Do Moderators Matter? Answering a Jury Deliberation Challenge to Deliberative Democracy†

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Introduction

Citizens are participating in government decision making in ever-increasing numbers, setting city budgets in Brazil (Koonings 2004), shaping electoral reform in Canada (CAER 2004) and, in the United States, setting goals for community policing in Chicago (Fung 2001) and deciding on a new design for the World Trade Center site (Poletta 2005). These efforts to engage ordinary people in the work of democracy frequently fall under the umbrella of deliberative democracy. Broadly defined, deliberative democracy in its many applications involves giving average people three things they typically don't get in their everyday lives: One, high-quality and well-organized information about a political issue; two, the chance to talk about the issue in a heterogeneous group; and three, the opportunity to at least express their better-informed opinions when they know elected officials are listening, and at most actually determine political outcomes themselves.

Theorists and practitioners have a number of impressive claims for deliberative democracy, among them that it creates better citizens and produces better government decisions. They offer analyses of pre-test and post-test data showing that, after a deliberative experience, participants emerge with their knowledge increased and their opinions changed. But in general, deliberative democracy in its relatively short life has jumped from theorizing to application without much intermediate empirical investigation. As a result, we know little about the inner workings of the deliberative experience that seems to have such salutary effects on its participants, narrowly, and more broadly perhaps even on the health of democracy itself. Deliberative democracy is a poorly lit meeting room which one kind of citizen enters and another kind of citizen departs. What happens inside needs to be better understood.

This paper illuminates the room by empirically investigating the effects small-group moderators or facilitators have on deliberative outcomes. I develop and test a new measure, deliberative quality, that uses a five-item scale to tap participants' perceptions of the fullness and fairness of the deliberation, and their personal satisfaction with it. Experimenting with groups randomly assigned to deliberate with or without a moderator, I also investigate moderation's effects on the usual deliberative outcomes, knowledge increases and opinion changes. The paper advances our understanding not just of deliberation, but also of citizen competence and the effect outside influence has on public participation. On a practical level, it will help organizations convening deliberations – which are fantastically expensive (Rossi 1997), time-consuming and labor-intensive endeavors – decide whether recruiting, training and employing moderators is necessary to meet their goals.

Jury Literature-Based Criticisms of Deliberation

Prompting the effort is a desire to satisfactorily address criticisms of deliberative democracy, especially those Lynn Sanders (1997) lodged by referencing the antidemocratic effects sometimes found in civil and criminal juries. In examining the deleterious effects that gender, race and personality have on the fairness of jury deliberations,[1] Sanders focuses especially on the role jury foremen play. The popular deliberation design studied here, James Fishkin's Deliberative Polling (Ackerman and Fishkin 2004) differs from juries in ways that should partially allay fears that white, well-educated, high-SES men (Ellsworth 1989) will dominate deliberations and suppress the views of women, minorities and those with non-mainstream political beliefs and attitudes. The prime differences are that Deliberative Polling

[1] Cass Sunstein has more recently involved juries in an argument criticizing deliberation. Ackerman and Fishkin address Sunstein's concerns regarding group polarization and the "argument pool" in their 2004 volume, *Deliberation Day*.

groups, unlike juries, have no foremen and are not required to come to a conclusion. Despite this, we can assess Sanders' criticisms by examining the closest analogue to the foreperson found in Deliberative Polling and other popular deliberation designs (such as citizens juries [Armour 1995; Jefferson Center 2004]): the externally imposed discussion referee variously called the moderator, the facilitator, and other names. These moderators receive training aimed at helping them promote a full and fair discussion of everyone's ideas. But do they succeed?

Sanders worries citizen political deliberators will defer to each other in ways that reflect societal inequalities, and this will prevent some views from being heard. Looking to the jury literature, she states, "When Americans assemble in juries, they do not leave behind the status, power and privileges that they hold in the outside world," (Sanders 1997, p. 364). Jury power dynamics appear immediately with the agenda-topping foreman selection. And it is typically a fore*man*; a White one, with at least a college degree and possibly postgraduate work, a high-status occupation and previous jury experience. Although women tend to outnumber men on juries, they are not selected foreperson as often as their numbers would suggest (Hans & Vidmar 1986). Speaking first and acting assertively, characteristics associated with men, help determine whom the jury selects as its leader. A claim of jury experience (even, in some cases, a false one) increases the chances of being selected for foreman, and this dynamic favors men as well: "[T]he process of foreman selection can be summed up by the phrase, 'choose a man who says he has experience' " (Ellsworth 1989, p. 213).

In response to an argument that deliberation designs employing moderators do not suffer from foreman-dominance effects, Sanders might reply that men significantly dominate jury deliberations even after dropping foremen from the analysis (see Hans and Vidmar 1986; Hastie et al. 1983; Marsden 1987). Fishkin (1995; see also Ackerman and Fishkin 2004) expects trained

moderators to prevent discussion domination by men or anyone else. If they in fact do this, deliberative quality should be higher and participants should gain more knowledge.

In the present paper I limit my argument about the parallels between the deliberative design studied here, Deliberative Polling, and jury deliberations, for two reasons. The first is a factor I define here: deliberative consequence. The second is the absence of a true foreperson in Deliberative Polling, as well as other deliberative designs.[2]

Deliberative consequence measures how important deliberative outcomes are: highly, moderately, or slightly. Highly consequential outcomes are those where the deliberative group makes a binding decision that affects other people. Civil and criminal juries are deliberative groups, and their verdicts are always highly consequential. Outside of juries, highly consequential outcomes occur when governments delegate plenary rulemaking or lawmaking power to deliberative groups. Some examples are the citizen budgeting groups in Brazil (Koonings 2004) and the electoral reform group in British Columbia, Canada (CAER 2004). In moderately consequential outcomes, the deliberative group acts as an advisory panel for government officials, who are more likely than not to implement the group's recommendations. For example, the FDA usually acts on the recommendations of its advisory panel. A citizens' panel delivered moderately consequential recommendations on how to rebuild the World Trade Center site (Polletta 2005). Slightly consequential outcomes are those where deliberative groups simply state their opinions, whether those statements are aggregations of individual opinions or a true group opinion that has been arrived at through some consensus-building or voting procedure. Many Deliberative Polls produce this outcome; they provide an estimate of what

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[2] In future papers, I will experimentally manipulate deliberative consequence and be able to draw more on the civil and criminal jury literature to address criticisms of deliberative democracy.

better-informed public opinion would be, but there is no *a priori* expectation that public officials will view the results as anything more than a better version of the opinion poll results they sometimes use as policy-design inputs.

The experiments described in this paper involve slightly consequential deliberations, and the analysis takes this factor into account. There are reasons to expect deliberations of greater consequence will be affected differently by the presence or absence of a moderator; I will fully investigate these differences in future papers. For now, I make this argument: Deliberative Polling small groups are far removed from juries because they are not required to render a verdict. That is, they do not need to reach a high-stakes conclusion about guilt or innocence, liability or none. Nor are they asked to reach a consensus or particular outcome. All they are asked to do, in fact, is come up with two questions to ask a panel of experts so they may further their political knowledge. There are no substantive consequences for failing to do so. Therefore, their deliberations are slightly consequential, where jury deliberations are highly consequential. As Ackerman and Fishkin put it (2004): "The point of a jury conversation is to come up with a single 'right answer': guilty or innocent, and if legally responsible, a particular criminal sentence or payment of money damages. In contrast, [Deliberative Poll participants] focus on framing good questions, not final answers …" (p. 63, emphasis in original).

The other factor besides deliberative consequence that for now necessitates a limited answer to jury literature-based criticism of deliberative democracy is the absence of the foreperson. There is no foreperson in the original Deliberative Polling design,[3] the one used in

[3] However, Fishkin, who conceived the Deliberative Polling design, has changed his mind on this point. He and Ackerman are now proposing that deliberative groups participating in a national civic engagement holiday called "Deliberation Day" elect from their number a foreman who will serve as moderator, out of concern that a "national moderator corps" would be too subject to attempted cooption by the political parties. Fishkin's new design does impose strict guidelines on

this analysis. The group moderator cannot be called a foreperson because the convening organization assigns moderators to the small groups and, ideally, carefully trains them both to ensure a full and fair discussion of the issues and to display none of the antidemocratic characteristics that forepersons have shown in past analyses.

In the specific case of slightly consequential deliberations, these differences from civil and criminal juries may obviate the concerns Sanders raises about conviction-proneness (see Vidmar & Schuller 1989) and verdict-driven versus evidence-driven juries (see Brown 1986; Hans & Vidmar 1986; Kanter 1979). As Sanders states: "Since, as a general matter, judges and juries tend overwhelmingly to arrive at the same verdicts, by this standard, jury deliberations look fair or right in terms of their outcome, despite the apparently troubling dynamics of deliberations …" (1997, p. 368). Studies show that juries deliberate just fine in that their decisions come out quite similar to those of the appointed judges American democracy trusts to deliver just outcomes (Hans & Vidmar 2001, Hans 2000).

Sanders raises many more questions, however, which must be addressed. She points to democrats' preference for equality in democratic deliberations and then judges deliberative democracy techniques to have failed the equality test because, in part, "men talk more than women in jury deliberations" (1997, p. 365).[4] But if strict equality's importance were discounted, she argues, the expression and consideration of "most or all views available to the group" (p. 365) would render irrelevant different group members' relative talkativeness. However, she sees even this as impossible because juries have been shown to adopt ideas based on the quantity, not the quality, of remarks in their favor (see Marsden 1987), and this again advantages talkative

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the elected moderator. For example, she or he must enforce 90-second limits each time one person wishes to speak (Ackerman and Fishkin 2004).

[4] Sanders also addresses the dominance of White perspectives over those of other racial and ethnic groups.

White men. This troubling dynamic may be impossible to fully remove. Jury researcher Mark Costanzo states, "It is unrealistic to imagine that any group of 12 (or fewer) jurors can be fully representative of a much larger community. The sample size is simply too small." (Costanzo 2004, p. 127). The best-case scenario, he argues, is diversity in age, ethnicity, experience and opinion. Such diversity can reduce expressions of prejudice, increase the amount and quality of discussion and improve the group's grasp of the facts (Abramson 2002).

Deliberative Polling and similar deliberation designs attempt to achieve this best-case diversity through random recruitment techniques and, more powerfully, random assignment of participants to small deliberative groups. As usually practiced, Deliberative Polling employs random-digit dialing or other at least semi-random techniques to contact potential participants in a certain population area (city, county, etc.). The respondents who agree to participate take a preliminary survey. Later all the participants attend a deliberative meeting, which can range in length from a few hours to a few days but generally lasts for a morning and an afternoon. Participants usually read and/or view carefully balanced and nonpartisan briefing materials, discuss political issues in small groups to which they have been randomly assigned, and then pose questions to a panel of experts. Finally, they are surveyed again, with the same questions, after all these experiences. Results from dozens of such Deliberative Polls have shown significant increases in participants' knowledge (Fishkin & Luskin 1999; Luskin Fishkin Jowell 2002) and changes in their opinions (Luskin, Fishkin and Jowell 2002).

Randomly assigning participants to small groups creates a powerfully atypical environment for political discussion where diversity can create the best-case scenario Costanzo (2004) envisions given the small sample size. When average people discuss political issues, which isn't often, they typically talk about them with people very much like themselves. This

creates an echo chamber in which their views are not challenged, which may be an effect quite similar to what happens in juries when the foreperson dominates the discussion and no one challenges his (usually) or her views. We would expect that participants in a deliberative poll would be more diverse because of active random selection, as opposed to passive "snowball" recruitment through social networks, which tends to create homogenous groups in which political disagreement is difficult (Eliasoph 1998). By contrast, people in diverse groups tend to discuss issues more deeply, learn more from each other and keep open minds (Huckfeldt & Sprague 1995 ; Knoke 1990 ; Krassa 1990 ; Leighley 1990 ; McLeod et al. 1999 ; Mutz 2002 a,b; Mutz & Martin 2001 ; Nemeth 1986 ; Nemeth & Kwan 1985 ; Turner 1991 ; Walsh 2003 , 2004).

Are People Competent to Deliberate in the First Place?

Can ordinary people deliberate? The easy answer is they must be able to, because the United States has reposed in juries authority to make highly consequential decisions in civil and criminal cases.

Gamson (1992) asserts "ordinary" citizens are capable of deliberating about complex issues, even technical ones like nuclear power or emotionally and historically fraught ones such as affirmative action. What he calls "conversational resources" sound like the heuristics people use to process complex information with low personal knowledge levels, and "collective action themes" sound like the storytelling framework by which people conceive their own ways of arguing about politics. If one accepts heuristics-based understandings of people's ability to vote their interests – that is, take political action – then one should be inclined as well to accept the idea citizens are competent to talk about political topics and taking political action. People like to use heuristics to make decisions efficiently, without the kind of deep reflection theorists would

like to see in the "ideal" citizen (Kahneman & Tversky 1983 , Kahneman et. al. 1982 , Lupia et. al. 2000 , Mondak 1994 , Mutz et. al. 1996 , Nisbett & Ross 1980 , Sniderman et al. 1991 , Taber et al. 2001). Deliberation may disturb people's usual dispositional emotional systems and trigger their surveillance systems, in which state they pay more attention to new information in their environments, actively consider the best choice to make and rely less on established habits and ways of understanding political concepts (Marcus et al. 2000). Findings regarding the benefits of deliberation would seem to promise more competence following organized political talk. Deliberation is credited with increasing internal political efficacy, widening personal networks and increasing the "deliberativeness" of people's political talk (Gastil 2000); increasing political participation generally (Gastil 2000, Delli Carpini 1997), and specifically the propensity to vote in upcoming elections (Gastil et al. 2002). In future papers, I will examine how deliberations of high, moderate and slight consequence vary in their ability to generate these salutary effects.

Do Deliberative Groups Need Moderators?

Why moderators? I have not yet found a satisfactory answer to this question; that is, one that is theory-based and empirically tested. I thus offer just two points of explanation at present, with hopes to do this matter more justice in a later paper. The first point is M. Schudson's: "Fully democratic conversation takes place in settings where talk is bound to be uncomfortable. … Such talk is threatening enough to require formal or informal rules of engagement" (1997 , p. 306). There is good reason to expect this. The most "costly" forms of political participation, like deliberations, appear to involve a disproportionate share of the well-off and well-educated (Bennett et al. 1995 ; Fung 2001 , pp. 89-93). Jury research finds three members of the average 12-person jury do more than half the talking, 20 percent of the jury says little or nothing, and the

statements of the high-SES members are seen as more accurate (Hastie et al. 2002 , Strodtbeck et al. 1957).

Peter Levine and his colleagues offer the second point. They list four features defining a successful deliberative initiative, including, “a neutral, professional staff that helps participants work through a fair agenda” (Levine et al. 2005 , p. 2). They later assert organizers specifically must provide facilitators (p. 3). Acknowledging critics of facilitated democratic conversation, the authors note, however, “Facilitators … cannot themselves be completely democratic and deliberative” (p. 3).

Indeed, the latter becomes clear when considering the positive and negative effects moderators could have on small-group deliberations. Positive effects include the assurance of high deliberative quality and perceptions of procedural justice. Negative effects include perspective suppression, process subversion by outside interest groups, and restrictions on individual autonomy.

Moderators can ensure complete discussions. “When arguments offered by some participants go unanswered by others, when information that would be required to understand the force of a claim is absent, or when some citizens are unwilling to weigh some of the arguments in the debate, then the process is less deliberative because it is incomplete in the manner specified” (Fishkin 1995, p. 41, emphasis in original). Further, moderated discussions could be more satisfactory for the deliberators. “[W]hen deliberation is well organized, participants *like* it,” Levine et al. write (2005, p. 1, emphasis in original)

An effective moderator’s presence could lead to a perception of deliberative fairness and procedural justice that would enhance knowledge gains among deliberators and perhaps prompt them, as a result of new thoughts arising out of the knowledge gain, to verbalize more ideas.

Tyler, Casper, and Fisher (1989) examined the impact of experience with the criminal justice system on defendant attitudes toward legal authorities, law, and government. They focused on the extent to which particular experiences affected more general attitudes toward the political system in which courts were embedded. They found the "fairness of the experience" had "a substantial influence on the lessons about the nature of law and government that citizens learn from their encounters with government institutions" (p. 629). A perception of procedural justice, that is, that the process was fairly conducted, tends to make group decisions more acceptable to people. Deliberation itself produces fairer results because it increases participation in the decision (Thibaut & Walker 1975); at the individual level, people can disagree with the eventual outcome and still think the process was fair if they feel they had the chance to express their opinions (Lind & Tyler 1988 ; Tyler 1994 , 2001 ; Tyler & Blader 2000).

Opinions tend to move toward the majority's in small-group discussion (Moscovici & Zavalloni 1969 , Myers & Lamm 1976 , Schkade et al. 2000). This could be because people holding minority views actually change their opinions to comport with the majority (Baron & Roper 1976 , Blascovich et al. 1975 , Isenberg 1986 , Myers 1978 , Myers et al. 1980 , Turner 1991), or because they're publicly acquiescing while privately holding firm to their own views (Davis et al. 1977 , 1988 , 1989 ; Penrod & Hastie 1980). In the latter case, skillful moderators could notice people giving in to the group and attempt to draw their views into the discussion, perhaps leading the group to consider a point that would have gone unexplored. On the other hand, it may be that majorities simply have numerical superiority not just in numbers of people but in numbers of compelling ideas, and therefore they have more of a chance to compel minority agreement than the smaller group has to do the reverse (Burnstein et al. 1973 , Burnstein & Vinokur 1977 , Vinokur & Burnstein 1978). Another argument against the efficacy

of moderators in this context is Devine et al.'s (2001) finding, in a review of the jury decision making literature, that the opinion a jury starts with is generally the one it ends up with. Moderators could intervene in this last case by actively soliciting alternative views when they observe a seeming predisposition toward believing something just because the group started with a particular opinion (which was probably advanced by one of the group's high-SES members).

The minority isn't always helpless in small-group discussions. It stands to reason moderators could help holders of non-majority viewpoints capitalize on some of the advantages research shows they sometimes enjoy. For example, minorities can prompt majorities to: consider alternate perspectives (Nemeth 1986 , Nemeth & Kwan 1985 , Nemeth & Wachtler 1983 , Turner 1991); look for and absorb novel information (Nemeth & Mayseless 1987 , Nemeth & Rogers 1996); and empathize with the minority perspective (Moscovici 1980). In the deliberative context, such effects as these appear to be strongest in inconsequential discussions (Smith et al. 1996). So minorities may do fine on their own in deliberations such as the Deliberative Polling design analyzed here, where the only consensus sought is on questions to ask an expert panel (Fishkin 1995), but not so well where the outcome is consequential, such as deliberative groups formed to recommend or even make policy. But once again on the other hand, some research shows that when groups know in advance they'll be held accountable for their decisions, they tend to think harder about the matter and strive for objectivity (Tetlock 1983, 1985; Tetlock & Kim 1987; Kruglanski & Freund 1983). This could advantage the minority as the majority conscientiously tries to avoid bias by seeking viewpoints that balance the majority opinion.

There are three more ways moderators could harm deliberations. In one deliberative process where differences were suppressed, frank and self-interested expressions were

discouraged and the amount of group consensus was exaggerated, participants grew angry and criticized the deliberative process and outcome in a much less deliberative forum, a public hearing (Karpowitz & Mansbridge 2005). Moderators could also attract efforts to subvert the deliberative process. Levine et al. (2005) report observing moderators, who are trained to promote equality, actively supporting potentially disadvantaged participants in deliberations. They fear, though, that as deliberations become a more meaningful part of government decision making, more powerful interests will rail against such "biased" support and use it as a point of attack against deliberation's legitimacy. Finally, moderators could also subvert the deliberative process themselves, if they influence the course of the discussion in a fashion that limits individuals' ability to choose freely among alternatives. Theorists who want citizens to reflect freely and independently on their political lives look askance at any outside influence that limits personal autonomy (Bartels 1998 , Edelman 1993 , Manheim 1991 , Parenti 1999). Because moderators are assigned by the organization convening the deliberation, the organization's agenda may be imposed on deliberators.

Given moderation's possible positive and negative effects, I propose these hypotheses:

H0: The moderator's presence does not significantly affect participants' ratings of deliberative quality, nor does it significantly affect knowledge increases or opinion change.

H1: The moderator's presence significantly affects participants' ratings of deliberative quality, and also significantly affects knowledge increases and opinion change.[5]

[5] A future version of this paper will introduce a new variable: the number of ideas presented and discussed in a small group discussion. Operationally, Ideas is defined as a political concept or policy approach raised initially by one person and subsequently minimally (or more) discussed by at least one other person. This qualification is designed to exclude from consideration ideas which are so plainly off-topic and ill-considered that no group could reasonably be expected to deal with them; ideas that are "spouted off," to use the vernacular. I videotaped each small

Data and Methods

To test these hypotheses, an experiment was embedded in two different deliberations held in Lincoln, Nebraska. The first deliberation, "A Community Conversation: Future of Lincoln," took place the evening of February 24, 2005. The second, "Citizen Deliberation on Genetically Modified Food," took place the afternoon of August 20, 2005. The University of Nebraska Public Policy Center (PPC) set up and conducted both deliberations. To accommodate the experiment, each deliberation's participants were randomly assigned to moderated and unmoderated groups. "Future of Lincoln" had five groups – three moderated and two unmoderated. "Genetically Modified Food" had five groups – two moderated, two unmoderated, and one overflow group that is not part of this analysis. There were 62 people split among the five "Future of Lincoln" groups, and 39 people split among the four "Genetically Modified Food" groups.[6]

Each deliberation focused on a specific issue. "Future of Lincoln" involved economic development and quality of life in Lincoln; "Genetically Modified Food" concerned whether there should be government requirements to label those products as such. The deliberations were conducted according to the standard Deliberative Polling design: random recruitment of participants, a pre-test survey of them, provision of briefing materials, small-group deliberation, a question-and-answer session with experts, and a post-test survey. The PPC allowed me to add

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group's deliberations at "Future of Lincoln," and will report qualitative analyses of those videotapes in a future version of this paper.

[6] There were differences in the recruitment of participants between the two deliberations that merit mention here and possible analysis in future versions of this paper. Organizers experimented with cost-saving recruitment methods in both deliberations, with a resulting decrease in randomness of recruitment as compared with the usual random-digit dialing used in recruiting participants for larger deliberation events. In "Future of Lincoln," organizers purchased a large list of randomly selected Lincoln telephone numbers, then randomly selected a smaller set of those numbers to call. In "Genetically Modified Food," recruitment was conducted by postcards sent to people who had either been contacted about or actually participated in past deliberations, as well as a sample of people taken from a random list of addresses.

to each post-test a new five-item deliberative quality scale I created, consisting of these Likert-scale agree/disagree statements:

- "This discussion was fair to all participants."
- "I felt comfortable talking in my group."
- "I think other people in my group felt comfortable talking."
- "One person or a small group of people dominated the discussion."
- "Important points were left out of our discussion because some people didn't get the opportunity to speak."

These items scale well together, Cronbach's alpha = .818.

ANOVA was used to determine whether there were significant differences between the moderated and unmoderated conditions on the five deliberative quality items

Results

Before addressing directly the hypothesis, it is interesting to note what participants thought of the quality of the deliberation. Did participants think the discussion was fair? Did they feel comfortable or think that their fellow participants felt comfortable? People's perceptions of the quality of the deliberative process could have tremendously important ramifications for their future behavior. For example, if participants feel uncomfortable or that the process is unfair, they could well decide not to be involved in deliberations in the future. The results show that, on average, participants had positive reactions to the deliberations. Just one of the group mean differences was significant. On the "Important points were left out of our discussion because some people didn't get the opportunity to speak" item, unmoderated participants had a mean quality rating almost a full point lower than their moderated peers.

[Table 1 about here]

Specific concern has been raised about certain groups being left out in deliberative discussions. If White males dominate discussions, we might expect to find that women, for example, have a less positive perception of the deliberative process than men. To test this possibility, I ran ANOVAs on the deliberative quality scales by gender.[7] The results show there was no significant group difference in "Future of Lincoln," but there was in "Genetically Modified Food." Women were almost two points less satisfied with the deliberation, but still quite happy; their group mean rating of deliberative quality was 20.97, while men on average rated the deliberation 22.93.[8] There were 29 men and 33 women in "Future of Lincoln," while "Genetically Modified Food" had 15 men and 33 women.

The main question, however, is whether having a moderator affects perceptions of deliberative quality. Overall, it doesn't. Results support the null hypothesis that the moderator's presence does not significantly affect participants' ratings of deliberative quality, nor does it significantly affect knowledge increases or opinion change. A significant mean difference on a deliberative quality measure was found just once; in one "Future of Lincoln" deliberative quality item, the unmoderated group mean was 2.56, .793 lower than the moderated group mean of 1.767.[9] That item, "Important points were left out of our discussion because some people didn't get the opportunity to speak," offered a Likert scale of 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Somewhat Agree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 2 = Somewhat Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree. In this instance, participants in unmoderated groups had a less positive reaction than their moderated peers to the deliberation's provision of equal chances to be heard. On that same deliberative quality item in

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[7] I created an additive deliberative quality scale after recoding the individual items into the same direction so "5" was the most positive possible item score, and 25 was the highest possible deliberative quality scale score.

[8] The difference was significant, $F(1,48) = 5.413$, $p < .05$

[9] $F(1,60) = 4.938$, $p < .05$

“Genetically Modified Food,” the group mean difference was much lower at .341, and far from significant. It bears noting, however, that the mean difference was in the same direction. In “Genetically Modified Food,” as in “Future of Lincoln,” unmoderated participants were less satisfied with the equality of speaking opportunities than those in moderated groups.

Discussion

Clearly whether there is a moderator in the group or not does not affect participants’ perceptions of the quality of the deliberation. But quality is not the only result we might expect from having a moderator present. As I discussed above, knowledge gain and opinion change might also be affected by the presence of the moderator. Preliminary results suggest that there might be some effect, but only for opinion change. Knowledge was measured as an additive scale of correct responses to pre- and post-test questions. Knowledge scores were compared using ANCOVA. Individual opinion items, all using five-point Likert scales, were also compared pre-post using ANCOVA.

The results show that whether people were in the moderated or unmoderated group did not affect their knowledge gain. In “Future of Lincoln,” the post-deliberation mean knowledge score difference between the groups was an insignificant .20. The corresponding figure in “Genetically Modified Food” was even smaller: .008.

There was much more evidence of significant opinion change. In “Future of Lincoln,” there were five significant mean differences out of 12 opinion items analyzed. In “Genetically Modified Food,” five items out of seven analyzed had significant mean differences.

Moderators have an impact, but their impact appears to be rather hit or miss. The presence of a moderator increases perceptions that relevant important points were discussed in the deliberation, but it did not affect perceptions of fairness or comfort. The moderator’s

presence increased opinion change in both deliberative forums, yet it had no significant effect on knowledge gains in either. Future research needs to look more carefully at precisely where moderators affect opinion outcomes and where they do not have an effect.

Conclusion

Moderators appear to neither help nor harm deliberations, as measured by their near-total lack of effect on deliberative quality. A possible exception is the measure of deliberative quality moderators may most easily be able to address: equality of speaking opportunities. More experiments with larger samples are needed, but it appears moderators may help ensure important points aren't left out of deliberations by making sure each person gets a chance to speak (perhaps by calling on quiet people who have not spoken, or have not had a chance to "get a word in edgewise"). Moderators do not affect knowledge gain, but they do affect opinion change; more study is needed to determine how and when.

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Table 1: Mean Deliberative Quality Ratings by Moderated Condition

Deliberative Quality Item	Future of Lincoln		Genetically Modified Food	
	Unmoderated	*Moderated*	*Unmoderated*	*Moderated*
This discussion was fair to all participants.	4.44	4.65	4.78	4.71
I felt comfortable talking in my group.	4.48	4.78	4.67	4.76
I think other people in my group felt comfortable talking.	4.64	4.68	4.61	4.71
One person or a small group of people dominated the discussion.	2.28	2.08	2.67	2.14
Important points were left out of our discussion because some people didn't get the opportunity to speak.	2.56	1.76*	2.39	2.05

* The moderated mean is significantly different from the unmoderated mean, $F(1,60) = 4.938$, $p < .05$