Ana Tanasoca*

Informal Networked Deliberation: How Mass Deliberative Democracy Really Works

https://doi.org/10.1515/auk-2023-2003

Abstract: Deliberative democracy started out as an ideal for mass democracy. Lately, however, its large-scale ambitions have mostly been shelved. This article revivifies the ideal of mass deliberative democracy by offering a clear mechanism by which everyone in the community can be included in the same conversation. The trick is to make use of people's overlapping social communicative networks through which informal deliberative exchanges already occur on an everyday basis. Far from being derailed by threats of polarization, echo chambers, and motivated reasoning, informal networked deliberation can indeed put everyone in touch, directly or indirectly, with everyone else.

Keywords: deliberative democracy, scaling up, social network, inclusion, polarization, social media, echo chamber, motivated reasoning

Deliberative democracy is supposed to be an ideal for *mass* democracy. Recent theorists have however largely abandoned its large-scale ambitions, focusing instead on formally-organized deliberation in small-scale mini-publics (Bohman 1998; Fung 2003; 2007; Smith 2009).[1] Those range from 20-person Citizens' Juries to 250- to 500-person Deliberative Polls™ to 500- to 5000-person AmericaSpeaks events (Goodin and Dryzek 2006; Smith 2009).[2] Habermas' older alternative suffers the same deficiency. He gestures at informal deliberation in the public sphere (Habermas 1992/1996). But while handful of people can indeed deliberate in the same coffee house (Habermas 1962/1989), how can one-off deliberations in any given coffee house be extended even to other coffee houses? How can those small-scale

1 Criticizing this move away from theories of mass (macro) deliberative democracy tackling big questions toward theories of micro deliberation, see e.g. Chambers (2009, 232) and Bächtiger and Parkinson (2019).

2 Note that the primary deliberative element in Landemore's (2020, 13) proposal for Open Democracy is still a mini-public (smaller than AmericaSpeaks ones); it would be unusual in having agenda-setting or/and law-making powers, but it is no more a mechanism of genuinely 'mass' deliberation than any of the others.

***Corresponding author: Ana Tanasoca**, Philosophy, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia, E-mail: ana.tanasoca@mq.edu.au

deliberative episodes be 'scaled-up' so as to be relevant to mass democracy? How can the *entire* community take part in one and the same deliberation? That remains the great unsolved mystery haunting this field.

In this article I offer a solution. *Mediated*, *community-wide networked* deliberation occurring through citizens' overlapping social-qua-communicative networks is, I argue, how small-scale informal deliberations extends across the entire community. Informal deliberation among small groups of people who are networked to other small groups of people, and they to others in turn, is the fundamental mechanism underlying mass deliberative democracy in the real world. In a way, this is just to elaborate what Habermas must surely have had in mind in his talk of deliberation in 'the public sphere' or in the black box that theorists of the deliberative system label 'the public sphere' (Dryzek 2009, 2017; Mansbridge et al. 2012). Identifying overlapping networks as the precise *mechanism* by which democratic deliberation can be scaled-up at the level of the entire community is, however, crucial.

This article aims to integrate the normative study of deliberative democracy with empirical research, old and new, drawn from multiple disciplines. At the same time, the article innovates conceptually, by proposing new normative concepts suited to the study of mass democratic deliberation understood in this way. Although my argument will rely upon empirical resources, all that is ultimately in the service of a normative aim, which is to show that mass informal networked deliberation can indeed achieve the core values commonly associated with the deliberative ideal—inclusion, reflection and reciprocity.

I should emphasize at the outset that informal networked deliberation is not confined to *online* networks. A lot of our informal deliberative exchanges still occur spontaneously, face-to-face, and randomly. Through those exchanges, we come into contact not just of our immediate (direct) discussants' opinions and information, but (through our discussants' discussants and their discussants in turn) with those of the wider community's network as well. I will draw here upon data about people's *online* networks as well. But *offline* networks continue to play an important deliberative role, as shown in Section III that relies on survey data provided by the American National Election Studies.[3]

I should also acknowledge from the outset that I shall not be attempting an exhaustive review of all the voluminous empirical literature on the topics I shall be

3 Thus, even if some age groups (such as seniors) were underrepresented on social media, it does not mean that they will be excluded from informal networked deliberation. They may conduct their informal deliberative exchanges through their offline (face-to-face) networks. Or they may nonetheless be adept at communicating through Facetime, email or Zoom. Not having a social media account does not mean one is excluded from informal networked deliberation.

discussing. I select the evidence that I do for its relevance and reliability. I report high-quality research published in top journals and by top scholars across fields in support of my claims. (That explains why most, but not all, of that evidence comes from the US.) But this article is intended as an exercise in empirically-informed political theory, rather than as a contribution to empirical political methodology.

The article proceeds as follows. *Section* 1 critiques deliberative democrats' fixation on artificially organized mini-publics. *Section* 2 provides reasons for thinking that (online but especially offline) social-qua-communicative networks, instead, are the main mechanism enabling large-scale democratic deliberation (see further Tanasoca 2020). That section also discusses conditions under which such informal networked deliberation can advance the normative goals that deliberative theorists set for their highly artificial micro deliberations. *Section* 3 examines to what extent informal networked deliberation is able to fulfill those goals and advance mass deliberative democracy in a world that is as (minimally, I shall argue) polarized as our own.

1 Deliberative Democracy: The Detour through Minipublics[4]

When turning to seek practical embodiments of their ideals, deliberative democrats commonly focus on small-scale, formally-organized deliberations among small groups of people—'mini-publics' of the sorts alluded to above. They are heavily invested in those as ways of facilitating citizen input on important public issues. More empirically-inclined scholars embrace such micro deliberations as a laboratory—a valuable methodological tool for studying interpersonal interactions. Normative theorists celebrate the way in which such micro deliberations by and large successfully vindicate deliberative democracy as a normative ideal (Dryzek 2000, 2014; Dryzek et al. 2019; Fishkin 2018; Bächtiger et al. 2010; for critiques, see Lafont 2015; Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019). Such exercises show that citizens can successfully work through their disagreements by deliberating: the exchange of arguments and reasons enlightens people's preferences and shifts their views, reducing

4 The evolution of deliberative democracy has been punctuated by several generations or turns: the institutional turn away from the Habermasian ideal of mass deliberative democracy toward mini-publics, followed by the turn towards deliberative systems. Due to space constraints, here I only nod to these transitions. For a discussion, see Chambers 2009; Mansbridge et al. 2012; Bächtiger et al. 2018.

disagreement at the group level (e.g., Fishkin 1995, 2009; Grönlund, Bächtiger, and Setälä 2014; Luskin et al. 2014; O'Flynn 2017; Steiner et al. 2017).

The problem, however, is that findings from small-scale, artificially-organized micro deliberations tell us nothing about how *everyone* can deliberate with one another *routinely* and *in the wild*, outside of such rare and contrived events. It is easy for a group of twelve people to deliberate together.[5] It is much harder to imagine how a community of twelve million people can deliberate 'together'. Furthermore, organized micro deliberations are governed by special communicative norms under the strict supervision of a moderator, and the deliberation is preceded by an information phase in which all deliberators are given access to the same evidence relevant to their matters discussed. Questions inevitably arise concerning how and to what extent such artificially-orchestrated deliberations can be 'scaled-up', that is, replicated at the society-wide level (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019; Niemeyer 2014; Niemeyer and Jennstäl 2018; Suiter et al. 2020). Since organized micro deliberations do not reflect the natural conditions in which mass deliberation normally occurs (or realistically could occur), they cannot provide any insights into how mass-scale deliberative democracy might work.

Advocates of micro deliberative events sometimes say that this is perfectly excusable, since their primary purpose is to show how people would deliberate under very special, ideal conditions. Yet the insistence on these special conditions, and that communicative exchanges must fit a very narrow definition to be deemed truly 'democratic deliberation', also prevents deliberative democratic theory from being empirically applicable to the real world. As Diana Mutz warned, such qualifications leave us with a 'near-empty set of social interactions to study' when testing the claims made by deliberative democratic theory (Mutz 2006, 5; Mutz 2008, 522).

More recently, deliberative democrats have started focusing on 'deliberative systems', which might in principle assuage concerns that their theories are irrelevant to large-scale, real-world deliberative democracy. The systems approach explicitly aims to study the synergy between the different sites, components, or levels of a deliberative system (Mansbridge et al. 2012, 2–4). Different components serve different functions and exhibit different deliberative strengths and weaknesses. Non-deliberative or even anti-deliberative acts occurring in one part of the system can still have deliberative value, through their beneficial consequences on another part of the system or for the system overall.

5 Mini-publics such as Deliberative Polls™ or AmericaSpeaks events that involve more people overall invariably centrally involve break-out sessions with just a dozen or so people at any given table.

Scholars conceive deliberative systems differently. Some simply provide a laundry list of sites forming a deliberative system in a democracy; one of the foundational texts on the topic lists 'informal networks, the media, organized advocacy groups, schools, foundations, private and non-profit institutions, legislatures, executive agencies and the courts' (Mansbridge et al. 2012, 2). Other scholars categorize components of deliberative systems more abstractly, as sites or boxes ('the public space', 'the empowered space') with arrows representing processes and interactions connecting those sites ('transmission', 'accountability', 'meta-deliberation', and 'decisiveness') (Dryzek 2009; 2009, 11–2; 2017). But the mere labelling does not explain what actually goes on within or among them. A systems diagram does not, in itself, tell us anything about just what makes the system function the way it does.

For that, we need to identify the *mechanisms* that make the system work: the patterns and regularities governing the operations within and the relations between the different system components (Bunge 1967; Elster 1989; Hedström 2008; Hedström and Ylikovski 2010; Hedström and Swedberg 1998; Hedström and Bearman 2013; Mayntz 2013; Merton 1968; Stinchcombe 1993; Tilly 2001). Mechanisms constitute the 'cogs and wheels' of what we study, the in-between law-like generalization and brute empirical description. There are various types of mechanisms (e.g., internal, situational, transformational, belief-formation or action-formation mechanisms) (Hedström and Swedberg 1998, 23). They can operate at different levels of analysis or provide connections among those levels when explaining, for example, how the combined behavior of individuals gives rise to collective outcomes (micro-macro) or how the environment affects individual behavior (macro-micro) (Coleman 1990, 701–2).

A focus on mechanisms is sorely needed in the study of deliberative democracy. Mechanisms can explain how changes in one part of the deliberative system lead to changes in another part of the system or how deliberation (and its effects) can be scaled-up from the micro to the macro-systemic level. Identifying mechanisms is also crucial in establishing that any given deliberative effect is not a one-off accident but rather the consequence of how the deliberative system is structured and functions. Without a proper analysis of mechanisms, deliberative systems theory amounts merely to postulating simplistic black-box explanations devoid of any real explanatory power (Mutz 2008, 530).

Grasping that nettle, some deliberative scholars have stated that the concept of deliberative system "is not intended to be mechanistic" or "have clearly identifiable boundaries" (Mansbridge et al. 2012, 5). But that reply renders the deliberative system approach vulnerable to the same objections raised by Diana Mutz about mini-publics: how are we to empirically test the claims made by deliberative systems theory if the system is boundless and devoid of mechanisms?

To demand attention to the workings of mechanisms in the study of deliberation is of course just to echo the long-standing call for *middle-range* theories, as applied to deliberative democracy (Merton 1949/1996; Mutz 2008, 531, 536). Such theories centrally involve accounts of mechanisms. Of course, such middle-range theories offer only partial explanations (Hedström and Udehn 2013, 30–2). Still, in contrast to grand theories, they are more amenable to robust empirical testing. Although the need for middle-range theories has been mostly ignored by deliberative scholars, numerous studies of deliberation in behavioral political science and political psychology answer this call admirably. In the next section, I outline a theoretical model of deliberative democracy for the real (non-ideal) world that builds on precisely such mechanism-focused, middle-range theories.

2 Network Mass Deliberation: A Solution to the Scaling-up Problem

Despite the flurry of interest in deliberative systems, the micro-institutional perspective focusing on small-scale, artificially-organized deliberation continues to dominate the study of democratic deliberation. I henceforth call that 'the standard model', in deference to the dominance it exerts over the current scholarship in this field.

There is, however, an older Habermasian tradition that instead embodied a large-scale focus. In his *Habilitationsschrift* Habermas (1962/1989) was interested in explaining transformations of the public sphere. That book looked toward public opinion and its micro-foundations: citizens' informal discursive exchanges enabled by the development of broadsheet newspapers and coffeehouses. In his later magnus opus on deliberative democracy, Habermas (1992/1996) offered a two-track model in which civil society was the primary locus of deliberative engagement.

The account of mass deliberative democracy I am defending here similarly has at its heart citizens' informal, spontaneous exchanges in naturally-occurring, non-artificial settings. Yet my focus on the way networks work (in theory and practice) helps to further explain, in a way that Habermas did not, how a myriad of such spontaneous exchanges interconnect across the community so as to allow everybody to 'deliberate together'. I draw on evidence not only about direct informal exchanges occurring within an individual's core network but also, even more importantly, upon evidence about overlaps between different people's 'core' networks and the capacity that affords for people to communicate with one another indirectly across their much larger 'extended' networks. Community-wide deliberation is made possible by direct and indirect communicative exchanges

across the 'deliberative community-wide web' created by people's overlapping networks.

In what follows I defend interconnected deliberative networks as a mechanism enabling mass deliberative democracy. While it may diverge from the ordinary ideal of deliberation in some important respects (to be discussed below), informal networked deliberation is a more empirically apt way of theorizing deliberative democracy. Importantly, it offers a straightforward solution to the 'scaling-up' problem that has plagued deliberative democracy. People's social-qua-communicative networks are the mechanism by which large numbers of people can deliberate 'together' on an everyday basis, without the need for any additional artifice.[6]

Yet with new empirical understanding of how mass democratic deliberation works comes also the need for a new normative framework for assessing it. In the next sections I do just that by introducing appropriately modified versions of classic deliberative-democratic desiderata like presence, inclusion, reciprocity, and equality. Ordinarily championed by standard deliberative theory and small-scale, artificially-organized deliberations based on it, these concepts are easily applicable to micro deliberative settings; they need to be adapted for the study of mass networked deliberation, however. I do just that in Section 2.2 where I propose a new normative framework for the assessment of informal networked deliberation. Having identified the mechanism behind large-scale deliberative democracy—people's overlapping social-qua-communicative networks—we also are in a better position to see how it can be improved. Due to space limitations, here I do not explore this latter question which I have already extensively covered elsewhere (Tanasoca 2020).

2.1 Two Models of Deliberation

Informal networked deliberation diverges from the standard model of deliberation in some important ways. The standard model conceives deliberation as an organized *group* activity requiring all participants to be present in the same place at the same time (Young 2002, 44–5, 126; Young 1990, 233; Goodin 2008, 3; Fishkin 1995, 33; Dryzek 2000; Fishkin and Laslett 2003, 1). *Co-presence* is an essential feature of the standard model of deliberation, enabling all deliberators to directly listen to and speak to each other. This is what I call the 'synchronic-group' model of deliberation. Informal networked deliberation, on the other hand, allows deliberation to occur

6 While neglected by deliberative democrats, the phenomenon of networked communication has long been well-known to political scientists and sociologists. It was central to Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee's (1954) seminal study of voting behavior.

in a serial fashion, among subsets of people in extended networks. Although direct and face-to-face deliberation plays an important role in community-wide informal networked deliberation, in ways that will be explained below, not everyone needs to be co-present, engaging directly face-to-face with one another in the same place at the same time to 'deliberate together'. By enabling the flow of arguments and information across the entire extended network, informal networked deliberation can make people 'discursively present' to one another, as the results from your deliberative exchange with one person are carried forward into your next deliberative exchanges with others. People's claims, arguments, and information can thereby come to be widely known across the community as a whole. In this 'serial-diachronic' model, deliberation is seen as a protracted process that occurs both directly and indirectly (vicariously) when people act as discursive intermediaries, passing along to their network contacts the views, perspectives, arguments, or information that they have collected from their previous interactions with others. The face-to-face direct engagement of everyone in the community with everyone else is not required for everybody to have deliberated 'together' in this more 'distributed' way.

In making discursively present people who are not direct participants in our deliberative exchange, networked deliberation allows us to influence, and be influenced by, distant others (e.g., 'a friend of a friend') without ever coming into direct contact with them (see Coleman, Katz, and Menzel 1966; Burt 1987, 1992, 2000; Granovetter 1973 for the importance of extended networks and weak ties). Such diffusion processes, with people routinely passing along information from one of their contacts to others in their network, are and have always been ubiquitous. We now have a wealth of empirical evidence about such exchanges, making us better able to study them. But the political role and value of informal networked deliberation has long been recognized by social and political scientists. The two-step communication model introduced by Lazarsfeld and his colleagues is an early case in point (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1995; see also Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004a; Druckman, Levendusky, and McLain 2018). People's core face-to-face networks have been shown to influence non-political beliefs and behaviors as well (Christakis and Fowler 2009).[7] And to foreshadow, even if those core networks have been shown to be more homogenous than not, as we will see in *Section* 3, people's extended networks are more heterogenous and characterized by more disagreement.

7 For example, people who are centrally located within their network have been shown to play a more prominent role in diffusion processes; they thus constitute an important resource in norm change (Prentice and Paluck 2020).

2.2 Deliberative Democratic Desiderata: Inclusion, Equality and Reciprocity

Deliberative democrats posit three prime desiderata as 'success conditions' for their proposed innovations: inclusion, equality, and reciprocity. Their great boast is that classic mini-publics serve all of these goals well. My aim in this section is to show that community-wide informal networked deliberation can do likewise.

'Democratic' deliberation is ordinarily understood to require *inclusive* deliberation. That is understood, variously, as including all members of the community, all affected parties or their representatives, or all relevant perspectives and group interests. In the standard model, what it is 'to be included' in deliberation is to be physically present to the deliberation—to have a seat at the table and be capable of listening to and directly addressing all other participants (Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1995; Young 2002). *Direct inclusion* has thus long been the gold standard. Such a high standard of inclusion cannot be achieved in any mass deliberative democracy, however. It is simply impossible for millions of people to be present around the same table and deliberate together.

Community-wide informal networked deliberation in the serial-diachronic mode suggests another standard of inclusion: *indirect inclusion* through people's extended, overlapping networks. One is included in mass deliberation in this sense when one is connected to other people who are themselves connected to yet others. In that way, a person can be made discursively present in multitudinous serial-diachronic deliberative exchanges while participating directly in only a few of them. Ideally, we would like everyone to be indirectly connected to everyone else, such that everyone can be discursively present in everyone else's direct deliberative exchanges. That is to say, we would ideally like everyone's views, information and arguments to flow freely and uncorrupted across the entire community so as to reach everyone else.[8] The structure of the community's overall deliberative network and the way people discursively act within that network should ideally allow such opportunities.

Classic network studies are reassuring on both those scores. The classic finding was that there are at most 'six degrees of separation' between people: everyone is connected to everyone else through six (or fewer) network links. With the advent of networking on online platforms, that has now been reduced to 3.57 (at least among Facebook users) (Milgram 1967; Pool and Kochen 1978/9; Bhagat et al. 2016; Watts 2004; see further Tanasoca 2020, sec. 5.2.1–5.2.2). Of course, network transmission is imperfect and information gets corrupted after being passed from one person

8 'Potentially', because we cannot expect everyone, every time, to communicate to others everything that others have communicated to her.

to another more than three times (Moussaïd et al. 2017, 4120). Even so, back-of-the-envelope calculations based on the above evidence (and a few additional simplifying assumptions) suggest that 70 % of Facebook users might be able to expect to transmit and to receive broadly uncorrupted information to and from fully 70 % of other Facebook users (for the calculation and the assumptions underlying it, see Tanasoca 2020, sec 5.2.3). The ideal of full democratic inclusion would of course be 100 %, but 70 % inclusion is higher than other classic indicators of democratic inclusion such as electoral turnout (IDEA 2022). And of course it is much higher than what could ever be achieved through micro-scale deliberative mini-publics.[9]

The second normative end of democratic deliberation is *reciprocity* or feedback—talking and being talked to in turn, with one's deliberative contribution eliciting a response from other deliberators (Gutmann and Thompson 1996). Deliberation is by definition a dynamic, interactive process, not merely the sum of isolated, individual discursive utterances (deliberation contrasts in that way with, for example, contributions posted on an Internet forum or message board). It relies on the capacity of individuals to prod and probe each other—on the focused back-and-forth between deliberators. No matter how democratically valuable people's contributions might be in insolation, in the absence of any meaningful exchange people are merely talking past each other, not deliberating—and the democratic value of their deliberating together is lost. In smaller deliberating groups, it is easier to ensure this dynamic back-and-forth among participants. But what kind of discursive reciprocity could be ensured in community-wide informal networked deliberation involving millions of people?

9 Ackerman and Fishkin's 'Deliberation Day' proposal may be one exception—although note that (a) it is an open question how many people would actually turn up for the event and (b) Ackerman and Fishkin (2004, 147–8) explicitly rely upon informal networked deliberation to extend the effects of that event to those who do not. Another exception is Landemore's (2020) 'open mini-public'—although that is just another relatively larger mini-public ("a … randomly selected assembly [of] between 150 and a thousand people or so"), albeit one "connected via crowdsourcing platforms and deliberative forums (including other mini-publics) to the larger population" (13); and as Landemore explicitly says, "it is not premised on mass participation" (14). Landemore's proposal is designed to ensure that deliberations in her mini-public assembly are consequential for political decision-making—something that both regular mini-publics and informal networked deliberation rely on voting to achieve (Habermas 1992/1996)—although insofar as her assembly itself has direct 'law-making [power] of some kind', her proposal would be better seen as a proposal for a deliberative *lottocracy* rather than a deliberative *democracy* considering that mass participation is not a goal anymore, and in the absence of regularly-held general elections, the demos at large also loses its primary mechanism by which it can act together (Stone 2022, 5; for a reply see Landemore 2022, 8).

Notice, first, that even artificially organized micro-deliberations under the supervision of a moderator have difficulty ensuring reciprocity for all participants (Gerber 2015). Some participants' contributions end up getting more attention and evoking a stronger response from others. To some extent this is unavoidable. Because deliberation is largely a path-dependent process where people respond to, and build upon, others' contributions, what will be said next in deliberation depends on what has previously been said. Order effects, not just the force of argument, presumably also influence the outcome of the deliberation. Thus, as a matter of structural constraint, some people's contributions will end up 'guiding' and impacting the deliberation more than other people's, eliciting thereby a greater response.

In community-wide informal networked deliberation, reciprocity is threatened not just by the large number of participants but also by the particular way in which deliberating 'together' happens: sequentially, across innumerable dyads or small conversational groups over a protracted period of time. Our capacity to intervene and interact dynamically in conversations to which we are only 'discursively', not physically present, is inevitably strictly limited by the fact that networked deliberation necessarily involves discursive intermediaries. A person's deliberative contributions might be communicated downstream in her extended network without feedback flowing back upstream to her. After all, we often pass information from other people forward to our network contacts, but we do not always (or even all that often) communicate their responses back to our original informants.

Thus, at the mass level, reciprocity will largely be a distributed property among subsets of people within the network who are directly deliberating, engaging in the back-and-forth with one another at any given time. What matters is that all members of the community be part of some such subsets and that their discursive contributions elicit some response from their direct, immediate interlocutors—that, as opposed to their distant audience in their extended network. Insofar as everyone routinely engages in informal deliberation with their close contacts, *distributed reciprocity* will hold across the entire deliberative network.

Finally, democratic deliberation aims to ensure *equal* inclusion. As a key feature of 'democratic' deliberation, equal deliberative participation is painstakingly pursued in artificially-organized deliberative events through the efforts of trained facilitators who enforce special discursive norms. Despite all such efforts, literally equal participation is rarely achieved even there (Gerber 2015). Needless to say, if equality remains elusive even in those controlled deliberative settings, it will be difficult to achieve in informal networked deliberation occurring spontaneously 'in the wild'. At the same time, however, we should not forget that there are many forms and currencies of equality.

At the micro 'dyadic' level, any form of dialogue—deliberation included—is a fundamentally *cooperative* activity (Grice 1975). A minimal form of equality is therefore intrinsic to any such discursive exchange. Deliberation requires the mutual, and broadly equal, engagement of both interlocutors. They both must be able to speak and listen in turn to one another. Any discursive interaction that is grossly unequal in this sense will be closer to a monologue or harangue than a dialogue. This minimal form of equality that is contained in any form of dialogue, and without which deliberation cannot exist at all, will be readily available within each dyadic, informal deliberative exchange.

At the more 'macro' level, whether everyone has an equal opportunity to engage in informal deliberation, depends on the very *structure* of the community's deliberative network. In a 'balanced' network, where everyone is linked to (and hence able to listen to and be listened to by) an equal number of other people, everyone can be said to have equal opportunities to engage in deliberation and hence have *ex ante* equal influence over it. Of course, in the real world some people have more network links than others, which might on the face of it make inclusion in informal networked deliberation to appear unequal. But in assessing that we must take into account not only people's direct contacts in their core network but also their indirect contacts in their extended network—all the other people ('friends of friends') to whom their direct interlocutors are connected. And since people with smaller core networks are almost invariably (e.g., on Twitter, 98 % of the time) linked to others with much (on Twitter, typically a thousand times) larger networks, people may be much more equal, taking account of *both* their core and extended networks than appears to be the case taking account of the former alone (Hodas, Kooti, and Lerman 2013; the more general phenomenon was first reported by Feld 1991). Deliberative equality (like reciprocity) could thus be achieved, not only writ small within each dyadic encounter, but also as a distributed property of myriad direct deliberative exchanges across the overlapping extended networks that constitute the community's overall deliberative network.

3 Informal Networked Deliberation in Practice: Is Polarization a (Big) Problem?

Above I have argued that deliberative democracy in the real world inevitably relies on people's core and extended social-qua-communicative networks as the crucial mechanism for scaling-up deliberation from the micro individual level to the macro level of the entire community. People's overlapping extended communicative networks form a deliberative web that can promote inclusion, equality, and reciprocity—the normative ends ordinarily championed by deliberative

theorists. But what are the prospects for this promise actually being realized in practice, under present circumstances?

Several things need to happen for people's discussion networks to serve as a mechanism for inclusive, equal, and reciprocal forms of deliberative democracy:

(1) First, people's (core or extended) networks must *include* others with political and policy opinions different from their own;
(2) Second, people must *actually* deliberate about those matters with those differently-minded others within their network;
(3) And third, finally people must reflect upon, take into account, and be *prepared to change* their own opinions in light of diverging opinions and information communicated by those differently-minded others across the network.

First and foremost, among those desiderata, people's social-qua-communicative networks must be informationally and opinion-wise diverse. If people were to form social and communicative ties exclusively with those who are like-minded—whose opinions about government and policy are similar to their own—that would lead to a deliberative analogue of Sunstein's 'Daily Me' world, where our information feeds are tailored to fit our personal likes and dislikes.[10] Needless to say, being part of such a partisan bubble or political echo chamber would diminish the chances for people to ever encounter diverse, opposing, or discordant views that challenge their existing beliefs.

We might thus worry that people's informal deliberative exchanges will systematically fail to include divergent political information, viewpoints, and perspectives.[11] Or we might worry that, even if their networks include differently-minded others, people will avoid discussing politics altogether with those with whom they are likely to disagree. We might further worry that even if they enter into such discussions, those deliberative exchanges will fail to have an impact on their beliefs. Discussions of motivated reasoning and irrationality especially among those holding strong partisan identities, highlight this worry (Kruglanski and Webster 1996; Lodge and Taber 2000; Strickland, Taber, and Lodge 2011; Taber and Lodge 2006). I shall discuss, and dismiss, each of those worries in turn.

---

10 Sunstein (2001) borrows the idea from Negroponte (1995), who had been working on it under the same name since the 1970s in the MIT Media Lab (Hapgood 1995).

11 According to a range of studies people often prefer to associate with those similar to themselves, which would lead to 'homophily' within their networks. See, e.g.: Lazarsfeld and Merton 1954; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001; Monge and Contractor 2003, ch. 8.

3.1 Are People's Social-qua-communicative Networks Opinion-Diverse?

Diversity of opinion and information matters in deliberation for two reasons. First, deliberation can have significant epistemic value only insofar as it can act as a pooling mechanism for the information and knowledge scattered across society. In pooling that information, and improving the individual competence of each citizen, deliberation can allow the community to reach more accurate judgements.[12] This however can happen only insofar as new and different sources of (valid) information are included in deliberation. Second, for deliberation to be democratic it must include a concern for all other citizens, and particularly for those affected by the community's collective decisions. The more people's varying interests and opinions are represented in the deliberation, the more democratic that deliberation will be. Needless to say, echo chambers and filter bubbles can drastically reduce both the democratic and epistemic value of networked deliberation across the community.

The crucial question is however a brutely empirical one. Just how diverse *are* people's (offline and online) social-qua-communicative networks? What exactly is the actual prevalence of echo chambers? Just how many people find themselves engaged just how exclusively in discussions with just how nearly identical others?

The balance of evidence we have from empirical studies and meta-analyses across the social sciences is relatively reassuring on this score. To start, however assiduously freely associating individuals seek out the comfort of identical others, their choices will inevitably be constrained by their environment and the opportunities that it offers (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1987, 120; Huckfeldt 1983; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004a). Our job, school, university, neighborhood, café, gym, church, or pub we frequent all shape and constrain our social interactions (Conover, Searing, and Crewe 2002; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, 110, 114–15; Mondak and Mutz 2001; Mutz and Mondak 2006). And insofar as we choose those environments, those choices will be predicated, not on our political opinions, but on other non-political criteria (does this café make good coffee? what are the salary and perks of this job? which neighborhood has better schools? which gym has newer equipment?). It is far from certain (or even likely) that those with whom we bond over our profession or common hobbies will all share the same views across a wide range of

12 These epistemic benefits are usually discussed by reference to group deliberation on the synchronic-group model (Goodin 2017; Landemore 2013). Yet, information-pooling can be achieved through overlapping extended networks, among people who never interact face-to-face.

political and policy matters (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, 17). The workplace in particular has been shown to expose people to divergent views (Mondak and Mutz 2001; Mutz and Mondak 2006).

Moreover, group homophily is usually *dimension-specific*, and people are likely to hold different preferences along different social dimensions (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook 2001; see also Blau and Schwartz 1984); those intersecting social circles will in turn create a heterogenous social network across all those dimensions. Our ability to associate only with like-minded people (even if we are inclined to do so) are further undermined by the facts that (a) we cannot be sure what others' opinions are in advance, (b) we tend to misperceive others' opinions as being closer to one's own and (c) their positions might emerge only after we have already associated with others (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1988, 469–70; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, 12, 18; Levitan and Visser 2009).[13] Importantly, even if one's dyadic deliberative exchanges or core networks are relatively homogenous, across the entire community small levels of heterogeneity within each individual's network aggregate to significant levels of disagreement across the community network overall. While one's chance of being directly exposed to disagreement might be modest, the chance of indirect exposure—of being exposed to someone else who has been exposed to someone who disagrees—is substantively higher.

This seems to hold true even online. People's 'received tweets' are more politically diverse and politically moderate than the 'accounts they follow' (showing that one can hardly isolate oneself from diverging content). Furthermore, the 'retweets' that one receives from the accounts that one follows are also more ideologically diverse than the tweets that are directly authored by the 'followed accounts' themselves (Eady et al. 2019). Retweets thus act as 'weak ties' (Granovetter 1973) exposing users to more diverse opinions, with the difference in ideological diversity likely to increase with each degree of separation online (retweets of retweets being more diverse than retweets and so on). Diversity of opinion is thereby fostered within people's extended networks (see Tanasoca 2020, 161–3 for discussion).

The upshot of all of those considerations is simply this:

> Disagreements over politics and policy arise even in the smallest and most closely held social groups.… few citizens are completely insulated from the interaction with others who will disagree with them. The simple fact is that disagreements occur on a regular basis, and that simple fact forces a reassessment of (1) the common wisdom suggesting that political homogeneity is the inevitable outcome of self-selection and conformity pressures within small

13 For the tendency to underestimate disagreement with friends on Facebook, see Goel, Mason, and Watts (2010), who show that there is a gap between real and perceived agreement even during discussion. Ignoring this discrepancy can lead to false inferences in some studies about the actual level of agreement within people's core networks.

> groups, and (2) the ideals and mechanisms of political communication and influence among citizens. (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004a, 98)[14]

Some might however argue that that conventional wisdom is now outdated. The current situation, they may say, is much, much worse. Yet even newer studies confirm that citizens' informal deliberative exchanges are still largely shaped by their environment and the degree of diversity that it harbors, rather than by their intention to seek like-minded interlocutors. A 2020 study of cross-sectional data tracking more than one hundred networks between 2008 and 2016 shows that informal deliberation is the spontaneous by-product of people's social relationships; "political talk is more … an incidental process than a purposive one" and thus "political attitudes and identities are poor predictors of who talks politics with whom" (Minozzi et al. 2020, 136, 141.). More importantly, the 2020 American National Election Study (ANES) confirms that people's social networks include politically differently-minded others. When asked how many of their friends or family are 'Democrats', 31 % of respondents responded 'about half' and 23.4 % responded 'a lot'; only a small minority indicated that their networks lacked diversity by answering 'none or almost none' or 'all or nearly all'. When asked how many of their friends and family are Republicans, the largest number of respondents (31.9 %) replied 'about half ' and 20.9 % replied 'a lot'; only a handful replied 'all or nearly all' (5 %) or 'none or almost none' (10 %) (ANES 2021a).

But are things different when it comes to social media—to people's *online* networks? Survey data from the ANES also shows that few people belong to homogenous networks online. When asked how many of their Facebook friends are Democrats, the most frequent response (36.4 %) was 'about half '. Very few respondents replied either 'none or almost none' (about 5 %) or 'all or nearly all' (6.8 %). Similar findings emerged when asking people how many of their Facebook friends are Republicans (ANES 2021a).[15] Even in the online environment then, politically

14 See also Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn 2004b. It must be said that some of those large studies purporting to report on heterogeneity or 'disagreement' within people's social networks offer limited evidence as to whether (1) people's networks truly include *opinion*-diverse people; and (2) whether their deliberative exchanges do indeed leave room for *discursive* (as opposed to electoral) disagreement. Those studies study homogeneity at the level of voting choices but that obscures a great deal of opinion disagreement about the finer details of politics and policy. Electoral homogeneity does not preclude opinion heterogeneity. Also, since electoral disagreement is measured within dyads, it does not give us a measure of the level of disagreement across people's entire extended *networks*. Even if the chance of being directly exposed to a disagreeable discussant were quite low, the chance of being *indirectly* exposed to disagreement through that discussant's discussants would be high.

15 When asked how many of Facebook friends are Republicans, the most common response (37.7 %) was 'about half'; very few replied 'none or almost none' (8.4 %) or 'all or nearly all' (2.9 %).

diverse networks are very much the rule and homogenous ones are very much the exception.

3.2 Do People Talk Politics with Those with Whom they Disagree?

People being socially connected with differently-minded others is only the first step, however. That, in itself, does not tell us much about people's propensity to actually engage in cross-cutting deliberation within those social networks. We know that people discuss politics with family and friends quite often (ANES 2017, 496–7; Conover, Searing and Crewe 2002; Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini 2009). But do those interactions genuinely constitute deliberation across opinion differences?

Luckily, we have several studies focusing squarely on the questions of whether disagreements occur during informal exchanges and whether people choose to deliberate about politics with those holding divergent political or policy views. Those studies have historically shown that high proportions (78 %) of Americans report moderate to high levels of 'contested political discussion', containing different views or involving people with different perspectives (Conover, Searing, and Crewe 2002, 39, 40 table 6). One more recent study of over-time discussion networks also clearly showed that most Americans are exposed to disagreement through their informal deliberative exchanges about politics (Minozzi et al. 2020). Shared partisanship also appeared to be the weakest predictor of whether two people will discuss politics, and friendship the strongest one (Minozzi et al. 2020, 147). Considering that more than 80 percent of Americans have friends from the other party that is certainly good news for the prospect of informal networked deliberation (Levendusky 2023, 3, 17, 25).

Contrary to what might be popular perceptions, the 2020 American National Election survey confirms that the last few years have not much affected people's capacity to talk about politics. When asked whether it has become easier or harder to talk about politics with family, most respondents reported it had become 'neither easier nor harder' (ANES 2021b).[16] In another question, the same survey asked Americans how often they have to self-censor out of fear that someone might call them a racist, sexist, or otherwise bad person. A majority of respondents replied 'rarely' or 'never' (ANES 2021b). The responses to those two sets of questions, taken together, suggest that most people are not hesitant to voice discordant opinions within their diverse networks. Finally, when the same survey asked Americans how much political differences hurt their relationships with close family and friends, the

16 Some 44 % gave that response when asked about talking politics 'with family', and 43 % said the same when asked about talking politics 'with friends'.

vast majority of respondents (61 and 59 % respectively) answered 'not at all' (ANES 2021b).

There is a widespread tendency to think that everything has changed with the advent of social media. I shall offer evidence that, even there, informal networked deliberation is actually reasonably heterogeneous. But first, let me enter two cautions against inferring too much from online behavior. First, remember that only a small minority of Americans (23 percent) use Twitter at all and an even smaller minority uses it all that much (the top 25 percent of users generate 97 percent of content) (Odabas 2022). Second, remember that people who discuss politics on social media are disproportionately partisan and ideologically extreme (e.g., Barberà and Rivero 2015; Settle 2018; Cohn and Quealy 2019; see also McGregor 2019). Those two facts, taken together, mean that we should be wary of drawing any grand inferences about the average citizen's deliberative networks and behavior from such evidence. And the second of those facts should lead us to expect that the online deliberative networks of heavy users of social media would be far less heterogenous than those of people who use social media less or not at all.

Against that background, it is reassuring to find that studies of activity within online networks support the view that, even there, informal networked deliberation still harbors a fair bit of diversity. For example, a study of Facebook friendships published in *Science* has shown not only that these friendships are ideologically diverse but also that they facilitate the transmission of divergent views (Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic 2015, 1130–1).[17] This finding was confirmed by another more in-depth analysis of the personal networks of millions of Twitter users in Spain, Germany and the United States. That study showed not just that such networks foster political diversity (albeit less than had they been randomly created) and that people became more politically moderate over time after being exposed to that diversity (Barberà 2015). Other scholars disagree, insisting that Twitter and Facebook are echo chambers on the grounds that, on polarizing topics, the shared content is more likely than not to agree with users' political leaning. Yet even they acknowledge one important caveat, which becomes apparent comparing Twitter and Facebook to other social media platforms like Reddit or Gab where echo chambers are absent (Cinelli et al. 2021). The difference may well be explained by the powerful feed algorithms at work on Twitter and Facebook—but if so, that means that studies showing echo chambers tell us more about what

17 Notice however that the results likely underestimate the amount of disagreement because the study focuses only on those who announce their affiliation in their Facebook profile—such people are presumably more ideologically committed hence more likely to seek form homogenous networks. For an extended discussion of other studies bearing on the existence of informal deliberation across difference, see Tanasoca 2020, 168–71.

people *are shown* on Twitter and Facebook rather than indicating an active choice on people's part to seek (and read) certain content. On platforms like Reddit where the algorithm feed allows users to tweak it (i.e., when people have more choice over the content they are shown), the homophilic pattern disappears (Cinelli et al. 2021, 5–6; for other problems of algorithms, see Farrell and Fourcade 2023).

Yet other recent studies claim that the 'echo chamber' is largely just a misdescriptive metaphor insofar as social media platforms do not act as a completely closed information environments (Geiß et al. 2021). Another common measure of people's openness to listening to opposing views is the diversity of the content of the news feeds that they choose. Recent studies show that, when it comes to *news* content, very few Americans (just 4 %) actually inhabit online echo chambers.[18]

Furthermore, there is a substantial amount of overlap between the accounts followed by Twitter users at the opposite ends of the political spectrum (Eady et al. 2019). The same to be true in the UK.[19] Studies in Canada show that, while people do discuss politics on social media, they nonetheless rely on mainstream news outlets and informal conversations with friends when seeking information about issues they deem important (Dubois 2015). In the UK, the vast majority of respondents disagree 'sometimes', 'mostly', or 'nearly always' with content posted by their friends on social media (Dubois and Blank 2018; see also Messing and Westwood 2014). And contrary to what is often supposed, studies in the UK and other countries (e.g., Austria, Denmark, Spain, Germany, Norway) show that the algorithmic selection offered by search engines actually increases the diversity of people's news diets, with self-selection leading only a small minority of highly partisan people to inhabit echo chambers (Fletcher, Robertson, and Nielson 2021; for a discussion explaining the reasons for this discrepancy, see Arguedas et al. 2022). All of those studies lead communication scholars to conclude that the actual impact of echo chambers and partisan bubbles has been overstated.[20]

3.3 Do People Take into Account Others' Diverging Views?

Polarization, as I said at the outset, poses a three-pronged threat to community-wide informal networked deliberation. First is the threat that people will sort themselves

18 When it comes to television news, four times as many Americans—17 %—are in a media bubble, consuming only far-left or far-right source (Muise et al. 2022). Notice, however, that still leaves the vast majority of Americans exposed to more diverse television news content.

19 Just 2 % of Internet users in the UK are estimated to be in a left-leaning Internet echo chamber and 5 % in a right-leaning one (Fletcher, Robertson, and Nielson 2021).

20 They trace that overstatement, variously, to the tendency of studies to focus narrowly on single online platforms or to self-reporting biases among the respondents. Prior 2009; Dubois and Blank 2018; see also Guess 2021; Guess et al. 2018. For a review, see Arguedas et al. 2022.

into bubbles of like-minded people; second is the threat that even people in diverse core networks will not speak their minds in the presence of differently-minded others. Were either the case, people would not be exposed to differing opinions. But as I have now shown, neither is true to any significant extent. What about the third threat—of hearing yet failing to take into account others' differing opinions or diverging information?

Survey and experimental studies show that cross-cutting deliberation does indeed have an effect on people's political views, opinions, preferences, and choices.[21] I will detail several of those findings shortly. But first let me just point out the role that those demonstrations play in the larger dialectic of this article. The question here being addressed is whether people listen to others who disagree with them. When all of the studies I shall go on to describe show ways in which people's political views are altered in response to being exposed to networks containing differently-minded others, what those studies are showing (over and above the specific findings I go on to discuss) is that people are indeed listening to differently-minded others. Otherwise, the various effects reported below would simply not have occurred.

For a start, notice that survey and experimental studies repeatedly show that cross-cutting deliberation makes people more ambivalent, having a moderating effect on their opinions (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004a, 188–90; Levitan and Visser 2008, 2009; Mutz 2006; Visser and Mirabile 2004). Cross-cutting deliberation increases people's expertise; it enhances people's ability to judge candidates; and it makes people more politically tolerant (Bennett, Flickinger, and Rhine 2000; Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn 2004b, 91–2; Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004a, 188–90; Mutz and Mondak 2006; Mutz 2006). People's political views have also clearly been shown to evolve as the views of those in their networks change (Lazer et al. 2010).

Psychologists have also shown that the composition of people's networks influences the strength of their attitudes. When people's networks include a wide range of views, people harbor weaker attitudes, ones that are less durable and more uncertain. This happens at least in part because people form attitudes by social comparison, assessing the accuracy of their own views by comparing them to those of

21 True, there is a swathe of now well-known, classic studies (e.g., Lord, Ross, and Lepper 1979; Taber and Lodge 2006) purporting to show that when confronted with diverging information, people simply discount it or worse further polarize their views. Upon closer inspection, however, it turns out that those studies are beset with significant methodological problems, including particularly the absence of random assignment; and when those studies are re-run in properly randomized fashion, they show that people actually *do* update their views in light of divergent information. For an in-depth discussion and replication of multiple such experiments, see Coppock 2022.

others around them (Festinger 1950; Klein 1997). That makes sense from a Bayesian perspective, of course, assuming that people take what others think as evidence. Exposure to a diversity of 'comparative information' increases ambivalence and makes people less certain in their views.[22]

In both naturally occurring networks and experimentally created ones, discussions with differently-minded others make people aware of discrepancies between their own attitudes and those of others. This increases ambivalence and thereby makes people more open to persuasion (Levitan and Visser 2009; Visser and Mirabile 2004). Importantly, those shifts were found only when the attitudes they were exposed to were expressed within the context of a social network; when people were exposed to the same views outside of the social (network) context, those views made no impact (Visser and Mirabile 2004, 786). This just shows that *how* people are exposed to divergent information—through informal networked deliberation—matters as much or even more than the sheer fact *that* they are exposed to such information. The social context in which diverging information is provided explains much of the impact seen in these studies. More robust studies of real-world social networks of college freshmen confirm these conclusions. They too show that, once political disagreements with network friends are discovered, people for the most part still continue engaging with those differently-minded contacts. Political disagreements are rarely able to predict the level of perceived personal closeness with that contact (Levitan and Visser 2009, 1063–4).[23] Neither does the strength of one's existing attitude influence the impact disagreement has on perceived closeness (Levitan and Visser 2009, 1063–4).

There is also direct evidence that diverse networks influence members' beliefs through *informational* rather than purely social mechanisms. Heterogenous networks have been shown to increase reflectivity, making people to more carefully consider and assess information. For that reason, people who are surrounded by differently-minded others exhibit more attitude change in response to strong than to weak arguments (Levitan and Visser 2008). Heterogenous networks are useful not only in promoting the dissemination of information but also in influencing how people process that information (Levitan and Visser 2008, 646).

Finally, heterogenous networks have been shown to impact people's political choices by making them less reliant on party cues (Ekstrom et al. 2020). Among those in heterogenous networks, partisanship is a weaker predictor of candidate

22 'At least in part' because this type of informational influence should be distinguished from normative influence where the desire to conform with the group influences people's views.

23 While in one case, there was clear evidence that people engaged in selective interaction, avoiding those they disagreed with, according to the authors, 'the effects were not especially large and were not consistent across issues'.

preferences. Interactions with differently-minded others make people more likely to choose candidates on the basis of policy positions rather than party label. People in networks containing high levels of disagreement shift their candidate preferences to align with their policy preferences, regardless of their party identification. People who are in diverse networks, and are exposed to cross-cutting deliberation, form their political views and make their political choices through a more complex, effortful reasoning rather than relying on party cues (Ekstrom et al. 2020).

In short, a raft of studies with varying designs reveal changes in the strength and direction of people's political opinion resulting from their exposure to differently-minded others in their discursive networks. The fact that those effects were found constitutes evidence that people do indeed listen to differently-minded others when interacting with them, as the evidence presented earlier suggested.

How could anyone have ever thought otherwise? One answer relates to 'measurement issues' within the methodology of some studies. When seeking indicators of successful deliberation, deliberative scholars typically focus exclusively on 'belief change'. That is as understandable as it is erroneous. After all, the value of democratic deliberation is supposed to lie in changing people's views so as to reduce disagreement, leading to less contested and more legitimate collective decisions. When studies find, as they sometimes do, that deliberation failed to change minds (or, worse, polarized opinions, increasing people's confidence in their preexisting positions) (e.g., Gerber et al. 2014; Wojcieszak 2011), that is seen as a sign that deliberation failed—that people either did not take those exchanges seriously or they completely discounted what others were saying.

Yet even if people are Bayesians who faithfully update their beliefs in light of evidence provided by others, not every piece of evidence will necessarily lead them to completely *flip* their opinions (for in-depth discussion, see Tanasoca 2020, ch. 4). Beliefs come in degrees, with varying credences attached. Deliberation may decrease a person's confidence in a certain proposition from 60 % to 55 % percent; but since the person still believes that proposition to be true (albeit with less confidence than before), that deliberative impact will pass unnoticed in studies focusing purely on directional opinion change.[24] Even the absence of credence change does not necessarily indicate that people have not engaged in meaningful deliberation: people might end up with the same credence as before, for example, if the

24 We can similarly explain in perfectly rational, Bayesian terms why we embrace some new opinion or piece of evidence only after hearing multiple other people advocate it: if we update our beliefs in light of new input from others, then the more discussants we encounter holding the same view, the more reason we have to change our beliefs in that direction. For a similar analysis, see Beaman et al. 2021, 1933.

new evidence against the proposition perfectly balances out the new evidence in favour of it.

Deliberative influence is a better concept for capturing the fuller range of deliberative impacts than belief change conceptualized as flipped opinions. It merely requires people to consider what others say, reflecting upon it. Deliberative influence can be exercised even if people have not persuaded one another to completely change their minds.[25] The persistence of disagreement is not proof of a failure of deliberators to listen to differently-minded others.

A second reason we might have been led to believe that people do not listen to differently-minded others might be that we have been oversold stories about 'motivated reasoning'. Actually, that is not necessarily much of a problem (for a similar point, see Bullock 2007, 2009; see also Druckman and McGrath 2019, 114–5). First, only a small proportion of the population is even potentially prone to partisan motivated reasoning—those holding very strong partisan identities and who have strong priors (Lodge and Taber 2000; Taber and Lodge 2006).[26] As Bertrand Russell (1928, 13) once said, "the opinions that are held with passion are always those for which no good ground exists." It is undeniable that polarization has increased among a minority of highly partisan individuals who also hold more extreme political beliefs (Fiorina and Abrams 2008).[27] But their polarization is largely driven by elite polarization and the increased politization of the media, not by informal networked deliberation across difference (Bolsen, Druckman and Cook 2014; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013; Druckman, Levendusky, and McLain 2018).[28]

Not only is there less empirical evidence of partisan motivated reasoning than might be supposed. The evidence we have (largely US-focused) is also methodologically weak (Gerber and Green 1999, 200–2; Pennycook and Rand 2021; Tappin and

25 Deliberative influence of this sort can occur also when people are moved to reassess (or even just to better understand the justifications underpinning) their beliefs—as they are when they need to come up with counterarguments in their own heads or when deliberating with others. Just because their beliefs have survived this process does not mean that no deliberative influence was exercised. See, e.g.: Ahn, Huckfeldt, and Ryan 2014, 11; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, 49.

26 N.b. the number of independents (who identify as neither Republican nor Democrat) has reached a historical high (43 %) in 2014. In 2021, according to Gallup polling, overall 42 % of Americans still identified as independents Moreover, in 2018, 45 % of Independents considered themselves to be moderates in policy terms. Jones 2014, 2019, 2022.

27 Partisans are also more likely to join echo chambers (Boutyline and Willer 2016; Iyengar and Hahn 2009).

28 For a recent analysis of how politicians polarized opinions about COVID-19 policies, see Flores et al. 2022. The latter show that while the overall public opinion in the United States is not exceptionally polarized, politicians and parties have a polarizing influence especially on partisans through the in-group/out-group rhetoric.

Gadsby 2019; Tappin, Pennycook, and Rand 2020a, 2020b).[29] The design of those studies is in serious need of improvement, in various respects (Pennycook et al. 2021). For example, studies showing polarization and motivated reasoning assume that citizens sincerely disclose their beliefs when answering researchers' questions. But there is no way of telling if people's answers actually represent their beliefs about the world or are instances of 'cheerleading' ('expressive responding') or satisficing (Bullock and Lenz 2019; Krosnik 1991). Second, when people informally interact with others on an everyday basis and form beliefs over protracted periods of time—as they do in informal networked deliberation, but not in one-off, organized group deliberations—people are less prone to partisan motivated reasoning (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004a). Third, partisan motivated reasoning can be countered easily through accuracy cues—that is, by making people be motivated by accuracy instead (Druckman 2012; Pennycook and Rand 2021; Zimmermann 2020).

In short, not only do we have lots of evidence (cited at the beginning of this section) that people do indeed listen to differently-minded others within their deliberative networks. We also have good reason for not believing the sort of evidence that is ordinarily offered for supposing that they do not.

4 Conclusion

In this article I have argued that mass deliberative democracy is something that is realistic to strive for. People's overlapping social-qua-communicative networks are the natural mechanism for scaling-up democratic deliberation to the level of the entire community. We have seen that people's capacity to avoid crosscutting deliberation and to carefully curate their communicative networks is overstated. And while polarization, motivated reasoning, and echo chambers would be problematic if pervasive, the evidence suggests that they actually affect only a minority of people. Instead, most people's core networks (and their extended ones all the more) still contain differently-minded people. Furthermore, people still talk about politics with their differently-minded contacts, reflecting upon and taking into account what these have to say. In short, the prospects for informal networked deliberation binding together the entire community are strong, and that is the best hope for realizing deliberative democratic aspirations on a mass scale.[30]

29 See also fn. 21. Coppock (2022) exposes in great detail the methodological weaknesses of well-known studies and shows that when those studies are properly replicated people are found to update their views in line with the Bayesian belief updating model.

30 Thank you to an anonymous referee and to Julian Culp for their helpful comments and suggestions.

Literature

Ackerman, B. A., and J. S. Fishkin. 2004. *Deliberation Day*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Ahn, T. H., R. Huckfeldt, and J. B. Ryan. 2014. *Experts, Activists and Democratic Politics: Are Electorates Self-Educating?* New York: Cambridge University Press.

American National Elections Studies (ANES). 2017. *ANES Times Series Study*. Also available at https://www.icpsr.umich.edu/icpsrweb/ICPSR/studies/36824#.

American National Election Studies (ANES). 2021a. *ANES 2020 Social Media Study*. American National Election Studies. Stanford University and the University of Michigan, November 18, 2021. Also available at https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-social-media-study/.

American National Election Studies (ANES). 2021b. *ANES 2020 Exploratory Testing Survey*. Stanford University and the University of Michigan. Also available at https://electionstudies.org/data-center/2020-exploratory-testing-survey/.

Arguedas, A. R., C. T. Robertson, R. Fletcher, and R. K. Nielsen. 2022. *Echo Chambers, Filter Bubbles and Polarization: A Literature Review*. Reuters Institute, University of Oxford. Also available at https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/echo-chambers-filter-bubbles-and-polarisation-literature-review.

Bächtiger, A., S. Niemeyer, M. Neblo, M. R. Steenbergen, and J. Steiner. 2010. "Disentangling Diversity in Deliberative Democracy: Competing Theories, Their Empirical Blind Spots and Complementarities." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 18: 32—63.

Bächtiger, A., J. S. Dryzek, J. Mansbridge, and M. E. Warren. 2018. "Deliberative Democracy: An Introduction." In *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, edited by A. Bächtiger, J. S. Dryzek, J. Mansbridge, and M. E. Warren, 1—31. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bächtiger, A., and J. Parkinson. 2019. *Mapping and Measuring Deliberation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bakshy, E., S. Messing, and L. A. Adamic. 2015. "Exposure to Ideologically Diverse News and Opinion on Facebook." *Science* 349: 1130—2.

Barberà, P. 2015. How Social Media Reduces Mass Political Polarization. Evidence from Germany, Spain and the US. Paper prepared for the 2015 APSA Conference. Also available at https://pablobarbera.com/static/barbera_polarization_APSA.pdf.

Barberà, P., and G. Rivero. 2015. "Understanding the Political Representativeness of Twitter Users." *Social Science Computer Review* 33: 712—29.

Beaman, L., A. B. Yishay, J. Magruder, and A. M. Mubarak. 2000. "Can Network Theory-Based Targeting Increase Technology Adoption?" *American Economic Review* 111: 1918—43.

Bennett, S. E., R. S. Flickinger, and S. L. Rhine. 2000. "Political Talk over Here, over There, over Time" *British Journal of Political Science* 30: 99—119.

Berelson, B. R., P. F. Lazarsfeld, and W. N. McPhee. 1954. *Voting: A Study of Opinion Formation in a Presidential Campaign*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bhagat, S., M. Burke, C. Diuk, I. O. Filiz, and S. Edunov. 2016. Three and a Half Degrees of Separation. *Facebook Research*, February 4, 2016. Also available at https://research.fb.com/three-and-a-half-degrees-of-separation/.

Blau, P. M., and J. E. Schwartz. 1984. *Crosscutting Social Circles*. Orlando: Academic Press.

Bohman, J. 1998. "The Coming of Age of Deliberative Democracy." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 6: 399—423.

Bolsen, T., J. N. Druckman, and F. L. Cook. 2014. "The Influence of Partisan Motivated Reasoning on Public Opinion." *Political Behavior* 36: 235—62.

Boutyline, A., and R. Willer. 2016. “The Social Structure of Political Echo Chambers: Variation in Ideological Homophily in Online Networks.” *Political Psychology* 38: 551—69.
Bullock, J. G. 2007. “Experiments on Partisanship and Public Opinion: Party Cues, False Beliefs, and Bayesian Updating.” PhD dissertation, Stanford University, Department of Political Science.
Bullock, J. G. 2009. “Partisan Bias and the Bayesian Ideal in the Study of Public Opinion.” *The Journal of Politics* 71: 1109—24.
Bullock, J. G., and G. Lenz. 2019. “Partisan Bias in Surveys.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 22: 325—42.
Bunge, M. 1967. *Studies of the Foundations, Methodology and Philosophy of Science, Vol. III Scientific Research: The Search for System*. Berlin: Springer-Verlag.
Burt, R. S. 1987. “Social Contagion and Innovation: Cohesion versus Structural Equivalence.” *American Journal of Sociology* 92: 1287—335.
Burt, R. S. 1992. *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Burt, R. S. 2000. “The Network Structure of Social Capital.” *Research in Organizational Behaviour* 22: 345—423.
Chambers, S. 2009. “Rhetoric and the Public Sphere: Has Deliberative Democracy Abandoned Mass Democracy?” *Political Theory* 37: 323—50.
Christakis, N. A., and J. H. Fowler. 2009. *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.
Cinelli, M., G. De Francisci Morales, A. Galeazzi, W. Quattrociocchi, and M. Starnini. 2021. “The Echo Chamber Effect on Social Media.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118: e202330118.
Cohn, N., and K. Quealy. 2019. The Democratic Electorate on Twitter Is Not the Democratic Electorate. *New York Times*, April 9.
Coleman, J. S. 1990. *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Coleman, J., E. Katz, and H. Menzel. 1966. *Medical Innovation: A Diffusion Study*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
Conover, P. J., D. D. Searing, and I. M. Crewe. 2002. “The Deliberative Potential of Political Discussion.” *British Journal of Political Science* 32: 21—62.
Coppock, A. 2022. *Persuasion in Parallel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Dryzek, J. S. 2000. *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Dryzek, J. S. 2009. “Democratization as Deliberative Capacity Building.” *Comparative Political Studies* 42: 1379—402.
Dryzek, J. S. 2010. *Foundations and Frontiers of Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Dryzek, J. S. 2014. “Foreword.” In *Deliberative Mini-Publics*, edited by K. Grönlund, A. Bächtiger, and M. Setälä. Colchester: ECPR Press.
Dryzek, J. S. 2017. “The Forum, the System and the Polity: Three Varieties of Democratic Theory.” *Political Theory* 45: 610—36.
Dryzek, J. S., A. Bächtiger, S. Chambers, J. Cohen, J. N. Druckman, A. Felicetti, J. S. Fishkin, D. M. Farrell, A. Fung, A. Gutmann, H. Landemore, J. Mansbridge, S. Marien, M. A. Neblo, S. Niemeyer, M. Setälä, R. Slothuus, J. Suiter, D. Thompson, and M. E. Warren. 2019. “The Crisis of Democracy and the Science of Deliberation; Citizens Can Avoid Polarization and Make Sound Decisions.” *Science* 363 (6432): 1144—6.
Druckman, J. N. 2012. “The Politics of Motivation.” *Critical Review* 24: 199—216.
Druckman, J. N., and M. C. McGrath. 2019. “The Evidence for Motivated Reasoning in Climate Change Preference Formation.” *Nature Climate Change* 9: 111—9.

Druckman, J. N., E. Peterson, and R. Slothuus. 2013. "How Elite Partisan Polarisation Affects Public Opinion Formation." *American Political Science Review* 107: 57—79.

Druckman, J. N., M. S. Levendusky, and A. McLain. 2018. "No Need to Watch: How the Effects of Partisan Media Can Spread via Interpersonal Discussions." *American Journal of Political Science* 62: 99—112.

Dubois, E. 2015. "The Strategic Opinion Leader: Personal Influence and Political Networks in a Hybrid Media System." Doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford.

Dubois, E., and G. Blank. 2018. "The Echo Chamber Is Overstated: The Moderating Effect of Political Interest and Diverse Media." *Information, Communication & Society* 21: 729—45.

Eady, G., J. Nagler, A. Guess, J. Zilinsky, and J. A. Tucker. 2019. "How Many People Live in Political Bubbles on Social Media? Evidence from Linked Survey and Twitter Data." *Sage Open* 1: 1—21.

Elster, J. 1989. *Nuts and Bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ekstrom, P. D., B. A. Smith, A. L. Williams, and H. Kim. 2020. "Social Network Disagreement and Reasoned Candidate Preferences." *American Political Research* 48: 132—54.

Farrell, H., and M. Fourcade. 2023. "The Moral Economy of High-Tech Modernism." *Daedalus* 152: 225—35.

Feld, S. L. 1991. "Why Your Friends Have More Friends Than You Do." *American Journal of Sociology* 96: 1464—77.

Festinger, L. 1950. "Informal Social Communication." *Psychological Review* 57: 271—82.

Fiorina, M. P., and S. J. Abrams. 2008. "Political Polarization in the American Public." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 563—88.

Fishkin, J. S. 1995. *The Voice of the People: Public Opinion and Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Fishkin, J. S. 2009. *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Fishkin, J. S., and P. Laslett. 2003. "Introduction." In *Philosophy, Politics and Society 7: Debating Deliberative Democracy*, edited by J. S. Fishkin and P. Laslett, 1—6. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Fishkin, J. S. 2018. *Democracy When People Are Thinking*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fletcher, R., C. T. Robertson, and R. K. Nielsen. 2021. "How Many People Live in Politically Partisan Online News Echo Chambers in Different Countries?" *Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media* 1. https://doi.org/10.51685/jqd.2021.020.

Flores, A., J. C. Cole, S. Dickert, K. Eom, G. M. Jiga-Boy, T. Kogut, R. Loria, M. Mayorga, E. J. Pedersen, B. Pereira, E. Rubaltelli, D. K. Sherman, P. Slovic, D. Västfjäll, and L. Van Bove. 2022. "Politicians Polarize and Experts Depolarize Public Support for COVID-19 Management Policies across Countries." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 119: e2117543119.

Fung, A. 2003. "Recipes for Public Spheres: Eight Institutional Choices & Their Consequences." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 11: 338—67.

Fung, A. 2007. "Minipublics: Deliberative Designs and Their Consequences." In *Deliberation, Participation and Democracy: Can the People Govern?* edited by S. W. Rosenberg, 159—83. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Geiß, S., M. Magin, P. Jürgens, and B. Stark. 2021. "Loopholes in the Echo Chambers: How the Echo Chamber Metaphor Oversimplifies the Effects of Information Gateways on Opinion Expression." *Digital Journalism* 9: 660—86.

Gerber, A. S., and D. Green. 1999. "Misperceptions about Perception Bias." *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 189—210.

Gerber, M., A. Bächtiger, I. Fiket, M. Steenbergen, and J. Steiner. 2014. "Deliberative and Non-deliberative Persuasion: Mechanisms of Opinion Formation in EuroPolis." *European Union Politics* 15: 410—29.

Gerber, M. 2015. "Equal Partners in Dialogue? Participation Equality in a Transnational Deliberative Poll (EuroPolis)." *Political Studies* 63: 110—30.

Goel, S., W. Mason, and D. J. Watts. 2010. "Real and Perceived Attitude Agreement in Social Networks." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 99: 611—21.

Goodin, R. E. 2008. *Innovating Democracy: Democratic Theory and Practice after the Deliberative Turn*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Goodin, R. E. 2017. "The Epistemic Benefits of Deliberative Democracy." *Policy Sciences* 50: 351—66.

Goodin, R. E., and J. S. Dryzek. 2006. "Deliberative Impacts: The Macro-Political Uptake of Mini-Publics." *Politics & Society* 34: 219—44.

Granovetter, M. D. 1973. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78: 1360—80.

Grice, H. P. 1975. "Logic and Conversation." In *The Logic of Grammar*, edited by D. D. Hartman, and G. Hartman, 41—58. Encino: Dickenson.

Grönlund, K., A. Bächtiger, and M. Setälä. 2014. *Deliberative Mini-Publics*. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Guess, A. M. 2021. "(Almost) Everything in Moderation: New Evidence about American's Online Media Diets." *American Journal of Political Science* 65: 1007—22.

Guess, A. M., B. Nyhan, B. Lyons, and J. Reifler. 2018. *Avoiding the Echo Chamber About Echo Chambers: Why Selective Exposure to Like-Minded Political News Is Less Prevalent Than You Think*. Miami: Knight Foundation.

Gutmann, A., and D. Thompson. 1996. *Democracy and Disagreement*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Habermas, J. 1962/1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence. Oxford: Polity.

Habermas, J. 1992/1996. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg. Oxford: Polity.

Hapgood, F. 1995. The Media Lab at 10. *Wired*, 1 Nov. Also available at https://www.wired.com/1995/11/media/.

Hedström, P. 2008. "Studying Mechanisms to Strengthen Causal Inferences in Quantitative Research." In *Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, edited by J. M. Box-Steffensmeier, H. E. Brady, and D. Collier. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hedström, P., and P. Bearman. 2013. "What Is Analytical Sociology All about?" In *Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology*, edited by H. Peter, and P. Bearman, 3—24. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hedström, P. and R. Swedberg, eds. 1998. *Social Mechanisms: An Analytical Approach to Social Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hedström, P., and L. Udehn. 2013. "Analytical Sociology and Theories of the Middle Range." In *Oxford Handbook of Analytical Sociology*, edited by H. Peter, and P. Bearman, 25—47. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hedström, P., and P. Ylikovski. 2010. "Causal Mechanisms in the Social Sciences." *Annual Review of Sociology* 36: 49—67.

Hodas, N. O., F. Kooti, and K. Lerman. 2013. "Friendship Paradox Redux: Your Friends Are More Interesting Than You." In *Proceedings of the Seventh International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*. Also available at https://www.aaai.org/ocs/index.php/ICWSM/ICWSM13/paper/viewFile/6136/6361.

Huckfeldt, R. 1983. "Social Context, Social Networks, and Urban Neighborhoods: Environmental Constraints on Friendship Choice." *American Journal of Sociology* 89: 651—69.

Huckfeldt, R., and J. Sprague. 1987. “Networks in Context: The Social Flow of Political Information.” *American Political Science Review* 81: 1197—216.
Huckfeldt, R., and J. Sprague. 1988. “Choice, Social Structure and Political Information: The Information Coercion of Minorities.” *American Journal of Political Science* 32: 467—82.
Huckfeldt, R., and J. Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics, and Social Communication*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Huckfeldt, R., P. E. Johnson, and J. Sprague. 2004a. *Political Disagreement: The Survival of Diverse Opinions Within Communication Networks*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Huckfeldt, R., J. M. Mendez, and T. Osborn. 2004b. “Disagreement, Ambivalence, and Engagement: The Political Consequences of Heterogeneous Networks.” *Political Psychology* 25: 65—95.
IDEA. 2022. IDEA Voter Turnout Database. Also available at https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/voter-turnout.
Iyengar, S., and K. S. Hahn. 2009. “Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use.” *Journal of Communication* 59: 19—39.
Jacobs, L. R., F. L. Cook, and M. X. Delli Carpini. 2009. *Talking Together*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Jones, J. M. 2014. Record-high 42% of Americans Identify as Independents. *Gallup News*, 8 January.
Jones, J. M. 2019. Americans Continue to Embrace Political Independence. *Gallup News*, 7 January.
Jones, J. M. 2022. U.S Political Party Preferences Shifted Greatly during 2021. *Gallup News*, 17 January.
Katz, E., and P. Lazarsfeld. 1955. *Personal Influence*. New York: Free Press.
Klein, W. M. 1997. “Objective Standards Are Not Enough: Affective, Self-Evaluative and Behavioural Responses to Social Comparison Information.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 72: 763—74.
Krosnik, J. A. 1991. “Response Strategies for Coping with the Cognitive Demands of Attitude Measures in Surveys.” *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 5: 213—36.
Kruglanski, A. W., and D. M. Webster. 1996. “Motivated Closing of the Mind: Its Cognitive and Social Effects.” *Psychological Review* 103: 263—83.
Lafont, C. 2015. “Deliberation, Participation and Democratic Legitimacy: Should Mini-Publics Shape Public Policy?” *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 23: 40—63.
Landemore, H. 2013. *Democratic Reason*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Landemore, H. 2020. *Open Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Landemore, H. 2022. “Reply to Critics. Symposium on Hélène Landemore’s Open Democracy.” *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* 18: 8—11.
Lazarsfeld, P. F., B. R. Berelson, and H. Gaudet. 1944. *The People’s Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign*. New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce.
Lazarsfeld, P. F., and R. K. Merton. 1954. “Friendship as a Social Process: A Substantive and Methodological Analysis.” In *Freedom and Control in Modern Society*, edited by M. Berger, T. Abel, and C. H. Page, 18—66. New York: Van Nostrand.
Lazer, D., B. Rubineau, C. Chetkovich, N. Katz, and M. Neblo. 2010. “The Coevolution of Networks and Political Attitudes.” *Political Communication* 27: 248—74.
Levendusky, S. M. 2023. *Our Common Bonds*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Levitan, L. C., and P. S. Visser. 2008. “The Impact of the Social Context on Resistance to Persuasion: Effortful versus Effortless Responses to Counter-attitudinal Information.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 44: 640—9.
Levitan, L. C., and P. S. Visser. 2009. “Social Network Composition and Attitude Strength: Exploring the Dynamics within Newly Formed Social Networks.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 45: 1057—67.

Lodge, M., and C. S. Taber. 2000. “Three Steps toward a Theory of Motivated Political Reasoning.” In *Elements of Reason*, edited by A. Lupia, M. D. McCubbins, and S. L. Popkin, 183—213. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lord, C. S., L. Ross, and M. Lepper. 1979. “Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization: The Effect of Prior Theories on Subsequently Considered Evidence.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37: 2098—109.

Luskin, R., I. O’Flynn, J. Fishkin, and D. Russell. 2014. “Deliberating across Deep Divides.” *Political Studies* 62: 116—35.

Mansbridge, J. J. 1999. “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent ‘yes’.” *The Journal of Politics* 61: 628—57.

Mansbridge, J., J. Bohman, S. Chambers, T. Christiano, A. Fung, J. Parkinson, D. F. Thompson, and M. E. Warren. 2012. “A Systemic Approach to Deliberative Democracy.” In *Deliberative Systems*, edited by J. Mansbridge, and J. Parkinson, 1—26. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mayntz, R. 2013. “Mechanisms in the Analysis of Social Macro-Phenomena.” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 34: 237—59.

McGregor, S. 2019. “Social Media as Public Opinion: How Journalists Use Social Media to Represent Public Opinion.” *Journalism* 20: 1070—86.

McPherson, M., L. Smith-Lovin, and J. M. Cook. 2001. “Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 27: 415—44.

Merton, R. K. 1968. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. New York: Free Press.

Merton, R. K. 1949/1996. “Theories of the Middle Range.” In Merton, *On Social Structure and Science*, edited by P. Sztompka, 41—50. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Messing, S., and S. J. Westwood. 2014. “Selective Exposure in the Age of Social Media: Endorsement Trump Partisan Source Affiliation when Selecting News Online.” *Communication Research* 41: 1042—63.

Milgram, S. 1967. “The Small World Problem.” *Psychology Today* 1: 61—7.

Minozzi, W., H. Song, D. M. J. Lazer, M. A. Neblo, and K. Ognyanova. 2020. “The Incidental Pundit: Who Talks Politics with Whom, and Why?” *American Journal of Political Science* 64: 135—51.

Mondak, J. J., and D. C. Mutz. 2001. Involuntary Association: How the Workplace Contributes to American Civic Life. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association.

Monge, P. R., and N. S. Contractor. 2003. *Theories of Communication Networks*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Moussaïd, M., S. M. Herzog, J. E. Kämmera, and R. Hertwig. 2017. “Reach and Speed of Judgment Propagation in the Laboratory.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 117: 4117—22.

Muise, D., H. Hosseinmardi, B. Howland, M. Mobius, D. Rothschild, and D. J. Watts. 2022. “Quantifying Partisan News Diets in Web and TV Audiences.” *Science Advances* 8: eabn0083.

Mutz, D. C. 2006. *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mutz, D. C. 2008. “Is Deliberative Democracy a Falsifiable Theory?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 521—38.

Mutz, D. C., and J. J. Mondak. 2006. “The Workplace as a Context for Cross-Cutting Political Discourse.” *The Journal of Politics* 68: 140—55.

Negroponte, N. 1995. *Being Digital*. New York: Knopf.

Niemeyer, S. 2014. "Scaling up Deliberation to Mass Publics: Harnessing Mini-Publics in a Deliberative System." In *Deliberative Mini-Publics*, edited by K. Grönlund, A. Bächtiger, and M. Setälä. Colchester: ECPR Press.

Niemeyer, S., and J. Jennstäl. 2018. "Scaling up Deliberative Effects — Applying Lessons of Mini-Publics." In *Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*, edited by A. Bächtiger, J. Dryzek, J. J. Mansbridge, and M. Warren, 329—47. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Odabas, M. 2022. 10 Facts about Americans and Twitter. *Pew Research Center*, 5 May. Also available at https://pewrsr.ch/3vM1gga.

O'Flynn, I. 2017. "Pulling Together: Shared Intentions, Deliberative Democracy in Deeply Divided Societies." *British Journal of Political Science* 47: 187—202.

Pennycook, G., J. Binnedyk, C. Newton, and D. G. Rand. 2021. "A Practical Guide to Doing Behavioral Research on Fake News and Misinformation." *Collabra: Psychology* 7: 25293.

Pennycook, G., and D. G. Rand. 2021. "The Psychology of Fake News." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 25: 388—402.

Phillips, A. 1995. *The Politics of Presence: Democracy and Group Representation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Pool, I. D. S., and M. Kochen. 1978/9. "Contacts and Influence." *Social Networks* 1: 5—51.

Prentice, D., and E. L. Paluck. 2020. "Engineering Social Change Using Social Norms: Lessons from the Study of Collective Action." *Current Opinion in Psychology* 35: 138—42.

Prior, M. 2009. "The Immensely Inflated News Audience: Assessing Bias in Self-Reported News Exposure." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 73: 130—43.

Russell, B. 1928. *Sceptical Essays*. London: G. Allen & Unwin.

Settle, J. E. 2018. *Frenemies: How Social Media Polarized America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, G. 2009. *Democratic Innovations: Designing Institutions for Citizen Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Steiner, J., M. C. Jaramillo, R. C. M. Maia, and S. Mameli. 2017. *Deliberation Across Deeply Divided Societies: Transformative Moments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stinchcombe, A. 1993. "The Conditions of Fruitfulness of Theorizing about Mechanisms in Social Science." In *Social Theory and Social Policy: Essays in Honor of James S. Coleman*, edited by A. Sørensen, and S. Spilerman, 23—41. Westport: Praeger.

Stone, P. 2022. "Open Democracy versus Popular Rule. Symposium on Hélène Landemore's Open Democracy." *Journal of Deliberative Democracy* 18: 5.

Strickland, A. A., C. S. Taber, and M. Lodge. 2011. "Motivated Reasoning and Public Opinion." *Journal of Health Politics, Policy & Law* 36: 935—44.

Suiter, J., L. Muradova, J. Gastil, and D. M. Farrell. 2020. "Scaling up Deliberation: Testing the Potential of Mini-Publics to Enhance the Deliberative Capacity of Citizens." *Swiss Political Science Review* 26: 253—72.

Sunstein, C. R. 2001. *Republic.com*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Taber, C. S., and M. Lodge. 2006. "Motivated Scepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs." *American Journal of Political Science* 50: 755—69.

Tanasoca, A. 2020. *Deliberation Naturalized: Improving Real Existing Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tappin, B. M., and S. Gadsby. 2019. "Biased Belief in the Bayesian Brain: A Deeper Look at the Evidence." *Consciousness and Cognition* 68: 107—14.

Tappin, B. M., G. Pennycook, and D. G. Rand. 2020a. "Thinking Clearly about Causal Inferences of Politically Motivated Reasoning: Why Paradigmatic Study Designs Often Undermine Causal Inference." *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 34: 81—7.

Tappin, B. M., G. Pennycook, and D. G. Rand. 2020b. “Bayesian or Biased? Analytic Thinking and Political Belief Updating.” *Cognition* 204: 104375.
Tilly, C. 2001. “Mechanisms in Political Processes.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 4: 21—41.
Visser, P. S., and R. R. Mirabile. 2004. “Attitudes in the Social Context: The Impact of Social Network Composition on Individual-Level Attitude Strength.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87: 779—95.
Watts, D. 2004. *Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age*. New York: W. W. Norton.
Wojcieszak, M. 2011. “Deliberation and Attitude Polarization.” *Journal of Communication* 61: 596—617.
Young, I. M. 1990. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Young, I. M. 2002. *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Zimmermann, F. 2020. “The Dynamics of Motivated Beliefs.” *The American Economic Review* 110: 337—63.