

She also argues “that government may foster capacities for forming and sustaining committed, intimate relationships” (p. 154), but this does not mean that she agrees with so-called marriage promotion. After a careful examination of the arguments made by marriage promoters and assessment of the evidence, for example, that marriage promotes social health, improves the conditions for children’s welfare, and stops poverty, she finds that these arguments are not compelling on the basis of the evidence. On the other hand, she argues that promoting relationships among equals, urging both parties to take responsibility for caring in the family, and limiting work demands on family life may be a positive direction for supporting “healthy marriage.”

By themselves, these claims do not seem controversial. The elegance of McClain’s argument becomes clear in the next step: As she examines recent policies that seem to be aimed at one or another of these three goals (for example, the favoring of marriage incorporated into welfare reform, as a way of fostering responsibility), many seem to run afoul of the other two goals while trying to uphold one of them. She insists that liberal policies toward families must promote all three goals. Adherence to all three provides clear guidance about which kinds of government policies toward families are acceptable and which ones are not.

Thus, McClain seems to share with communitarians a concern that governments foster individuals’ growth and development in the family, that families are the “seedbeds of virtue.” Having agreed with that position, though, she then insists that government policies that do not respect different sexual orientations, for example, cannot meet the test of serving as a seedbed of virtue because they are intolerant. She thus argues for a number of seemingly controversial family proposals: same-sex marriage, kinship registration, equality in sharing housework and caring duties, and comprehensive (rather than abstinence-only) sex education in schools.

Consider, for example, McClain’s argument for comprehensive sex education. Through a careful analysis of the content of “abstinence-only” programs, the author discovers that arguments about abstinence have a necessarily narrow understanding of human sexuality (in which everything is couched in terms of the dangers of sexual intercourse), which, she believes, hinders individuals’ capacities for understanding their own desire and thus their capacity to be self-governing. At the same time, such programs assign different views about sexuality to boys and girls and thus perpetuate a view of male irresponsibility in matters of sexuality.

Perhaps the most controversial chapter is McClain’s defense of same-sex marriage. She argues that “inequality among families” is as unjustifiable as inequality within families, and therefore argues that same-sex marriages should be permitted by law. In a close analysis of the *Goodridge* opinion (2004), she sides with the Supreme

Court of Massachusetts in their view that “civil marriage is an evolving paradigm,” and recalls the principle of toleration that she has set out. There is no reason, if marriage is a good, to deny it to gay and lesbian citizens.

In response to other recent feminist claims that marriage should be abolished entirely (a claim made by some gay and lesbian opponents to marriage and by Martha Fineman, who believes that the bond between caregiver and dependent should define family units), McClain continues to defend the importance of marriage. Nonetheless, the principles of equality and responsibility also demand that other forms of family relationships be respected, and so she favors a system of “kinship registration” that would permit families to receive state support for the various arrangements that they might make. Such registration, rather than weakening the family, she argues, would strengthen it.

There are limitations, of course, to McClain’s approach. In being almost entirely U.S.-focused, McClain does not consider proposals such as a family allowance, a policy in existence in all other industrialized states. Nor does she pay much attention to the kinds of inequalities among families that result from unequal economic circumstances (and their correlates, housing, education, safety, etc.). She runs up against the familiar objections raised against liberals about tolerance. Those who do not share her view of respect for others, for example, will probably continue to argue that same-sex marriage embodies proscribed evils, rather than that it disrespects people who deserve to be respected. But no matter. This book is well argued, surveys most of the ongoing issues in family policy, and demonstrates what a creative, coherent, liberal approach to family policy might entail.

**Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy.**

By Diana C. Mutz. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 184p. \$60.00 cloth, \$20.99 paper.

**Citizen Speak: The Democratic Imagination in American Life.**

By Andrew J. Perrin. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006. 208p. \$45.00 cloth, \$19.00 paper.  
DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707070235

— Ethan J. Leib, *University of California—Hastings College of the Law*

Deliberative democracy is no longer reserved for the theorists. Empiricists now want a part of the action. With their various tools, social scientists are testing and considering both deliberative democratic institutions (e.g., juries, town hall meetings, deliberative polls, and other fora for citizen discussion) and the preconditions of context and character that theorists have proposed are necessary to make deliberative democracy work. Political scientist Diana Mutz and sociologist Andrew Perrin have written new books purporting to bring empirical work to bear on the claims of deliberative democratic theory. Both books are short and illuminating, though their postures as serious

challenges to deliberative democratic theory are overstated and potentially misplaced. This failure to undermine the enterprise of deliberative democracy, however, does not prevent each from making a serious contribution to helping us understand how citizens engage in political debate and discussion among themselves in their everyday environments.

At the core of *Hearing the Other Side* is a presentation of provocative results from careful social network survey studies. Mutz finds that fewer than one-quarter of survey respondents can report a single person with differing political views with whom they interact—and that Americans have some of the fewest “crosscutting” political discussants in the world. This is troubling because of the benefits that are routinely imputed to crosscutting conversation: it leads to tolerance, knowledge of others’ views, and a more intimate understanding of one’s own views. In canvassing the extant literature and developing her own tests with available survey data (and adding a small experimental confirmation, to boot), Mutz is able to establish that talking with others who have opposing political positions does tend to lead to tolerance and awareness of legitimate rationales for others’ views but has no noticeable effect on our understanding of our own views.

Because crosscutting political dialogue has these substantial benefits, she suggests a way to achieve more such talk: by seeking and developing more “weak ties” within our networks. As Mutz ably shows, our looser and weaker ties are more likely to promote crosscutting conversation because voluntary associations and our close friendship and kinship networks are extremely homogenous. One cannot, Mutz persuasively argues, merely seek to increase network size, because that would also tend to add enough homogenous reinforcement to risk counterbalancing the benefits of crosscutting political talk.

These findings among others in Mutz’s engaging and well-written book are in substantial tension with Robert Huckfeldt, Paul E. Johnson, and John Sprague’s 2004 conclusions in their *Political Disagreement: The Survival of Diverse Opinions within Communications Networks* (2004). They found, utilizing many of the same data sets and surveys, that Americans are regularly exposed to disagreement in their networks and appropriately and easily integrate it into their perspectives without incident. Mutz carefully deconstructs and undermines many of their assumptions and analytical techniques to paint a much bleaker picture of the homogeneity of our networks and our general isolation from crosscutting discourse.

However, Mutz does not end her study there. It turns out that crosscutting conversations also have a dark side: they lead to diminishing political participation among the discussants involved. Not only are those with discussants with differing political views less likely to become activists in promoting their own political preferences, they are also less likely to vote altogether. High levels of participation

and homogenous networks are highly correlated; partisan activists tend to exist in “echo chambers.”

Mutz even has a set of explanations for how this dynamic works. She is able to marshal impressive data to prove that crosscutting exposure both results in ambivalence about a discussant’s views and triggers a conflict avoidance mechanism. Together, these contribute to making those exposed to opposing views less likely to participate in politics. This is a resurrection of the moribund “cross-pressures theory” and a very well-argued one at that; it also undermines some of Huckfeldt et al.’s work suggesting that disagreement does not lead to shunning politics or a general dissonance. The debate will go on, of course, but Mutz’s is a strong and convincing voice.

When summarizing her findings in their starkest form, Mutz suggests that we have to choose between “deliberative democracy”—by which she means networks with crosscutting exposure—and “participatory democracy”—by which she means active and voting partisans. This characterization makes for good copy but trades upon a thin conception of deliberative democratic theory. To be sure, Mutz is right that deliberative theorists could pay more careful attention to the empirical realities of everyday discourse, but her findings serve as a very limited challenge to deliberative theory as such.

There is just so much more to deliberative theory than the idea that people should engage in crosscutting political discussion in their everyday networks with people who vote differently for president or have different partisan identifications. Indeed, although there are undoubtedly deliberative theorists who recommend that citizens argue with their disagreeing cocitizens about politics, the center of deliberative democratic theory is about what citizens, legislators, and judges should do when acting politically and making actual political decisions. To the extent that deliberation in private networks contributes to deliberative democracy, those conversations at the periphery permeate the core of political action in many indirect ways, not merely through direct citizen participation. Moreover, the preconditions of equality and reciprocity are at least as central to deliberative democracy as exposure to diversity. Indeed, Mutz’s fascinating evidence is potentially a much more serious challenge to those who put the promotion of diversity at the center of their political agenda; it sheds only moderate light on the central processes and contexts that deliberative theorists take as their focus.

Mutz’s proxy for measuring “deliberation” also may be too rough to be of real interest: deliberative theorists surely think that two people who voted for Bill Clinton and share many common political views can engage in meaningful crosscutting debate and deliberation, but it is not clear that these conversations get included in her measures. We also deliberate by reading opposing views, listening to the radio, and otherwise exposing ourselves to or engaging in crosscutting debate with people outside

our networks; none of these forms of deliberation are included in Mutz's study. Nor, finally, do deliberative theorists necessarily have as narrow a view of what counts as citizen participation as Mutz. Talking itself might be viewed as a form of participation in a deliberative democracy and Mutz seems to limit her analysis to more conventional forms of partisan activism.

*Citizen Speak* also postures as a refinement to deliberative democratic theory. Perrin's claim to challenge deliberative democracy is even more tenuous because, as he acknowledges, deliberative democratic theory is mostly a normative enterprise. His effort to show that our everyday political conversations do not conform to the strictures of most accounts of proper deliberation should hardly be especially surprising or interesting to deliberative democrats. Nevertheless, Perrin's book explores important empirical perspectives on how citizens talk to one another.

In his case, Perrin's evidence (for the most part) comes from careful observation of small focus groups he recruited and moderated in Alameda County, California. He is interested in in-group discussion because he views all thinking and talking as "citizenship activities"—and because he sees groups (even if homogenous) as the fundamental unit of citizenship. His capacious idea of political action and participation is refreshing if overly generous; his account of participation stands in stark contrast with the way Mutz operationalizes the idea in her study. His appreciation is that much of our sense of ourselves as citizens does not emerge from explicitly political discussion; instead discussion more generally is a critical corrective to the sort of work Mutz has undertaken. Mutz's analysis focuses on political discussants in particular.

Perrin conducted focus groups in five different types of civic associations: churches—both Protestant and Catholic—labor unions, business organizations, and sporting groups. He furnished volunteers within these groups with four political scenarios, watching and moderating their reactions. Specifically, he asked citizens what they would do if their senator was involved in a bribery scandal, if their local police force were engaged in racial profiling, if a local chemical plant was violating pollution laws, and if their local airport was threatening to expand.

Throughout the book, Perrin purports to discover how the "democratic imagination" works: How do citizens talk among themselves and how do they evaluate the avenues of political recourse available to them? His focus on what contributes to a citizen's ability to develop "creative" solutions is particularly interesting, though admittedly remains a bit vague throughout. His assessment that our imaginations are bounded by "political microcultures" seems plausible, though hardly as exciting as his effort to specify the conditions for true imaginative political problem solving.

Although the set of questions Perrin poses is certainly worthwhile, the book takes many theoretical diversions that obscure a clean argumentative structure. More, he

devotes substantial real estate to categorizing different rhetorical styles, moves, logics, and methods and to giving us snippets of transcript here and there to give us a sense of how people talk in their "organic" environments. Discussants, it turns out, use narrative, trail off on tangents, use emotional appeals, and are skeptical of facts. They invoke moral arguments with great regularity—more than others have thought. They draw upon their own self-interest as well as the enlarged interests of the community. Perhaps most saliently, they spend a great deal of energy considering the capacity they have to accomplish anything about their problems. They consider political protest, signature gathering, media blitzes, governmental action, boycotts, writing letters to the editor, and revolution.

Ultimately, these building blocks may someday unlock the key to citizen creativity, however defined. However, the book does not deliver a persuasive account of the very creativity and imagination that Perrin purports to explore; he gives us only its loose structure. In the final analysis, there is something depressing about his findings: Most of the dialogue and discussion that Perrin reports can be seen as failures of imagination because people are unwilling to do much of anything in response to their political stimuli.

Given that all of Perrin's reported conversations transpire within civic organizations known to mobilize their participants well, perhaps homogeneity contributes to these participants' failure to imagine new methods to address their political problems. However, this would be the very opposite of what Mutz's study would suggest: homogenous groups should do better in producing active partisans. Perhaps crosscutting discussion promotes more creativity. Perrin might try more heterogeneous focus groups next to see if they are more imaginative in tackling political dilemmas.

Mutz and Perrin have written books investigating the nature of political discourse as it occurs in everyday environments. Although these books do not substantially challenge deliberative theory, they do contribute to an ongoing inquiry that should command widespread attention among political scientists and sociologists interested in how we can develop a tolerant, knowledgeable, and creative political culture to nurture our democracy.

#### **Free Speech and Democracy in Ancient Athens.**

By Arlene W. Saxonhouse. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. 246p. \$70.00.

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— Geoffrey M. Vaughan, *University of Maryland, Baltimore County*

The subject of this book is *parrhêsia*, free or, as the author sometimes prefers, frank speech. Through close readings of stories by Plato and Homer, she identifies free speech with shamelessness and self-exposure, claiming that "[s]hame and free speech represent opposing points in the political order that play off one another in the construction of a stable