elements about an issue; (b) people usually do not realize that they have conflicting opinion elements until they have had a chance to discuss and reflect on their thoughts about an issue; and (c) only when people have had an opportunity to express their opinions by speaking do they try to organize their opinions in more coherent ways—consistent with what they "say" and what they now believe.

In a similar vein, Price (1992) proposes the discursive model of public opinion, which views public opinion itself as a discursive process, rather than as a "thing" existing in people's minds to be extracted by precategorized survey questions. The discursive model assumes that public opinion is an "emergent product of debate and discussion" that cannot be reduced to the elements in an isolated individual's mind (p. 2). In this sense, reasoned public opinion is, following Giddens's term, one of the "resources" produced by deliberation.

Empirical studies have validated the proposition that everyday political talk enhances the quality of opinions and reasonableness of arguments (Conover & Searing, 2005; Druckman & Nelson, 2003; Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999) as well as political knowledge (Eveland, 2004). Through an experimental study, Druckman and Nelson demonstrated that political conversations enhanced opinion quality by eliminating the "elite framing," which was akin to manipulation. Druckman and Nelson emphasized the importance of developing an independent standard by which to evaluate the quality of opinions. A few years earlier, however, Kim et al. (1999) already suggested "consideredness," "opinionation," and "argument quality" as a set of reliable measures to evaluate the quality of opinions. Through a nationwide survey, they found that ordinary people actually talked politics in their everyday

lives, which contributed to public reasonableness and higher quality of opinions, as measured by consideredness, opinionation, and argument quality (Kim et al., 1999).

Empirically investigating the consequences of everyday political talk with various methods, Conover and Searing (2005) also reported that everyday political talk promoted the principal conditions for genuine political deliberation. They contend that although everyday political talk may not be rigorously deliberative, it still “helps citizens to work out their preferences, try out justifications for them, and develop confidence about performing in the public arena” (p. 281). According to them, everyday political talk would draw citizens “toward consensus on fundamental values and rules of the game” and foster “mutual understanding, tolerance, and public spiritedness” (p. 280). Furthermore, the nondeliberative motivations for informal and casual political talk, such as social, rhetorical, and narrative reasons, also perform “critical functions in the evolution of perspectives and opinions throughout the deliberative systems” (p. 281). These findings support our argument that everyday political talk, as dialogic deliberation, produces the conditions for rational and instrumental deliberation.

Recognizing Conover and Searing’s empirical study, Habermas (2005) contends that everyday talk enhances reasonableness: “The daily routines and interactions foster reasonable political attitudes and interests among potential voters” (p. 389). In a recent article in *Communication Theory*, Habermas (2006) also maintains that not only does deliberation have an impact on the “formation of considered political opinion” (p. 414) but that reasons are produced through everyday political talk: “Deliberation is a demanding form of communication, though it grows out of inconspicuous *daily routines* of asking for and giving reasons. In the course of everyday practices, actors are always already exposed to a space of reasons” (Habermas, 2006, p. 413).

While talking politics, people may persuade others, discuss issues, debate with anyone with whom they disagree, and above all, change opinions. Through such processes, people exchange ideas, share code schemes, and construct frames; they may also gain information, thus mitigating the problem of the “asymmetric distribution of information,” which Downs (1957) views as the enemy of a functioning of democracy. In doing so, political conversations establish an interpretive community with shared values (Anderson, Dardenne, & Killenberg, 1994; Zelizer, 1993), which is one of the necessary conditions for deliberative democracy.

The arena for everyday political talk: The public sphere

Now, the question is where in their everyday lives do people talk politics? The answer is: everywhere. Many empirical studies have reported that people talk politics with friends and families at home and work (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1997; Mutz & Mondak, 2006; Smith & Zipp, 1983). Wyatt, Katz, and Kim’s (2000) nationwide survey found that people talked about personal as well as political topics most frequently at home and at work, and then in civic organizations, restaurants and bars, shopping malls, and elsewhere.

The places where people talk politics are the public sphere. Habermas's (1989) concept of "the public sphere," the translation of the German *Öffentlichkeit*, or openness, is not "public" in the sense that public is opposite to "private"; conceptually, it is located somewhere between the public (political system) and the private (lifeworld) realms. The public sphere is "an intermediary system of communication between formally organized and informal face-to-face deliberations in arenas at both the top and the bottom of the political system" (Habermas, 2006, p. 415). Between the political system (state) and the civil society (the lifeworld) is "the unruly life of the public sphere" (Habermas, 2006, p. 417) where "the private autonomy citizens" engage in free and spontaneous communicative action—usually in the form of non-purposive and informal political talk. Thus, the public sphere is the arena for everyday political talk and dialogic deliberation. Or, to be more precise, everyday political talk produces the public sphere.

The public sphere does not refer to any single physical space but to a social space produced by communicative action. In this sense, it is conceptually very close to what Buber calls "the sphere of between." Just as Habermas's public sphere is produced by communicative action, Buber's (1965) "sphere of between" is produced by a dialogue, or "a real conversation," which is completely spontaneous (p. 203).

The public sphere is where people meet and do dialogic deliberations to achieve mutual understanding. The public sphere is neither a public institution nor a political organization; instead, it is a space where private citizens engage in dialogic deliberations on public issues. It is also not an institution for decision making. Public meetings with specific agenda or goals, for example, do not constitute the public sphere; the public sphere is the arena where "institutionally unbound" speech acts are performed (Johnson, 1993). It is through dialogue in the public sphere that we connect "what is our own (*idion*)" with "what is communal (*koinon*)" (Arendt, 1958, p. 24) and the meaning of personal experiences with the meaning of the political world. Everyday political talk in the public sphere bridges the political and the private spheres (Wyatt, Katz, et al., 2000); or, everyday political talk transforms private spheres into the public sphere.

Eliasoph's (1998) findings are somewhat intriguing, as they demonstrate that American people freely talk politics only in the private sphere. Through an ethnographic fieldwork with suburban volunteers and activists, Eliasoph found that people mysteriously shrank their political concerns when they spoke out "on the stage"; they tried to portray themselves as private persons advocating their own interests in the public sphere, whereas they freely talked about broader political issues when they "whispered" in "intimate, late-night, moonlit conversations" (p. 7). As a result, Eliasoph heard "public-spirited conversation only backstage, in hushed tones" (p. 16). The activists were actively silencing their "public-spirited political conversation" and were working hard to keep political conversation backstage because that was their "political etiquette" and their way of "looking out for the common good" (p. 63). Eliasoph's findings contradict the widely held belief that "backstage" (domestic) talk is "substandard" and less relevant to political life. She even demonstrated that people

actually sounded better backstage than frontstage. Eliasoph laments that citizens' construction of an "unspoken political etiquette" (p. 230) paradoxically empties the public sphere of political conversation. Yet, what Eliasoph calls "the backstage," where citizens freely talk politics, is another form of the public sphere. It may not be her original intention, but Eliasoph ended up showing that the private and domestic spheres were indeed an important part of the public sphere where people actively engaged in everyday political talk.

Other studies report similar findings: Through focus group interviews, Conover et al. (2002) reported that citizens are more willing to talk politics "in private discussions with family and close friends" (p. 57). Analyzing a series of personal conversations, VanLear (1987), too, reported that as much as 65% of talk was devoted to public items, 19% was about semiprivate details, and only 2% was about intimate confidences. Wyatt, Kim, and Katz (2000) also found that people talked more frequently about public issues than personal and family matters in their private conversations.

Why, then, does political talk in the private sphere matter? It matters because contemporary politics is mediated. The mass media—first the press, then electronic media, and now computer networks—have introduced the public world to living rooms. We may call this process the domestication of the public sphere. Citing Moores's (1988) study of the process of mass media's "naturalization" within the domestic context, Morley (1990) argues that there has been a shift of balance from the public to the private spheres. As a result, "family" has achieved dual status: simultaneously private and public. In the same vein, Brunson and Morley (1979) argue that media consumption spans the private–public divide, combining domestic and national life.

Scholars have contended that media consumption is an integrated part of political conversation in the private sphere, and everyday political talk cannot be separated from news media. Bausinger (1984), for example, maintains: "Even when reading a newspaper one is not truly alone, it takes place in the context of family and friends. . . . Media communication cannot be separated from direct personal communication. Media contacts are materials for conversation" (pp. 349–350). Delli Carpini and Williams (1994), too, conceptualize television and its viewers as participants in an ongoing conversation, and Rojas et al. (2005) suggest the concept of "media dialogue," alluding to the fact that media consumption and talking politics are an intertwined and undividable process. Gamson (1992) also considers the media as important "conversational resources" (p. 117) and contends that ordinary people's talk is triggered and influenced by the mass media: "[T]he conversations overwhelmingly began with media discourse" (p. 131).

Furthermore, much evidence confirms a close relationship not only between news media and conversation but also between those and public opinion (Gamson, 1992; Kwak, Williams, Wang, & Lee, 2005; Moy & Gastil, 2006). Relying on Tarde (1898/1989), Katz (1992) also maintains that (a) the newspaper fuels conversation, (b) conversation shapes opinion, and (c) opinion triggers action. In his historical

account of the emergence of the public sphere, Habermas points out that the press and dialogue were the two essential elements of public opinion that were interdependent and came into being simultaneously. In Habermas's (1991) definition of the public sphere, we can see that the three elements—media, conversation, and public opinion—are tightly associated:

By “public sphere” we mean first of all a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed. Access to the public sphere is open to all citizens. A portion of the public sphere is constituted in every conversation in which private persons come together to form a public. When the public is large, this kind of communication requires certain means of dissemination and influence; today, newspapers and periodicals, radio, and television are the media of the public sphere. (p. 398)

According to Habermas (1989), a group of people become a public only after making use of its reason, and dialogue itself is a process of “making use of the reason,” which is provoked by the press (p. 24). In 17th-century Europe, towns began to “replace the courts’ publicity of representation with the institutions of a public sphere” (p. 34). In 18th-century Europe, the public sphere emerged in *salons* in France, coffee houses in England, and *Tischgesellschaften* (table societies) in Germany, as these were places for informal conversations or dialogic deliberations. Each of these “places” was connected through the press: “The coffee houses were already so numerous and the circles of their frequenters already so wide, that contact among these thousandfold circles could only be maintained through a journal” (1989, p. 42). Habermas (1989) views public opinion as “the enlightened outcome of common and public reflection” (p. 96), which arises from political talk and the press. Thus, public opinion always requires conversation: “*L’opinion* was the opinion of the *public éclairé*, articulated through the press and *salon* discussions” (Habermas, 1989, p. 98).

Recognizing the tight association between political talk and mass media, Habermas (2006) points out that “considered public opinions” of responsive voters are formed through engaging in everyday political talk, reading newspapers, and watching television (p. 418). In other words, communicative reasons are produced not only by talk but also by news media use as well—or everyday political talk spurred by the news media.

Conclusions

Democracy should not be narrowly understood as a specific kind of political system or a set of procedures for making political decisions. Democracy is not only about what decisions to make and how to make decisions but also about why we make such and such decisions and about what and who we are. Democracy is not only about negotiating conflicting self-interests but also about understanding one’s own and others’ interests. Democracy is not only a way of achieving certain goals but more often than not, it is also about constructing our goals. Democracy is not only a way of

reaching consensus but also about constructing the fundamental background on which we can collectively negotiate to achieve a consensus.

This is why we propose that deliberative democracy requires two levels of deliberation: One is instrumental deliberation, a procedural tool, through which we negotiate and make decisions; the other is dialogic deliberation, or dialogue, through which we construct the concept of the self and other, the sense of community, and public reason. Everyday political talk, the practical form of dialogic deliberation, is the fundamental underpinnings of deliberative democracy. Everyday political talk itself might not be ideally deliberative nor reasonable, but it is perhaps the only practical way through which citizens construct and reveal their identities, understand others, produce rules and resources for deliberation, enhance their opinions, transform the domestic spheres into the public sphere, and bridge their private lives to the political world.

In this essay, recognizing the conceptual similarities between Habermas's communicative action and Buber's dialogue, we conceptualize everyday political talk as dialogic deliberation, which is spontaneous, informal, and nonpurposive. It is dialogic because it has no specific goals or purposes, and it serves to construct the concept of the self, to reach mutual understanding, and to establish interpersonal relations. It is oriented not to the strategic I-It relations, but to the communicative I-Thou relations. Criticizing the instrumental view of deliberation, which is concerned exclusively with deliberations in the political system (government, political institutions, formal public meetings, etc.), we propose to extend the scope of deliberative democracy beyond the political system, to the public sphere, and to the private sphere. The public sphere refers to the spatiotemporal conditions where citizens get together freely and have everyday political talk. We also propose that everyday political talk, seemingly trivial and irrational as it may be, is the process of producing and reproducing public reason and enhancing the quality of opinions.

We suggest that researchers of deliberative democracy examine empirically the effects of everyday political talk, especially with regard to the quality of opinions. Traditionally, public opinion researchers have measured the effects of communication with the shifts of citizens' issue positions and preferences. However, we postulate that the essential impact of everyday talk would be found with the quality of opinions rather than changes of positions. To find effective prescriptions for working deliberative democracy, researchers should explore the conditions that would encourage people to talk politics in their everyday lives.

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Théoriser la délibération dialogique : Les conversations politiques quotidiennes en tant qu'action communicationnelle et dialogue

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Le paradoxe de la démocratie délibérative est que les conditions préalables à la délibération doivent être produites à travers la délibération elle-même. Cet article soumet donc que la démocratie délibérative requiert deux niveaux de délibération : l'un est la délibération instrumentale, un outil procédural par lequel les gens négocient et prennent des décisions; l'autre est la délibération dialogique, ou le dialogue, par lequel les gens construisent le concept du soi et de l'autre, le sens de la communauté et la raison publique. Nous appuyant sur la *théorie de l'action communicationnelle* de Habermas, le concept de *dialogue* de Buber et la *théorie de la structuration* de Giddens, nous proposons que la conversation politique quotidienne informelle et sans but, la forme pratique de délibération dialogique, est le pilier fondamental de la démocratie délibérative. C'est à travers la conversation politique quotidienne que les citoyens construisent leurs identités, atteignent une compréhension mutuelle, produisent une raison publique, forment des opinions réfléchies et produisent des règles et des ressources pour la démocratie délibérative.

Theoretische Überlegungen zur dialogischen Deliberation: Täglicher Polittalk als kommunikative Handlung und Dialog

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Das Paradox einer deliberativen Demokratie ist, dass die Voraussetzungen der Deliberation durch Deliberation selbst hergestellt werden müssen. Dieser Aufsatz untersucht die Annahme, dass deliberative Demokratie zwei Ebenen der Deliberation benötigt: Zum einen die instrumentelle Deliberation, ein verfahrensorientiertes Werkzeug, mit dessen Hilfe Menschen verhandeln und Entscheidungen treffen; zum anderen die dialogische Deliberation, oder der Dialog, durch welchen Menschen ein Konzept ihrer selbst und anderer sowie den Sinn einer Gemeinschaft und öffentlicher Vernunft konstruieren. Basierend auf Habermas' Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns, Bubers Konzept des Dialogs und Giddens Theorie der Strukturation argumentieren wir, dass informeller und unbestimmter täglicher Polittalk als praktische Form der dialogischen Deliberation die fundamentale Basis einer deliberativen Demokratie darstellt. Durch täglichen Polittalk konstruieren Bürger ihre Identität, erreichen gegenseitiges Verständnis, produzieren öffentliche Vernunft, formen beachtete Meinungen und produzieren Regeln und Mittel für eine deliberative Demokratie.

**Teorizando sobre la Deliberación Dialógica: La Charla Política Diaria
como una Acción Comunicativa y de Diálogo**

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La paradoja de la democracia deliberativa es que los prerequisites de deliberación deben ser producidos a través de la deliberación misma. Este ensayo, así, propone que la democracia deliberativa requiere 2 niveles de deliberación: Uno es la deliberación instrumental, una herramienta de procedimiento, a través de la cual la gente negocia y toma decisiones; la otra es la deliberación dialógica, ó diálogo, a través del cual la gente construye el concepto de uno mismo y del otro, el sentido de comunidad, y la razón pública. Contando con la *teoría de la acción comunicativa* de Habermas, el concepto de *diálogo* de Buber, y la *teoría de estructuración* de Giddens, proponemos que la charla política diaria informal y sin propósito, la forma práctica de deliberación dialógica, es el pilar fundamental de la democracia deliberativa. A través de la charla política diaria, los ciudadanos construyen sus identidades, obtienen entendimiento mutuo, producen razones públicas, forman opiniones consideradas, y producen reglas y recursos para la democracia deliberativa.

理论化对话性之思辨：日常政治话题讨论作为一种传播行为和对话

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思辨性民主的困惑在于思辨的先决条件必须通过思辨本身而产生。本文因此认为思辨性民主需要两个层面的思辨。一个是作用性思辨，即人们通过一个程序性工具进行协商并做出决定；另一个是对话性思辨，即人们通过对话来构建有关他人或自我、社区感及公共推理的概念。依据哈贝马斯的传播行为理论、Buber 的对话概念以及吉登斯的结构理论，我们提出这样一种观点：非正式的、缺乏目的的日常政治话题讨论（对话性思辨的一种实践形式）是思辨性民主的根本所在。通过日常的政治话题谈话，公民得以构建他们的身份、增进彼此之间的理解、创造公共推理、形成经过思虑的观点、并为思辨性民主提供规则和资源。

대화적 토론의 이론화: 의사소통 행위와 토론으로서 일상 정치적 담화에

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요약

심의적 민주주의의 역설은 심의의 선행조건들이 반드시 심의 그 자체를 통하여 생산되어야 한다는 점에 있다. 본 에세이는, 따라서, 심의적 민주주의는 심의의 두가지 다른 차원을 요구한다는 것을 제안하고자 한다: 첫째는 도구적 토론으로, 이는 사람들이 협상하고 의견을 결정하는 과정을 통해 토론을 하는 것이고, 둘째는 대화적 심의, 또는 대화로 이는 사람들이 자신과 타자의 개념, 공동체의 감각, 그리고 대중적 논리의 개념을 구축하는 것으로서 나타나는 것이다. 하버마스의 의사소통 행위 이론, 부버의 대화 개념, 그리고 기든스의 구조주의적 이론에 근거하여, 본 논문은 비형식적이고 비목적적인 일상생활의 정치적 대화와 대화적 심의의 실제적 형태들이 심의적 민주주의의 기본적인 주춧돌이라는 점을 제안하고 있다. 일상생활의 정치적 대화를 통하여, 시민들은 그들의 정체성을 형성하고, 상호 이해를 달성하며, 공공적 논리를 산출하고, 고려된 의견을 형성하며, 그리고 심의 민주주의를 위한 규칙과 자원을 생산하게 된다.

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