



Project
MUSE[®]

Today's Research. Tomorrow's Inspiration.

Making Deliberation Cooler

Lynn M. Sanders

The Good Society, Volume 19, Number 1, 2010, pp. 41-47 (Article)

Published by Penn State University Press



For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/gso/summary/v019/19.1.sanders.html>

Making Deliberation Cooler

Lynn M. Sanders

What better time than the summer of 2009 for James Fishkin's newest book to arrive on the scene?¹ Our hot August featured one raucous town hall meeting after another, generating several arrests; members of Congress hung in effigy; a reported death threat against North Carolina Democratic Representative Brad Miller; and—last but not least—a vow by the longest serving Representative in the House, Michigan Democrat John Dingell to talk happily about health care except with anyone who wanted to “demagogue the discussion.” Lest you think as I did at first that Dingell had indulged in verbing—changing a noun into a verb—know that the Oxford English Dictionary already considers “demagogue” a verb, though chiefly one in the U.S., citing some usage from the 1897 Congressional Record.

Speaking of distinctive American inventions: for some years now—almost a quarter century, in fact—James Fishkin has spearheaded an ambitious project to marry the modern science of opinion polling with the ideal of democratic discussion rooted, at least in our imaginations, in the Athenian polis.² This combination of ancient ideal and modern technology creates an institutional framework for “deliberative democracy,” a familiar term that Fishkin reserves for the quite rare conjunction of actual political equality and “good” conditions for the development of “thoughtful” opinions. Fishkin aims to make this conjunction of egalitarianism and thoughtfulness a more regular occurrence, via an invention called Deliberative Polling.³ *When the People Speak* is the latest formal enunciation of this new methodology. It is not Fishkin's first book on the topic, but it is the most theoretically ambitious and comprehensive one to date.⁴

The project of Deliberative Polling has already succeeded impressively in terms of frequency. *When the People Speak* includes a chart detailing the Deliberative Polls conducted between 1994 and 2008: there have been scores of them already, in twenty-seven countries and on the Internet, and the numbers are building. Yet this burgeoning empirical record is available via other media;⁵ Deliberative Polling is widely covered by news outlets. So why write an old-fashioned, university press book about Deliberative Polling?

Fishkin's primary aim is normative and philosophical. This is a book about the democratic theory of “deliberative democracy,” interlocuted with evidence from deliberative polling.

The main point though is the normative rationale. (He notes that more empirical discussions of the findings from deliberative polling, generated with his collaborator Robert Luskin, will be presented later.) Philosophically, Fishkin buttresses the normative argument with the received wisdom of political thinkers, especially the American Founders. As we would expect in a book with the word deliberation in its subtitle, Habermas is invoked here, but not nearly as often as are the authors of the *Federalist Papers*, Madison in particular. This is because Fishkin, like the Federalists, is a proponent of the power of institutional design. And he is, like other institutional designers, a reformer. This raises the question: what is the object of the reform? The Deliberative Poll is indisputably a clever idea, but its real power emerges not from its cleverness but from how it compares to, and might improve upon, what else is on offer as a mechanism for discovering public opinion.

This raises the question: what is the object of reform? The Deliberative Poll is indisputably a clever idea, but its real power emerges not from its cleverness but from how it compares to, and might improve upon, what else is on offer as a mechanism for discovering public opinion.

To qualify as democratic, deliberations must meet egalitarian standards.⁶ To qualify as deliberative, opinion must be generated under “good” conditions conducive to thoughtfulness and characterized by balanced consideration of alternative information and perspectives. To both ends, deliberative democracy needs to be a well-managed, safe encounter, so that it will not discourage, and will motivate to

participate, the ordinary citizens who do not already feel driven to express their intense political views. Not surprisingly for such a long-standing and substantial enterprise as Deliberative Polling, exactly which aspects of deliberative democracy Fishkin advertises as most improving—better thinking via “good conditions,” fuller participation in deliberation of more representative citizens, or better managed, less raucous public encounters—has shifted over time.

Originally, Fishkin adopted and attempted to respond to the worries emerging from the tradition of political behavior research, from students of public opinion and voting led by Philip Converse. *When the People Speak* not only still addresses Converse, but also claims to go far beyond the primary rejoinder to Converse in mainstream public opinion research. In the recent past, Fishkin and his colleagues have geared analysis of deliberative polling to address concerns about egalitarian participation

raised by critics of deliberation. They have asked whether in deliberations, some persons' views dominate; their findings are generally quite reassuring in this regard. They have addressed how to motivate and equalize participation, and the relationship between demographic characteristics of participants and the views emerging and prevailing in discussions.

Most recently, in the first year of the Obama Presidency and the second of the Great Recession, Fishkin has presented Deliberative Polling as a corrective to the town hall meeting gone awry. His August 2009 op-ed piece in the *New York Times*, "Town Halls by Invitation,"⁷ exemplifies Fishkin's Madisonian devotion to proceduralism: better-designed democratic forums will reign in the worst excesses of participatory zeal. This is a good place to start assessing the promise and pitfalls of Deliberative Polling, and especially the correspondence between what the theory of deliberative democracy holds and what develops in the practice of Deliberative Polling.

When the People Shout

Fishkin's op-ed portrays the August 2009 town halls, with their outbursts, heckling and other excesses, as democratic deliberation gone badly wrong.⁸ Though misleadingly styled as a variant of the New England town meeting, Fishkin says that the health care town halls were nothing like them. Part of what accounts for these meetings getting out of hand, Fishkin says, is unscientific selection. Those who decide to show up at these "amorphous, unpredictable meetings," cannot possibly be a representative sample of a Congressional district. When open to all comers, town hall meetings degenerate into "open invitations for interest groups and grass roots campaigns to capture the public dialogue."⁹

To counter these excesses, Fishkin advises using Deliberative Polling. Three elements of Deliberative Polling promise the necessary tamping down. First, random sampling assures the dilution of intensity, because a "random sample cannot be captured by people with intense interests volunteering themselves."¹⁰ Second, "balanced briefing materials" prepare deliberative polling participants to encounter the issues. In the book, Fishkin enlarges beyond the scope of his *Times* op-ed on this criterion of balance: it is achieved according to "stakeholders" in the issue being addressed in the deliberations (for example, in the town hall meetings, health care reform). Materials provided to deliberators are certified by these stakeholders as representing the range of views and expertise engaged by the issue at hand.¹¹

Third and perhaps most intriguingly from the perspective of democratic theory, Fishkin advertises the role of the moderators in small group discussions in deliberative polling. Though moderators make an appearance in *When the People Speak*, in the op-ed response to heated August town halls they are announced

as "key:" "in the current town hall format, shrill voices can easily silence the rest. But during a deliberative poll, trained moderators make sure that every voice is heard and that the group carefully and thoughtfully narrows in on its most pertinent and pressing policy questions." When someone threatens to demagogue the discussion, a "trained moderator" will intervene to make sure no hijacking occurs.

Considering these three Deliberative Polling interventions in town hall style excess, the second, balancing briefing materials, is perhaps the most obviously open to distortion or manipulation and therefore, in my view, the least concerning. Yes, it is crucially important to represent a range of views and not stack the deliberative outcome in any direction via the supply of ideas and positions to participants. Yes, some important views might be forgotten, and there are risks that the most important issues may never even make it onto the agenda. But Fishkin has answers to these problems: both by surveying the range of opinion in a community before briefing materials are prepared, as some Deliberative Polls do, and by enlisting experts and stakeholders from opposing sides, this concern seems to me to be mitigated.

Fishkin explains in *When the People Speak* that Deliberative Polling's moderators "attempt to establish an atmosphere where participants listen to each other in a safe public space and no one is permitted to dominate the discussion."¹² They, like the briefing materials, are a crucial element of the infrastructure of Deliberative Polling. But they seem to do more than referee between competing alternatives, or even to keep the show running. Fishkin's references to "atmosphere" and to a "safe public space" are about the environment for discussion, not its substance. Like a public school teacher in a challenging environment, the moderator seems at least potentially to be tasked with keeping the lid on. It seems that, at least in highly charged circumstances, for example ones where Deliberative Polls were presented as real alternatives to town halls, these moderators would bear a lot of responsibility for reminding everyone of ground rules and for cooling things off.

Fishkin discusses moderators in *When the People Speak*, but they do not get anywhere the degree of theoretical attention as, for example, the construction of background briefing materials have. They seem to be conceived as neutral technicians, facilitators who are simply supposed to "keep the discussion going,"¹³ but this may underplay both the demands they might face under some circumstances and also sidestep the novelty of their introduction into democratic deliberation. What is the analogue in our politics for the role of the moderator? Is it the head of the jury, or the judge who instructs the jury? Is it the Chair of a committee in a legislature? What springs most immediately to mind are examples from schools, not politics: classroom settings, where teachers both have to maintain control, as noted above,

and are also places where someone needs to keep the discussion going. Indeed, in a Deliberative Poll conducted in China, “local teachers were trained to moderate the small groups, without giving any hint of their own views.”¹⁴

We do not have an American democratic theory of group discussion moderator, though the contrast between Fishkin’s timely book, where moderators are mentioned in passing, and his August op-ed, where they have become “key,” suggests how much we need such a theory. Since the moderators are engaging in deliberation too, even if or especially because they are directing it, should not they be evaluated by criteria that are as robustly informed by democratic theory as are the criteria we bring to bear in evaluating everything else about the deliberative poll?

Fishkin’s op-ed emphasis on the power of random sampling is consistent with his development of its power in the book. But note how Fishkin enlists the random sample survey on which the polling part of Deliberative Polling relies, into double duty. First, the random sample survey is often and deservedly praised as an egalitarian or democracy-enhancing device,¹⁵ and Fishkin clearly shares this emphasis. But it is also a democracy-limiting device. Random sampling, in a way that is highlighted in the op-ed, means that participation in Deliberative Polling is by invitation only. Even though poll participants enjoy an equal chance (relative to their representation in the population) of receiving an invitation, not everyone who wants to can show up. The doors to the democratic meeting are open only to the invited. Fishkin celebrates it precisely because it dilutes intensity. This celebration of invitation-by-sampling poses an interesting contrast to a well-known criticism of public opinion research initiated by Herbert Blumer and extended by Benjamin Ginsberg. Both Ginsberg and Blumer saw the dilution of intense and group-based opinion necessitated in random sampling, but saw it as an anti-democratic development.¹⁶

Whether via the dilution of intense groupings through random sampling, or the artful intervention of a well-trained moderator, Fishkin identifies deliberative democracy with safety. “There is a special value in safe public spaces where people can listen to each other without expecting an exchange of expletives,” Fishkin notes at an exemplary passage.¹⁷ In his repeated references to the safety features of the Deliberative Poll, Fishkin suggests the preconditions necessary for participation, since “confronting alternative points of view may ... decrease participation. It may well be easier in an organized setting ... to create a safe space for people to share diverse and competing viewpoints in an atmosphere of mutual respect.”¹⁸ Here, again, one wants more theory. Is the premium on safety directed more to fear of psychological discouragement or actual physical disruption? Is safety

a necessary concern in any country with a history of political violence, including our own? How much passion is allowed in a deliberative setting—can people shout out if they sit right back down? And how much safety is too much: what is the risk of making Deliberative Polling bloodless, or as boring as school?

When the People Think

Perhaps above all, Fishkin wants to make democratic settings safe for thinking. Following the aspirations and metaphor of George Gallup, Deliberative Polling “puts the whole country (or the whole region or the whole state or the whole town) in one room where it can think.”¹⁹ This interest in thinking provokes Fishkin not only to seek “good conditions,” but also to the articulation of a political psychology.

Fishkin’s political psychology is the classically liberal one we see in the Founders, dependent on a distinction between emotion and reason, contrasting hot passions and cooler thoughts. Indeed, Fishkin cites the *Federalist* directly to sketch his political psychology:

Madison and Hamilton both argue consistently from the distinction between the passions and interests that motivate factions and “the reason, alone of the public that ought to regulate and control the government” (*Federalist* No. 69). Madison is positing the rudiments of a political psychology connected with deliberation. The filtering of public views arrives at a dispassionate and shared account of the solutions to public problems. It is not motivated by immediate passions directed against others or interests that seek profit at the expense of others.²⁰

Though the term filter does not itself appear in the *Federalist*, Fishkin’s reference sketches the mechanism he, via Madison in *Federalist* 10, clearly attributes to well-designed deliberative settings: deliberation “filters the public views in a calm and dispassionate way to arrive at collective solutions to public problems supported by reasons.”²¹

It remains an open, empirical question whether the political psychology implied by deliberation’s filtering mechanism is a realistic one. Seeing deliberation as a filter depends on allowing the residue of emotions and

passions to sink to the bottom and the deliberative cream of “good” thinking and considered, reasoned opinions to rise to the top. Most psychologists today do not draw such a clean distinction between thought and emotion, preferring a conception of emotion as a component of thought. But more challenging than this, perhaps, for such a stark filtration model of deliberation is the burgeoning evidence that human beings are unaware of many of

It remains an open, empirical question whether the political psychology implied by deliberation’s filtering mechanism is a realistic one.

their thoughts, whether hot or cool. We arrive at positions—we may even arrive at good judgments that look deliberative—but we may have no idea how we got there.²²

The unconscious mind may also incline us to rely on underlying prejudices and biases in our decisions, again in ways that we are not aware of or in ways that we may deny. Representing a burgeoning focus in the study of racial attitudes, one political psychologist finds on the basis of experimental evidence that conservatives' expressions of individualist policy commitments are most likely to be in fact driven covertly (outside of respondents' awareness) by underlying racial antipathies.²³ To the extent that this psychological model describes our political thinking, it means that the filter mechanism cannot work. We cannot control the influence of many underlying elements of our mental processes well enough to filter them out.

This is not a new idea, and more important it is one that has a great deal of currency in our political discussions. Many observers, for example, were convinced that the exuberant objections to health care reform were driven at least partially by racial antagonism to President Obama. It poses special problems for anyone committed to deliberative democracy and therefore for Fishkin. What is a deliberative democrat to do when her interlocutor expresses prejudice explicitly or utters something that seems latently biased? What is she to do—or what is she doing—when she believes that her interlocutor is prejudiced? These positions are troubling ones for deliberative democrats.

Models of deliberative democracy, including Fishkin's, offer limited resources for getting around these challenges. Democratic theory might deal with the first problem—the explicit expression of prejudice—by rule making, by noting what kinds of utterances are off limits. Then the keepers of the rules—the trained moderators in Fishkin's infrastructure—can remind everyone of the ground rules. Note, however, that even in cases where we suspect racial antipathy is motivating, it is rarely explicit. The second kind of suspicion—of implicit bias—is a more challenging problem perhaps, both because it is more frequent and because there seem to be so few resources in deliberative democracy to deal with it. We cannot accuse an opponent of affirmative action or Barack Obama of being secretly prejudiced, even if we believe it. To do so is to violate ground rules of mutual respect.

More generally, how could the deliberative poll intervene in—in Fishkin's terms “filter out”—unconscious, perhaps irrational processes in opinion formation and collective decision making? Again, the evidence suggests these undercurrents powerfully structure public opinion. Do they disappear in face-to-face deliberation? If they do not, how do we handle them, since they are not manifest or expressed even as they are powerfully structuring? What of the problem of codewords—of the possibility of these ideas being communicated in a deliberative poll but

also being deniable and therefore not officially on the record as it were?

To repeat, these are not Fishkin's problems alone; they belong to anyone who is committed to deliberative democracy. But Fishkin's strong proceduralism, his pronounced arguments that good design will produce better thinking and also manage the excesses of democratic enthusiasm, begs for more urgent attention to these concerns.

When the People Face Each Other

As I mentioned earlier, this is a research project of almost a quarter century duration. It has been going on long enough that we can see improvements. A significant one in recent Deliberative Polling studies is serious attention to the question of what makes face-to-face deliberation distinct from other processes of political learning. Fishkin has not only directed attention to the conditions under which deliberative participants seem to generate mutual respect. Compared to earlier iterations, in some Deliberative Polls Fishkin and colleagues have built into the experimental design a test distinguishing “discussing the issues together” in face-to-face deliberation rather than “learning at home in anticipation of the event or any of the other elements of the process.”²⁴ This focus enables proponents of Deliberative Polling to say precisely what is distinctive about getting together in the same, as opposed to a virtual, room.

In an earlier criticism of Deliberative Polling²⁵ I emphasized its vestigial reliance on the methodology and democratic criteria of public opinion polling. Public opinion polls based in surveys rely on an individualistic methodology. They take each survey respondent as the unit of analysis. Though attention to the influence of face-to-face discussion of issues, as opposed to mere exposure to issues and information, promises to identify precisely the “value added” of the deliberative microcosm, in some respects Deliberative Polling still remains afflicted by some of the pathologies of polling, by which I primarily mean devotion to the model that linked valid opinion with fixed individual psychology and stable political attitudes. Only Fishkin has turned this search on its head. He has reinterpreted the same kind of evidence that motivated volumes of political behavior research as evidence of a positive effect of deliberation.

When the People Change: The Deliberative “Punch Line”

Fishkin's original and enduring aim is to overcome the deficiencies, while preserving the strengths, of the modern mass opinion poll. He wants to uncover “the deliberative opinion the public would have under good conditions.”²⁶ Modern opinion polling's great strength is the egalitarian guarantee of representative sampling: everyone has an equal chance of contributing to the

representation of public opinion that a poll makes. But—despite their occasional attributions to the contrary²⁷—public opinion researchers are reluctant to claim that the opinions reflected in surveys are either good or deliberative. Especially in the earlier days of public opinion and political behavior research, the assessment advanced by scholars was quite far from these characterizations.

Fishkin geared the design of Deliberative Polling to the pre-occupations of the political behavioralists. Analysts beginning with Philip E. Converse uncovered evidence of a capricious public. Survey respondents answered questions as if at random; that they were willing to offer opinions in response to questions about policies invented by the researchers; that opinions appeared to come from the “top of the head” rather than out of deep consideration. What might public opinion data mean in light of such evidence? Was poll-driven evidence misleading about the nature of public opinion, or did it reveal that the public did not really have opinions?²⁸ Each of these worries emerged from the observation of inconsistency over time in the attitudes expressed in surveys. Converse and his followers worried about random shifts in opinions because they thought this indicated unserious, fleeting or incompetent political thinking. If the public lacked stable attitudes, then it might lack real or true attitudes.

This concern with “nonattitudes,” or what Fishkin calls “phantom attitudes,” remains a prominent one in *When the*

People Speak. Public opinion researchers themselves have shifted attention somewhat away from their hand-wringing about the failure of many American citizens and survey respondents to exhibit real or true attitudes. After all, whatever opinions are expressed in surveys might, however fleetingly, count as real opinions. Public opinion researchers today do not go so far as to adopt Fishkin’s preoccupation to create good conditions for the public to generate considered opinions. But they, like him, think of public opinion as highly conditional, a product of the particular circumstances of the survey instrument—who asks questions, how, when and where. Question wording and other context effects have a demonstrable and interpretable influence on the kinds of answers the survey participants offer.²⁹

Where Converse and his early respondents put an almost fetishistic premium on attitude stability, Fishkin puts a similar premium on attitude change. In a striking contrast to public opinion researchers’ early worries about attitude instability, change is conceived and interpreted by Fishkin as a positive effect of deliberation:

If the people are to decide, or at least have an input to these questions, what are some indicators that they are actually

deliberating about them, rather than just offering “top of the head” responses, conforming to social pressures or deferring to experts? The first indicator that something is happening is that opinions change. More than two-thirds of all the attitude items in Deliberative Polls result in statistically significant net change.³⁰

Via the reference to a “top of the head” response embedded here, Fishkin is also drawing a contrast to John Zaller’s framework. When Zaller characterizes responses to survey questions as coming from the “top of the head,” this is a non-derogatory characterization. Zaller deploys the “top of the head” terminology to refer to a key coordinate in his model of public opinion. Political life provides cues about information and how to interpret it; citizens differ in how much information they receive from the environment and the priors that shape their receptions and interpretations. All this produces a mix of considerations that potentially shape opinion; which considerations prevail when it comes time to answer a survey question depend on what is available in memory, or at the “top of the head.”³¹

Zaller uses “top of the head” as a descriptive term; his stance is agnostic; he offers a value judgment only insofar as he departs from the negative assessment—that worry about fleetingness and inconstancy—that Converse initially advanced. Fishkin returns with

vigor to the negative characterization, if not quite to the full-blown worry. A “top of the head” response is likely to be “vague” or “malleable;”³² “thin;”³³ “almost” a “non-attitude;”³⁴ the opposite of “considered;”³⁵ impressionistic;³⁶ “volatile”³⁷ or result from “social pressure” or “deference.”³⁸

To be sure, some of Fishkin’s references to “top of the head” opinions are qualified: they “may well be uninformed;”³⁹ they may “possibly lack” coherence or consistency⁴⁰ or “might” be arbitrary.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Fishkin leans very heavily on the contrast between DP opinion and “top of the head” opinion. Again, the contrast is absolutely central to what he characterizes on several occasions as the “punch line” of deliberative polling: changes in attitudes. Deliberative Poll participants arrive on the scene; they offer “top of the head” responses on policy issues, they are exposed to deliberation, then their opinions are assessed again. Changes from the initial “top of the head” responses are the primary indicator for Fishkin that deliberation has succeeded. Once seen as a sign of capriciousness, changes in attitudes are now seen as a sign of consideration. But whereas Zaller established “top of the head” opinions as a forgiving rejoinder to Converse, as reason to set aside his worries, Fishkin uses the term made familiar by Zaller to signal

Once seen as a sign of capriciousness, changes in attitudes are now seen as a sign of consideration.

both a return to Converse's worries and a claim that they might be overcome.⁴²

So Fishkin has sidestepped Converse's worry by recrafting what was once attitude instability into the "punch line" of attitude change. It is a promising and reassuring hypothesis to think that attitudes change because of deliberation, and that Deliberative Polling creates conditions for better, richer, more detailed, more thoughtful consideration than does the mere intervention of time. Faced with the problem of nonattitudes, it is reassuring to think that even though respondents "do not have an opinion when first contacted, many will form conclusions by the end of the process."⁴³

Fishkin's language suggests that this hypothesis has been tested in Deliberative Polling, but these tests have in fact been quite sparse and limited. For the most part, Deliberative Polling compares opinion after the "treatment" of Deliberative Polling to opinion before: that is all. Only a handful of deliberative polls have been run with anything close to a true control group, that is, with groups randomly assigned to a control from the same sample from which participants are drawn, exposed to the same pre- and post-tests but not the Deliberative Polling treatment. Though *When the People Speak* includes several assertions that Deliberative Polling improves on the thinking exhibited by control groups, no actual data is reported. A study of civic education programs in California, for example, included control groups, but they were not run contemporaneously with the Deliberative and other treatments.

Insofar as one can reconstruct the comparisons between Deliberative Poll groups and equivalent samples not exposed to the treatment, the results appear to be mixed. More of the considerable resources that Fishkin is now able to generate to sponsor Deliberative Polls must in the future be directed pointedly to such controlled investigations.

Lynn M. Sanders is Associate Professor in the Department of Politics at the University of Virginia. Her current research focuses on the influence of political participation on mental health. A book manuscript in progress examines how the methodological assumptions of survey researchers have shaped Americans' understandings of public opinion on race.

Endnotes

1. James Fishkin, *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). This paper was originally prepared for presentation at the "Author Meets Critics" Roundtable the book at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Toronto, September 4, 2009.

2. While we associate Athens with direct democracy, Fishkin, following historians and classicists, emphasizes how we might also

or instead think of it as a precursor to modern opinion polling, since ancient Athenians used random selection to choose participants in their political institutions. See page 82.

3. Fishkin notes at page 203 of the text that Deliberative Polling is a trademark; any fees generated from the trademark support the Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford.

4. Fishkin's previous books on deliberative democracy include *Democracy and Deliberation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), *The Voice of the People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), *Debating Deliberative Democracy* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003; edited with Peter Laslett), and, with Bruce Ackerman, *Deliberation Day* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). His *The Dialogue of Justice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) is a sustained work of democratic theory, but only incidentally engages deliberative democracy or deliberative opinion polls.

5. For example, via the quite comprehensive yet elegant website for Fishkin's Center for Deliberative Democracy at Stanford University (<http://cdd.stanford.edu/>).

6. "In a deliberative democracy everyone's views are considered equally under good conditions for the participants to arrive at their views. The process is deliberative in that it provides informative and mutually respectful discussion in which people consider the issue on its merits. The process is democratic in that it requires the equal counting of everyone's views." Fishkin, *When the People Speak*, 11.

7. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/16/opinion/16fishkin.html>

8. Prior to the August health care town hall meetings, a group of opponents of reform circulated a strategy memo delineating "best practices" for disrupting the sessions with members of Congress. The strategy memo is a mix of recommendations: participants are advised both to rattle their representative and to restrain themselves. This complicates things from the perspective of democratic procedure: how objectionable is advice that if a member "says something outrageous, stand up and shout out and sit right down?" <http://thinkprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/townhallactionmemo.pdf>, page 3.

9. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/16/opinion/16fishkin.html>

10. Ibid.

11. Fishkin, *When the People Speak*, 126.

12. Ibid., 26.

13. Ibid., 125.

14. Ibid., 107.

15. See my "Democratic Politics and Survey Research," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 29:2 (1999): 248–80; Sidney Verba, "The Citizen as Respondent: Sample Surveys and American Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 90:1 (1996): 1–7; John Brehm, *The Phantom Respondents* (University of Michigan Press, 1993).

16. Blumer carved a space for intense groups in his conception of public opinion: "Public opinion is not an action of a population of disparate individuals having equal weight but is a function of a structured society, differentiated into a network of different kinds of groups and individuals having differential weight and influence and occupying different strategic positions." Herbert Blumer, "Public Opinion and Public Opinion Polling" in *Symbolic Interactionism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986 [1948]), 205; Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Captive Public* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

17. Fishkin, *When the People Speak*, 51.
18. *Ibid.*, 90.
19. *Ibid.*, 59.
20. *Ibid.*, 72.
21. *Ibid.*, 72.
22. See, for example, John A. Bargh and Ezequiel Morsella, "The Unconscious Mind," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 3:1 (2008): 73–79.
23. Charles S. Taber, "Principles of Color: Race, Ideology, and Implicit Cognition," (July 2009). Available at SSRN, <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1432661>
24. Fishkin, *When the People Speak*, 142.
25. Lynn M. Sanders, "Poll Envy: An Assessment of Deliberative Polling," *The Good Society* 9:1 (1999).
26. Fishkin, *When the People Speak*, 28.
27. For example, Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro posit that a process of "collective deliberation" consisting of "many specialized elements ... organized in a complex fashion, communicating—through a number of direct and indirect links—with each other and with individual citizens" underlies the expression of public opinion in survey responses. Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro, *The Rational Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 364.
28. See Philip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in David E. Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 1964), 206–61; Philip E. Converse, "Attitudes and Non-Attitudes: Continuation of a Dialogue," in Edward R. Tufte, ed., *The Quantitative Analysis of Social Problems* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1970), 168–89; Christopher H. Achen, "Mass Political Attitudes and the Survey Response," *The American Political Science Review* 69:4 (1975); 1218–31; George F. Bishop, Robert W. Oldendick, Alfred J. Tuchfarber and Stephen E. Bennett, 1980, "Pseudo-Opinions on Public Affairs," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 44:2 (1980), 198–209.
29. John Zaller's *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge University Press, 1992) is exemplary and represents a now-standard view.
30. Fishkin, *When the People Speak*, 121.
31. Zaller adopts the term itself from the psychologists Taylor and Fiske, who developed a psychological model of opinion construction based on ingredients available in memory. Shelley E. Taylor and Susan T. Fiske, "Saliency, Attention, and Attribution: Top of the Head Phenomena," in L. Berkowitz, ed., *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (New York: Academic Press, 1978).
32. Fishkin, *When the People Speak*, 20.
33. *Ibid.*, 24.
34. *Ibid.*, 25.
35. *Ibid.*, 35.
36. *Ibid.*, 4, 52.
37. *Ibid.*, 125.
38. *Ibid.*, 121.
39. *Ibid.*, 20.
40. *Ibid.*, 104.
41. *Ibid.*, 146.
42. Despite the adoption of the "top of the head" language, Fishkin does not cite Zaller's book. Within a footnote discussing the role of priming—the calling to the fore some considerations at the expense of others—in public opinion research, Fishkin cites an important article Zaller wrote with Stanley Feldman. See page 202.
43. *Ibid.*, 123.