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11. Public Policy for Reconnected Citizenship

RICHARD M. VALELLY

INTENTIONALLY OR UNINTENTIONALLY, public policies influence the individual and group foundations of democratic processes and institutions. My purpose here is to explore the design of policy for reconnected democratic citizenship. Reconnected citizenship here means some shift both at the individual level and among the publics who are involved in making any given policy work. This shift would be toward a stronger, more self-conscious approval of some or all of the distinctive norms of democratic politics (public debate, governmental competence, rule of law, political equality, and social commitment to social provision of public goods) and, just as important, the principle that collective problems can be publicly resolved.

By changing or reinforcing links between individuals and group and electoral politics, policy design can alter the very context of democratic citizenship in which policy is made. Policy analysts, policymakers, political activists, and citizens can—and ought—consciously to assess, much more often than they do now, the potential that any given policy has for involving citizens in democratically useful forms of group politics and for strengthening a sense of citizen duty. Policies that do so can enhance the broad governmental competence (and the public confidence in such competence) that is a condition for the effective political resolution of public problems.

Ruy Teixeira, in his study of nonvoting in American politics, calls for “reconnecting” American citizens to their political system. By this he means finding ways to foster both a better grasp of political institutions, processes, and issues among citizens and a significantly more positive, psychological affect toward the political system. Reconnected citizens, in his view, differ from citizens who are either indifferent toward or neutral

For valuable comments I thank Joshua Cohen, Martha Derthick, and Robert Kuttner. None, of course, is responsible for any errors of fact or interpretation.

about politics, are openly cynical, or have a weakened sense of citizen duty, that is, reject a norm of participation whatever their current evaluation of the political process. Over the past three decades many Americans have developed such attitudes.¹

In using the term *reconnected citizens*, I mean more than citizens simply having a positive affect toward the political process. Democratic politics is something that everyone can be part of, at least electorally, and possibly more often than electorally. Without unrealistically demanding that everyone be a full-time political agent, my recommendations focus on making political participation more individually meaningful for more Americans.

Why Reconnected Citizenship?

Two broad concerns animate these recommendations and the basic inquiry into the relationship between policy design and democratic citizenship. The first has to do with America's seeming increase in organized politics bashing (for want of a better term); the second deals with the fundamental utility and rewards of democratic political community.

First is politics bashing. Fostering reconnected citizenship may constitute, I believe, a needed response to increased public discontent with politics. In 1992, fourteen states approved term limitations for members of Congress. The idea of an explicit constitutional rule for curbing deficits, espoused by Presidents Reagan and Bush, has also become increasingly popular, on the ground that ordinary legislative politics has no internal fiscal balance. Consider, too, some of the Perot movement's significance. In launching and then relaunching his candidacy, Ross Perot and those associated with him frankly espoused new mechanisms of accountability and representation that would supposedly solve not just the "mess" in Congress but the whole mess in Washington. These ideas include electronic town meetings, mass canvassing of the public mood via instant electronic referenda, and service in the presidency without pay. The Perot campaign articulated a fairly widespread desire for a special government above ordinary politics.

Such public discontent undoubtedly performs useful corrective functions in American politics. It reflects public concern over very real features of contemporary American politics and holds open the promises of more

1. Teixeira (1992, chap. 2). The term *reconnected* can be found on pp. 154-55; for reform proposals giving a flavor of Teixeira's view of reconnectedness, see pp. 156-82.

collective dialogue and political accountability.² But collective problems cannot actually be addressed if there is no public patience with ordinary democratic government and politics. Politics ought not to be a dirty word or connote that the dominant reality of American politics is a giant rent-seeking scam run by the organized at the expense of the unorganized.

Effective policymaking—the public and efficient provision of public goods—requires tolerance of the characteristic limits of the policy process, not a desire for “big fixes,” such as new constitutional rules or plebiscitary presidencies. Effective policies require feedback, assessment, and modification when warranted; such feedback, assessment, and recasting depend on public patience; and public patience ultimately comes from public loyalty to and confidence in ordinary political and policy-making processes. Policy initiatives in the 1990s, when the public has become aware of a series of social, environmental, and economic problems, demand a sturdier foundation than impatient discontent.

American politics is now haunted by the specter of inflated expectations and mass disappointments with broad policy initiatives to correct such widely perceived problems as the health insurance crisis. A subtle harm to constitutionalism and, ultimately, to political democracy, to say nothing of the prospects for really solving public problems, might result from the organized politics bashing that is now a real and growing force.³

Careful attention to how policy can generate reconnected citizenship may therefore be a way of avoiding such dangers. There are other ways, of course, such as revitalizing local government. But national policy gets made regularly; every day large numbers of creative people are thinking about setting the national policy agenda, shaping the policy process, influencing implementation, and working to fight future battles over policy. Analyzing how artfully to redirect this ongoing policy process may help to change the rage, discontent, or simple apathy with and about government and politics that many Americans feel. Success in doing this, in turn, might well strengthen the social foundation of public approaches to common problems.

Public policy for reconnected citizenship has a second and separate justification. In an important sense, fostering reconnected citizenship

2. Jeffrey Schmalz, “Americans Sign Up In Record Numbers To Cast A Ballot,” *New York Times*, October 19, 1992, p. A1, provides anecdotal evidence of the Perot campaign’s impact on citizen awareness of issues.

3. See, for instance, President Clinton’s May 14, 1993, press conference. An interesting report in this connection is Dennis Farney, “Bedroom Communities Want Clinton to Solve Their Problems, Too,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 5, 1993, p. A1.

would help to lay the "seed corn," so to speak, of political community and of the arts and skills of political cooperation and mutual political association (hereafter referred to as *associationalism*). These arts and skills help democratic polities avoid fratricidal conflict, suboptimal social and economic development, and social tendencies to authoritarianism or leader worship.⁴

Through its ordinary processes democratic politics often seems to continually reinvigorate these arts and skills. Recent theorizing about the relationship between individuals and collective institutions and processes has come to appreciate that preferences and behavior shift as individuals cross boundaries between marketlike areas of life and communal and political areas of life. Voting, for instance, becomes paradoxical and irrational in strictly egoistic terms, hence the recognition in political science of the role of a sense of duty. More basically, different domains exist and people recognize this as they shift back and forth between them.⁵

But even if people adjust as they shift between "the market" and "the public square," suggesting a stable coexistence of domains, associationalism and the norms supporting it require nurturance, given what is known about the difficulty of collective action. Self-interest and egoism are powerful forces; at some point one domain might colonize or conquer the other. In the 1970s it was widely feared that politics had killed the market, but the opposite fear—that self-interest more often than not blocks cooperation for the supply of public goods—is equally plausible. Self-interest and egoism can and do play positive roles. As an example, some approaches to environmental regulation recommend establishing markets in pollutants that would adequately price the negative externalities of production and thus rapidly accelerate progress toward meeting environmental standards. But self-interest and egoism, or simple indifference toward politics, can gradually corrupt a community's capacity to address its problems. In a society as powerfully individualistic as American society, it is almost impossible to "overnurture" associationalism and public-regarding norms.⁶ We may well constantly run, as a society,

4. For a recent statement, see Putnam (1993) generalizing from Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti (1993).

5. See Hirschman (1982) and Kelman (1987, especially chaps. 10–11). For more analytic treatments, see Margolis (1982), and Riker and Ordeshook (1968). I thank Janice Fine of the MIT Political Science Department for reminding me of the basic links between the less analytic and more analytic works cited here.

6. This was Tocqueville's basic point in *Democracy in America*.

an associational deficit. Public policy for reconnected citizenship would help to lay “seed corn” for a stock of socially valuable skills and behaviors perhaps continually in danger of depletion. Public policy for reconnected citizenship has not only a short-run justification—balancing the potential dangers of contemporary politics bashing; it also has a long-run justification—contributing to the diffusion of norms and skills that any democratic polity needs.

Policy Messages and Citizen Status

My approach to analyzing policy for reconnected citizenship borrows from the work of other authors in this volume: Helen Ingram and Anne Schneider’s work on, as they aptly put it, “the subtle messages of policy design,” Deborah Stone’s account of the role that “causal stories” play in policy processes, and Janet Weiss’s work on public information campaigns.⁷ Public policies can contain several kinds of messages about public purposes and citizens’ role in their realization. First, they can send signals about the people who are involved in making the policy work—what Ingram and Schneider have called the “target populations” of a given policy, that is, the specification of “who is to do what, how, and for what reason.” In selecting target populations, further, a policy and its design implicitly tell a “story” about both the problem or problems that the policy is meant to address and the causal role of the target populations in solving that problem.

For instance, in a case discussed further below, a policy encouraging European-style works councils within industrial firms would signal that one of the causes of a public problem, uncertain or possibly declining industrial competitiveness, is how firms use the problem-solving skills of their work forces—and therefore would also signal a less well-recognized problem, namely, poor standards for workplace relations. Therefore, to realize a common national goal—increased competitiveness—workers become a “target population” conceived of as agents of a public solution to the problem of uncertain competitiveness. Their very agency also addresses a related problem—poor standards for workplace relations between workers and management.

This is an illustration of a policy whose design would signal to its target population the public recognition of a public problem, shared by many Americans; it thus “constructs” a target population as the agent

7. Chapters 4 and 5 in this volume and Stone (1989).

of a common purpose, through participation and representation, in local, workplace problem-solving processes. Not only does such a policy design help place people in valued problem-solving roles, but it also underscores that public goals are realizable.

Policy design can thus signal to citizens that effective government is possible and it involves ordinary people. Key conditions of democratic political order—competent government and political accountability—are reinforced. Strengthening these conditions reinforces another democratic norm—deliberation. Political deliberation, whether in legislatures or in carpools, means little if government is ineffective or unaccountable. But deliberation means much more if the prospect of effective government is genuine. Policy for reconnected citizenship, in other words, involves ordinary citizens in publicly constituted processes that address real problems and also strengthens their stake in democratic politics.

These points are suggested through illustration. After treating general issues in democratic theory, a case study of the “employment involvement” trend in industrial relations considers how to redirect an existing trend in a democratically desirable direction. Next a case study of an environmental policy seeks to uncover the democratic value of an existing policy. Finally, a case study of legislation to improve voter turnout seeks to show what a policy proposal already on the legislative agenda may well need in order to maximize its intended democratic goal. The first two cases are about designing associationalism; the last treats how to clarify for citizens some of what is involved in electoral choice.

Recasting Associationalism

One of the key things that public policy for reconnected citizenship can do is affect the group system. But how easy is citizen involvement in group politics? And what does democratic theory say about the desirability of group politics? Without addressing these questions, seeking to influence associationalism in the name of reconnected citizenship might seem either pointless or, worse, factional.

The Relative Ease of Associationalism

Early pluralist theorists, such as David Truman, emphasized how quickly groups arose, and they underscored the inherently inclusionary character of the group system, picturing it as an arena for broad repre-

sentation of a wide variety of interests and values. This view suggests that associationalism comes easily to citizens. Such a seemingly Panglossian view of the group system came under several kinds of attack, ranging from Mancur Olson's formal and logical demonstration of both the difficulty of collective action and the strength of the microeconomic incentives to avoid associational activity, to arguments emphasizing the highly uneven distribution of resources necessary for competition for public resources within the group system. In E. E. Schattschneider's famous phrase, "the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent." The cumulative force of these attacks apparently required very substantial modification of early views of group politics.⁸

In recent work, however, Jack Walker went far toward showing that the group system is as dynamic in its evolution as early pluralists suggested, although for reasons far different from those initially emphasized. Walker constructed the first reliable "census" of interest groups across time. He found that the older view of "stable unrepresentation" (due to scarce distribution of political resources) no longer captures interest group politics.⁹ At any point in time in a democratic system political resources do have a highly skewed, underlying distribution consistent with the socioeconomic inequalities of a capitalist society. The underlying scarcity of resources for effective group politics—time, skills, and money—appears to erect a high "threshold" for associational activity. But Walker considered the variety and scope of government's regulatory and policy initiatives, as well as the array of private institutions and actors, including government, foundations, and the media, dedicated to solving policy problems and to diffusing information about policy issues.

Actors in public and private institutions are constantly, if often unintentionally, rearranging the group system, for instance, by changing the structure of opportunities for organization, by providing valuable resources, or simply by deepening lines of conflict. For example, when the Kennedy administration established state-level commissions on the status of women, it laid the basis for the formation of the National Organization of Women. Similarly, liberal foundations helped to finance the black voter registration drive of the early 1960s in the deep South. This accelerated social change but also intensified factionalism within the civil rights movement. Injection of resources and change in political oppor-

8. Truman (1951); Olson (1965); and Schattschneider (1975).

9. Walker (1988); and Gamson (1968).

tunities thus regularly restructure patterns of collective action. An important aggregate, unintended consequence has been that—with the exception of the long decline of organized labor—gaps in group representation have closed steadily since the 1930s. In short, the group system is dynamic, shifting, and relatively open—not unchanging and closed to newcomers. While associationalism hardly comes as easily to citizens as pluralist theorists first claimed, it comes more easily than the reactions to pluralism suggested.¹⁰

The Relative Desirability of Associationalism

But is a trend toward increased associationalism desirable? If not, why reinforce it or further stimulate it? From at least two perspectives increased associationalism could easily seem questionable. The first is neo-classical liberal theory, which considers the collapse of the separation between market and state that is embedded in the interventionist, welfare state a central feature of modern politics. It has generated innumerable forms of government-conferred privilege for producer and social groups—farmers, workers, industrial sectors, the aged, and those in need of low-cost housing. The development of the social standards that are demanded by these groups simply piles up labor costs, causing capital to move toward lower-cost countries, and menaces the fiscal balance required for providing truly essential public goods.¹¹

From a more neo-Madisonian political perspective, there is widespread evidence of the mischiefs of faction. To whatever degree the group system is more dynamic than once thought, there still is a threshold of entry. Groups consequently have an advantage over ordinary citizens in shaping the political agenda. “Overrepresented” minorities thus generate governmental goods for their private benefit and spread the costs to the unorganized majority. “Pork” may be generated, agencies may be “captured,” agenda-setting in specific policy domains may be ceded to organized groups, and, through the political economy of campaign finance, the integrity of legislators and legislative processes compromised. Groups may exploit either citizen activism or legitimate citizen concerns while actually operating as little more than sophisticated, direct mail operations with high overhead. Or, if they influence presidential nominating rules

10. Walker (1988); see also Walker (1991).

11. For thinking about objections to associationalism I found Cohen and Rogers (1992) very useful.

of the major parties in their favor, they may undermine the capacities of parties to offer majoritarian policy platforms.¹²

The total results of such rent seeking and faction not only threaten the norm of equity in access to public privileges and in the incidence of public burdens (as in the case of spreading the costs of narrow benefits), but also threaten the foundations of governmental competence (as in the case of “pork” or agency capture). Yet the prospects both of equity and of governmental competence are fundamental conditions of a democratic order. Without them, public debate about public purposes would become trivial. Thus groups seem constantly to threaten a democratic order.¹³

But democratic theory does not speak with one voice about groups and associationalism. It also holds that groups and associations can be “schools of democracy.” Associationalism builds a certain kind of civic virtue. As John Stuart Mill argued, participation is educative: a person has to “weigh interests not his own; to be guided, in the case of conflicting claims, by another rule than his private partialities; to apply, at every turn, principles and maxims which have for their reason of existence the common good.”¹⁴

A distinction that Tocqueville drew between “self interest well understood” and “individualism” is also helpful here. Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America*, pondered the character of the political virtue that democracy requires of its citizens. He suggested that “self interest well understood” was a form of democratic virtue strong enough to sustain a widely held ethic of caring, to some degree, about public concerns. He contrasted this with an antipolitical attitude, “individualism,” and worried about the disconnection from politics and from the associationalism of democratic politics that is implied by “individualism.” Associationalism, in his view, nurtured self-interest well understood.¹⁵

Second, associations can empower and encourage those who can easily become discouraged and disfranchised: landless farmworkers, the disabled and handicapped, veterans of an unpopular war, women discriminated against in the workplace and in courtrooms, and ordinary, hard-working blue-collar men and women. Despite formal political equality,

12. An especially striking example of several of these problems can be found in Erik Eckholm, “Alarmed by Fund Raiser, The Elderly Give Millions,” *New York Times*, November 12, 1992, p. A1, which describes Richard Viguerie’s activities in direct mail fundraising for groups supposedly monitoring social security policy for the elderly. See also Hansen (1991); Hirschman (1970, chap. 6); Moe (1989); and Polsby (1983).

13. McConnell (1966); Hansen (1991); Page (1983); and Romer and Weingast (1991).

14. Pateman (1970, p. 30).

15. Tocqueville (1969, pp. 506–28).

their "voices," even if articulated, are often indistinct or inaudible to "the mainstream."

Electoral politics, especially presidential electoral politics, would seem to correct for "deaf democracy." Voting is not a costly activity: everyone one can do it, the handicapped and the healthy, men and women, rich and poor. Also, the presidential constituency is national. Presidents tend to care about the macroeconomy, national strength, and such broad issues as strengthening self-reliance, equality, inclusion, and some measure of social justice. Hence the interest in responsible parties and activist presidencies found among such critics of pluralism as E. E. Schattschneider and Grant McConnell and their legates in American political science. And, broadly speaking, as Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen show, strong party politics, which involves mobilization of the electorate, tends to reduce class bias in representation.¹⁶

But electoral politics can also be subtly unrepresentative. It tends toward the aggregation of interests, toward broadest common denominators. And mandates are notoriously found in the eyes of the beholders. Electoral outcomes provide very imprecise signals to policymakers; the information they convey is always mediated by the policy activists, pollsters, and political professionals within and without major campaign organizations. The articulation of interests and "voicing" of group politics, particularly protest groups, make up for such intricate exclusion, removing ambiguity and doubt about interests and needs, and, in so doing, betokening inclusion and equity. Strong party and electoral politics are perhaps most representative, therefore, when there is also a strong group system.¹⁷

If, therefore, democratic theory delivers conflicting judgments about groups and associationalism—finding democratic education and honorable representation in group politics as much as it finds faction—then ruling for one or another view obviously becomes an empirical and prudential matter. The proof of associationalism is in the political pudding, as it were. Sometimes democratic education and inclusive representation ensue; other times, faction prevails. Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers have advised, accordingly, a deliberate politics of association. Using standard policy tools, they mean to recast group politics so that its processes converge simultaneously on democratic education, more inclusive rep-

16. Schattschneider (1975); McConnell (1966); and Rosenstone and Hansen (1993).

17. Schlozman and Verba (1987).

resentation, and more effective policy. The basic idea here is that groups have an unrecognized function to perform in tailoring policy initiatives to local circumstances. In a wide variety of settings they can help ordinary people to act as the experts "on the ground." Such policy design can, indeed, add to governmental competence.¹⁸

To exemplify this recommendation, I will focus on industrial relations and on an emerging form of representation in environmental regulation.

Recasting Representation in Industrial Relations

By now it is commonplace to hear a summons for public policy to encourage workplace democracy. Such calls occur in a context in which it is widely (although hardly universally) assumed that labor has rights, that is, that industrial democracy, in principle, is socially valuable. But key issues now are international economic competitiveness, particularly concerning newly industrializing countries, such as Korea or Taiwan, and seemingly well organized social systems of production, such as Japan's or Germany's, and increasing international wage competition. Thus calls for employee involvement (or EI) typically recognize that, given this new context, the social standards for protecting a measure of industrial democracy need to be recast.¹⁹

Indeed, public policy already seemingly encourages workplace democracy and many private initiatives appear to institute it. The tax code currently encourages employee stock ownership plans; by the late 1980s several thousand firms, covering millions of employees, had some kind of employee ownership, and several hundred of these were majority-owned. In addition, several national agencies have responsibilities for "facilitating the formation of worker cooperatives and worker buy-outs."²⁰ During much of the 1980s the U.S. Department of Labor assisted in the creation of more participatory workplace systems.

In the private sector, corporate experimentation with worker participation has been very widespread, partly out of competitive necessity (also, in part, to shed or to deter unionization). In the 1980s corporate America was a prime agent of experimentation in new organizational structures and more flexibility in the workplace. Some form of employee participation had come to between one-third and one-half of U.S. firms

18. Cohen and Rogers (1992, p. 425).

19. The best short discussion, scholarly or popular, is Metzgar (1992).

20. Bachrach and Botwinick (1992, pp. 104-05). See also Rosen (1991).

by the mid-1980s. Larger firms may have adopted it more willingly than smaller firms.²¹

The effect of these changes on efficiency is as yet unclear, although the cumulative evidence regarding the few genuine cases of EI suggests real gains. More relevant to my purpose here, there has been very little discussion of the political consequences.

The effect on citizenship of increased public and private investment in EI appears to have been, at best, slight. Worker-owned and worker-managed companies do tend to reinforce voting in national and local elections. Workers in such companies also seem a bit more likely to encourage friends or neighbors to vote, to contact public officials about an issue, to write letters to editors, to work with others to solve some community problem, to attend meetings of the city or town council, and to attend a public hearing of a government agency, such as a school board.²²

The meager political effect of the extensive experimentation with EI is surely explained to some extent by its largely cosmetic character. Overall, the 1980s were marked more by harsher employer treatment of unions and by less focus on employee job security, pension rights, and fringe benefits than by consensual establishment of workplace democracy. If the experimentation had led to fundamental changes in workplace hierarchies, then it is much less likely that one would have seen in the late 1980s and early 1990s both a rash of corporate efforts to replace striking workers permanently and widespread "downsizing" and "reengineering" of work forces. Only a handful of corporations witnessed significant efforts at genuine reform: the Saturn division of General Motors, Xerox, Ford Motor Company, and a few others. Others, such as Eastern Airlines and Caterpillar, saw new management teams dismantling successful EI systems, with, at best, dubious gains.²³

21. Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Kochan, and Verman (1991); Heckscher (1991); Kochan and McKersie (1990); and Bachrach and Botwinick (1992, p. 102).

22. See Greenberg (1986, chap. 5). Greenberg reviews the scant positive, empirical literature on the subject of workplace democracy's political effects at pp. 119 and 123. Greenberg cautions that certain forms of workplace democracy, in particular worker-owned cooperatives, tend to make workers, quite rationally, given the market challenges such co-ops face, more aggressively self-interested.

23. See Kelley and Harrison (1992) and Harrison (1991, p. 74). On the state of labor relations, see Hoerr (1992). On Xerox, see Cutcher-Gershenfeld (1991), the result of doctoral work at the MIT Sloan School of Management. Saul Rubenstein, of the Sloan Ph.D. program in industrial relations, is currently preparing a similar study of Saturn. For Ford

Clearly, therefore, there is room for public policy, in particular policy that tends to institute the kind of genuine reform that currently exists in only a few firm-level oases in the American workplace economy. The Commission for the Future of Worker-Management Relations appointed by Secretary of Labor Robert Reich suggests that the 1990s may see some push for revitalized industrial relations.²⁴ A promising proposal would tie the reform of pension laws or tax expenditure benefits to establishment of employee participation committees (EPCs) in firms larger than twenty-five employees. The National Labor Relations Act of 1935, and its statutory and administrative amendments, are implicitly seen in this proposal as somewhat limited, although by no means obsolete. Along with basic unionism new forms of workplace representation may be necessary. These would build on recognition of the multiple ways in which industrial representation has grown up outside the administrative framework established by the NLRA, for instance, in the federal courts, which now increasingly govern a variety of workplace issues (for example, women's reproductive rights, workplace safety, and pension benefits of bankrupt companies).

EPC members would be rank-and-file employees elected by their co-workers through secret ballots. EPCs would consider not only wages, benefits, hiring, and training, but product and process innovation and the introduction of "best industry practice" technology. Finally, they would administer federal workplace safety programs in ways that would eliminate the need for the inspectorates that business has found so meddlesome.

A key feature of the EPC idea is that it be autonomously funded through joint worker and firm contributions. In other words, in return for tax credits or other incentives, firms would be required to partly fund EPCs. This funding would help EPCs secure expert assistance and advice from unions, consulting firms, academics, and other EPCs. To the extent that this incorporation of expertise generated firm-level allocative effi-

Motor Company, see Neal Templin, "A Decisive Response to Crisis Brought Ford Enhanced Productivity," *Wall Street Journal*, December 13, 1992, p. A1. On "re-engineering," see Al Ehrbar, "'Re-Engineering' Gives Firms New Efficiency, Workers the Pink Slip," *Wall Street Journal*, March 16, 1993, p. A1. For an equally chilling glimpse at the corporate shedding of labor, see Joann S. Lublin, "Ranks of Unemployed Couples Multiply, Devastating Double-Income Households," *Wall Street Journal*, May 7, 1993, p. B1.

24. For examples of the debate inspired by the commission's establishment, see Estreicher (1993); Rothstein (1993); and Stone (1993). See also Cohen and Rogers (1992, pp. 455-58).

ciencies, incentives for passing the cost of funding EPCs on to consumers would diminish.²⁵

Genuine, robust codetermination, which probably means also helping autonomous unionism to reemerge in many workplaces, would also have two political dimensions that firms might accept because of the promise of internal efficiencies. These are restoring or substantively implementing protective rights that have not been vigorously enforced in the past decade, such as rights to a safe work environment, and, second, the development of new participation rights in the form of significant worker participation in decisions historically considered to be management prerogatives.²⁶ Change along these two dimensions would surely be contentious. One of the fundamental origins of the Caterpillar strike of 1991-92, for instance, was management opposition to growing union involvement in historic management prerogatives. But workplace democracy may well possess key economic strengths: flexibility in responding to market change and higher product quality. It was precisely along these dimensions that Japanese companies mounted their most effective challenge to firms in other countries in the past two decades.²⁷ Obviously, the prospect of reaping efficiencies might well constitute insufficient inducement in a corporate culture that has nurtured only superficial changes in workplace relations and that credits recent success in export competitiveness to cost cutting through shedding labor or forcing down the wage bill. But many Americans may be genuinely interested in economic democracy.²⁸

EPCs might help to restore confidence among much of the industrial work force that setting social standards, such as protective rights in the workplace, is not an exercise in futility. The confidence of industrial management in broad social standards may be increased, and managers

25. For more on EPCs see Weiler (1990).

26. Bachrach and Botwinick (1992, chap. 9) and Metzgar (1992).

27. Cutcher-Gershenfeld (1991) details some of the efficiency advantages. Womack, Jones, and Roos (1990) detail the firm-level characteristics of Japanese industrial competitiveness in a leading economic sector, auto-industrial manufacturing.

28. A 1975 survey found that 65 percent would favor working for a company that is employee owned and controlled; 52 percent would support a plan "in which employees determine broad company policy"; and 66 percent said they did not work as hard as they could "because they aren't given enough say in decisions which affect their jobs." Christie (1984, p. 125). The survey is obviously dated, and I am not aware of more recent data, but we now have a better sense that public opinion is surprisingly stable. See Page and Shapiro (1992, chaps. 1-2). Still, a repeated survey would be required before drawing any satisfying inference.

might see that such standards need not be overbroad or burdensome but can be adjusted to local needs in light of local knowledge and capacities.

A possible second-order effect of reformed workplace relations is the construction of a certain context for reconnected citizenship. A public policy encouraging the establishment of EPCs implicitly treats those participants in EPC formation and maintenance as competent: able to manage the overlaps between workers' interests and management interests in productivity, flexibility, and workplace safety and judge the need for new rights. It is a policy that tends to "construct" people in a certain way.

In doing this, a policy encouraging workplace democracy that is much more genuine than has so far appeared with most employee involvement programs of the 1980s establishes nationally sanctioned patterns of small-scale governance. Such national encouragement of small-scale forms of governance might well reinforce citizenship for large-scale governance. Involvement in making truly consequential decisions at the local level in a publicly designed and publicly evaluated process may invite other forms of associationalism beyond the workplace, and it may betoken a strengthened capacity of individuals for involvement in other processes of consequential decisionmaking. It may promote reconnected citizenship even as a specific policy issue is addressed in ways that meet the interests of the various actors in, or concerned about, the policy domain. A second, similar example follows.

Recasting Representation in Environmental Regulation

Environmental regulation today explicitly provides for group representation, such as public comment on rulemaking. Yet such group representation is subject to the criticism that it impedes effective decisionmaking, partly explaining, in turn, a notorious delay in achieving environmental goals. Putting regulation together with a key feature of democracy, group representation, seems to be a recipe for the frustration of public goals and the undermining of governmental competence in this particular policy area.

One example, however, the 1986 Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA), seems to provide evidence for a different and hopeful view of the relationships between groups and regulation. Certain of its characteristics have the potential to improve environmental standards while arguably revitalizing civic consciousness in local communities around the country.

In 1986, in response to the disaster at the Union Carbide facility in Bhopal, India, Congress passed EPCRA as Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986, modeling it in part on an earlier New Jersey right-to-know statute. EPCRA requires the Environmental Protection Agency to release what is known as the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI), which lists the quantity of 320 carcinogens released by industrial plants across the country.²⁹ The TRI, in principle, provides information on what a factory is emitting, how much, and into what medium (land, water, or air) and what chemicals are currently stored and whether there is a record of spillage.

In fact, TRI is unknown to the general public, even in areas where general community concern about toxic emissions is known to exist, is woefully incomplete due both to its flawed, data-gathering mandate and imperfect corporate compliance, and has few internal, systematic checks on the reliability of the data it reports. While EPA has made improvements to how the information in TRI is released, via on-line database, CD-ROM, fiche, and other media, obtaining the information is prohibitively expensive for an ordinary citizen. Corporations, indeed, purchase most of the TRI data for their own use. Finally, there is some fragmentary evidence that TRI encourages corporations in compliance with the EPA reporting program to juggle their data in order to appear as if they are reducing emissions at a greater rate than they actually are.

Nevertheless, TRI has spurred citizen protest, involvement by state environmental regulators, state legislative activity, and very strong voluntary compliance among leading companies, principally the Monsanto Corporation, to meet locally set targets for reduction of emissions. Much of the transmission of its information occurs through the existing system of environmental advocacy groups. The process is in line with the revised view of the group system's developmental dynamics, which states that associationalism, while not easy, is certainly easier than the critics of pluralism in the 1960s and 1970s suggested, and that governmental provision of a resource crucial for collective action (in this case, information that would otherwise be impossible or irrationally time-consuming for any given group, not to mention the ordinary citizen, to obtain) is a key stimulus to associationalism.

Environmental advocacy groups computerize and process the dense information in the TRI, circulating their reformatting of the data, which

29. My treatment of this statute is based on Shenkman (1990); Randolph B. Smith, "A U.S. Report Spurs Community Action By Revealing Polluters," *Wall Street Journal*, January 2, 1991, p. A1; and General Accounting Office (1991).

are then picked up by local media or local activists. Although the evidence so far is fragmentary, it does seem that this mechanism has triggered the ad hoc formation of local citizen groups, which then work with local companies, state regulators, and, when companies are unionized, a plant's unions.

Local dynamics are hardly free of conflict, can create tensions, and are marked by sometimes irate citizen protest. Managers in many companies evidently believe that the information in the TRI can be and has been put to misleading uses. But the bottom line seems to be genuine progress, in several communities, on first developing and then implementing local environmental standards.

A striking feature of EPCRA's politics is the policy's implicit evaluation of citizen capacities to understand a scientifically complex issue, in this case the level of acceptable risk to a community due to toxic emissions from a local plant. It assumes that citizens should be able to control politically the level and kind of toxic emissions occurring in their communities. For some, this optimistic evaluation of citizen capacities may seem mistaken. Scientific literacy is not widespread in the United States, and it is widely believed among the technologically and scientifically literate that citizen incompetence probably precludes citizen involvement in key regulatory issues.

Yet the threshold for effective citizen involvement may not be very high at all in the sense that ordinary citizens may be able to make reasonable choices after only brief exposure to thinking about complex issues. A recent study paired roughly equal, randomly selected samples of ordinary citizens and scientists, for whom uncertainty, probability, and hypothesis are familiar concepts even though they were not experts in the issues treated by the study. The study exposed the citizen sample to a questionnaire, a twenty-minute film, and forty-five-minute group discussions of complex policy issues led by moderators, followed (at a second, later session) by another brief film recapitulating issues treated in the earlier session and a readministration of the questionnaire. It found that for the most part both samples, layman and scientist, considered the same policy issues similarly. These included solid waste disposal and reducing the threat of global warming from carbon dioxide emissions due to coal and gasoline consumption in home heating and transportation. The differences that did exist between the two groups seemed plausibly related to factors other than scientific literacy. The study hardly settles the wisdom or illogic of citizen involvement in scientifically or technologically complex policy issues. But it does suggest that renewal

of the system of representation may not have to be restricted to certain kinds of issues deemed "suitable" for the average citizen.³⁰

EPCRA's potential for reconnected citizenship is striking for the absence of an inspectorate intervening in local circumstances. A common complaint about bureaucracies is that they impose broad standards but are unable to customize these broad standards, so to speak, to account for local circumstances. This is not meant to argue against bureaucracies or standards. The TRI obviously could not exist without bureaucratic collection of the information that goes into the inventory and efforts to enforce corporate compliance with reporting. Relatedly, the capacity of citizen groups in a given locale to have articulate demands at all about permissible standards clearly depends in part on an earlier, national history of a public search for broad environmental standards. Mentioning the common complaint about bureaucratic incapacity to take account of local conditions is meant only to underscore a feature of contemporary regulation that can and does generate a certain amount of public cynicism, both about governmental competence and, more generally, about the very possibility of effective regulation. EPCRA thus seems to have a potential for encouraging public confidence in the public purpose of environmental regulation. If so, that points toward reconnected citizenship.

A second and related feature of EPCRA's politics is the implicit emphasis on small-scale governance. The design of this policy constructs a target population in such a way as to endow it with competence to address responsibly a public problem about which there is widespread concern, namely, the release of toxic chemicals. The design of the policy further assumes that a key cause of the problem is public ignorance about such release and that, therefore, a key remedy must be government provision to citizens of the information they need. Small-scale governance not only involves people in solving a problem that many actors in the policy domain, for different reasons, have an interest in solving; it also has a tendency to lay the "seed corn" of reconnected citizenship. To the extent that people govern on a small scale, the possibilities grow for the transfer of skills engendered in one area to another, small-scale context, or to involvement in electoral politics and in the associational life of groups or movements with national goals.

In considering how policy design can recast associationalism, I have stressed that such design has the potential to "construct" citizens as participants in local forms of representation—in the workplace and in

30. Doble and Richardson (1992).

communities—that in turn effectively address widely recognized public problems. But for several reasons a discussion of policy design for reconnected citizenship must also explore whether and how policy can influence a revitalization of the electoral process.

First, for those who are part of the stronger group politics that is envisioned here, group politics might well be perceived—by some fraction of them—as oriented toward broad goals if electoral politics is also seen as meaningful and valuable. Second, some fraction of those who are not now involved in group politics may become more interested if electoral politics is perceived as more vital. The two domains, group and electoral, may renew each other. Associationalism ought to be seen as a continuum, and policy for reconnected citizenship ought—and can—attend to reconnecting all along this continuum.

Recasting Voter Registration: The Role of Public Information

As is well known, voter turnout in U.S. presidential elections (defined as the ratio of actual to eligible voters) dropped about 13 points between 1960 and 1988, and it dropped in other national elections as well. To be sure, the 1992 presidential election seems to have reversed the trend noticeably, but given the amount of measurement error in estimates produced on or right after election day, and given the weight and variety of social and political forces that appear to have produced the decline, it will not be clear whether there really was a significant reversal until well into 1993, and, in any event, far from clear that it can stand as a lasting reversal.³¹

Nonvoting, indeed, is pervasive in American electoral politics. Minorities of active voters determine the outcomes of gubernatorial, state legislative, county, mayoral, and municipal council elections, as well as state and local referenda. While there are exceptions, the rule seems to be that the smaller the constituency, the smaller the active voting public.³²

The question of whether and how to reverse decline in just one category of electoral activity, national elections, proves to be a genuinely complex matter. Any resolution of it depends in part on properly conceptualizing the decline and on properly specifying its causes. Neither facet of the issue is (nor is likely to become) free of enduring controversy.

31. For a brief introduction, see Valelly (1990).

32. The theoretical framework for this proposition is laid out in Peterson (1981).

Even more controversial are evaluations of whether turnout decline makes or has made any real difference for the representation of public policy preferences, and thus for who gets what from government.

Even if one concludes that turnout decline can partly be reversed through choices that are plausible and possible in the contemporary political context, it turns out that simply returning to the status quo as of about 1960 will probably require at a minimum an ambitious mix of strategies: reform of campaign finance, reform of print and broadcast media coverage of the electoral process, and changes in procedures for voter registration. Even so, historically deep-seated features of how parties compete with each other and how they mobilize (and fail vigorously to mobilize) voters would inhibit the full potential effect of this mix of reforms.³³

Still, agency-based registration (the “motor voter” bill), a key accomplishment of the 103d Congress, is an important step. Voters register to vote when they are also interacting with a state agency, such as a motor vehicle registration board. Under this reform states are also provided with resources for using an unbiased procedure for regularly cleaning their voter lists. Agency-based registration lowers the costs of voter registration to an individual radically by “folding” them—as Teixeira has pointed out—into another set of costs, like those of, say, registering a car. The potential effect on turnout is estimated between 4 and 10 percentage points.³⁴

Little attention seems to have been paid, though, to the need to alert citizens—as they interact with an agency—as to *why* motor voter registration seems easier. There is a role here for a public information campaign. Such a campaign could reinforce the norm of citizen duty that seems clearly important in motivating a decision to vote at all.

A narrow microeconomic approach to voting would lead any voter to conclude that the ratio of costs of voting—time involved in registering and voting, for instance—far outweigh the real benefit to the individual of voting. The decision to vote depends, in other words, on political norms. And, having decided to vote, an average voter is unlikely to vote on narrow pocketbook grounds. Such voting is less frequent than voting based on broad retrospective or prospective evaluations of the performance of politicians (“have they, or has he or she, made America or the state or the district better or worse off?”). Yet the role of political norms

33. McGerr (1986); Rosenstone and Hansen (1993); and Coleman (1992).

34. Teixeira (1992, chap. 4).

in the decision to vote—and perhaps in the act of voting—has become attenuated. Policy design can play a key role in replenishing the force of norms in voting; it can lay the “seed corn” of associationalism in its broadest sense.³⁵

The National Election Study used to ask survey questions that sought to tap citizens’ sense of obligation to participate in spite of factors that made it seem hard or unpleasant. Because so little change seemed to occur, most of the survey items were dropped after 1980, but the one that was retained—whether one ought to vote even if one did not care much about an election—showed a very substantial drop of 17 points (59 to 42) between 1980 and 1988. The *Washington Post* has asked citizens whether they thought that their vote mattered. In 1980 its survey found that 91 percent responded yes, but by 1991 that number dropped to only 73 percent.³⁶

Under these circumstances, agency-based voter registration may not play as effective a role as it could without an effort to address the decline in a sense of citizen duty. When citizens register to vote while doing something else at an agency, they can be provided with a brief analysis of what many political scientists refer to as the “turnout problem.”

Providing information will cause controversy, and formulating its content may (perhaps ought) to require a special federal commission that incorporates the advice and input of the fifty secretaries of state, as well as expert advice on what is known about the consequences and effectiveness of public information campaigns. This is a policy tool whose use inevitably raises broad questions about how to safeguard against government manipulation of citizens.

But an information campaign might include coverage of the change in turnout since 1960, a brief international comparison of turnout in the United States and in other countries (a feature that will inevitably arouse concern since turnout is much lower in the United States than elsewhere) and further analysis showing, though, that the United States differs much less from other countries in rate of turnout among *registered* voters. A public information campaign would emphasize the clear evidence that once registered, voters tend to vote. Fourth, it could also emphasize what

35. This proposal seems consistent with Teixeira’s own sense of the unexplored role of information in changing citizen motivation: “Though it may be implausible to expect a characteristic like party identification (partisanship) to increase much in intensity . . . it is quite plausible . . . to expect levels of information-oriented characteristics to increase . . .” (1992, pp. 156–57).

36. Teixeira (1992, pp. 55–56).

political scientists have tended to find, namely, that turnout does not benefit one party or the other. Fifth, an information campaign could summarize the arguments that hold that the “turnout problem” is exaggerated. Finally, it could suggest further reading, pro, con, or mainly informative, and a brief statement of a key rationale for voting, namely, that active voters tend to know more about what their government is doing than inactive voters or habitual nonvoters.

Thus the design of agency-based voter registration could be altered so that it incorporates a particular policy tool, the public information campaign, so as to reinforce or reawaken a sense of citizen duty, as defined above. Janet Weiss reports that public information campaigns appealing to existing, widely held norms are the most successful.³⁷ This may be because an individual’s awareness of the relatively uncontroversial nature of these norms makes it easier for him or her to pass along or to discuss with others—family members, coworkers, and friends—the contents of a public information campaign. Agency-based registration thus has a potential for more fully replenishing—without manipulation and in a way that is respectful of citizens—the norms that motivate voting.

Otherwise, agency-based registration may subtly signal to citizens that citizenship is mainly a matter of calculating costs and benefits (“If we lower the costs to you won’t you please vote?”). If so, this would hardly be a way to lay “seed corn” for strengthening democratic politics. Through espousing a sensitivity to how policy design affects citizenship, one sees that a simple issue of apparent detail—whether to provide information about the “turnout problem”—raises the question of how to maximize the broad, democratic utility of a public policy.

Conclusion

Policies are often evaluated as to whether they get the job done well and at what price. But policies and their design can also alter the very democratic context within which policymaking and policy evaluation take place. Like others in this volume I have argued here for an approach to policy analysis that is more sensitive to consciously strengthening democracy than most contemporary policy analysis. Through illustration I sought to show that policy analysts and policymakers alike can ask important questions about and of policy trends and initiatives. Other examples would surely occur to a group of legislators or administrators.

37. Chapter 5 in this volume.

How can an existing trend be redirected in a normatively desirable direction? The discussion of building on the employee involvement movement of the 1980s by encouraging works councils sought to answer this question. Does this or that policy have an unappreciated democratic value? The discussion of the surprising effect on group representation in environmental regulation of the Emergency Community Planning and Right-to-Know Act addressed this question. What does a policy proposal already on the legislative agenda seem to need in order to meet its intended goal? By exploring the role of a public information campaign in agency-based voter registration policy, I sought to answer this question.

Concerns about strengthening both the meaning of democratic citizenship and the continuum of associational life that stretches between simply deciding to vote and fairly engaged participation in a citizen's movement or in a group stood behind these questions. Thinking through how to lay the "seed corn" of associational norms and political skills can inform, indeed articulate, policy analysis and recommendation. Policy design can construct citizens as competent to address public problems. It can do so by providing for representation in local problem-solving processes. Such representation provides for small-scale governance that, in turn, can foster reconnected citizenship in other areas: other groups and more frequent voting. The problem-solving features of local representation that can be encouraged by policy also reinforce a norm of governmental competence. Public confidence in the realizability of such a norm is crucial to democracy and its deliberative character. Otherwise, public cynicism can steadily grow. Finally, public policy can reinforce existing norms that are crucial for reconnected citizenship, such as the sense of citizen duty that can motivate electoral participation.

Even if policy design can in fact attend to the task of laying "seed corn," ought it to? Tocqueville claimed that knowledge of association is, as he put it, the "mother of all other forms of knowledge," a dictum implying that strong, mutually respectful, "bottom-up" patterns of democratic participation and associationalism help nations to become more prosperous and decent.³⁸ His claim for a correlation between such forms of participation and national strength makes sense, in fact, out of the cases explored here. Real, not ersatz, employee involvement arguably makes firms stronger and more competitive, and to the extent that firms are stronger, then sectors and the economy as a whole are stronger. Participation may well be crucial, also, to environmental problem solv-

38. Tocqueville (1969, p. 517).

ing. Finally, while the link is less obvious in the case of strengthening the norms that motivate voting, stronger links between citizens and the electoral process are crucial for creating basic public respect for political approaches to common problems.

Democratic renewal through public policy and other initiatives is, in fact, already on our national agenda. The American polity is in the midst of a widespread sense of public discontent with politics unrivaled since the late nineteenth century. Democratic systems have many internal sources of renewal, not least the constant recognition among citizens that the norms governing the "market" areas of daily life differ from the norms that are sovereign in the "public square." But the careful design of public policy is not often seen as a strategy of renewal. This chapter—this volume—urges us to take public policy for democracy more seriously.

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