British Journal of Political Science (2025), **55**, e46, 1–9
doi:10.1017/S0007123424000632

British Journal of Political Science

LETTER

Deliberation and Human Nature

Ramon van der Does

ISPOLE, Université Catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium
Email: ramon.vanderdoes@uclouvain.be

(Received 30 June 2023; revised 14 April 2024; accepted 1 October 2024)

Keywords: deliberation; deliberative democracy; human nature; evolutionary theory; political psychology

Political talk often seems nasty, brutish, and short: political discussion among citizens at work increased stress and suppressed productivity during the 2016 presidential campaign in the US (APA 2016); in the Philippines, the coming to power of Rodrigo Duterte in 2016 marked the use of online troll armies to suppress dissent in public debate via tactics of humiliation and shaming (Curato 2022); political leaders and health authorities in countries such as Sweden and Denmark during the covid-19 pandemic generally '[repeated] reasons for selected policies, rather than [that they encouraged] public debate over options' (Baekkeskov, Rubin and Öberg 2021, 1338); and the list goes on.

Mounting concerns about the quality of political discussions have spurred widespread interest in finding new ways to stimulate deliberation; short for talk about politics marked by mutual respect and a give-and-take of reasons (Dryzek et al. 2019). Deliberation, then, embodies a set of communicative practices many find wanting in today's public debates: treating others as equals and taking the time to justify and critically evaluate voiced opinions and empirical claims (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019; Mercier and Landemore 2012). Since the 'deliberative turn' in political theory in the 1990s (Dryzek 2000), scholarship on deliberation has steadily increased (Jacquet and van der Does 2021) and policymakers have followed suit, producing a 'wave' of experimentation with fora to involve citizens in deliberation over public policies (OECD 2020; Paulis et al. 2020).

A common assumption among both deliberation enthusiasts and critics is that people, *by nature*, are hard-pressed to deliberate. Critics argue that the agenda pushing for more deliberation rests on 'unrealistic expectations about human nature' (Achen and Bartels 2016, 301; Brennan 2016; Mouffe 2005). If anything, people are hardwired to *refrain from* rather than *engage in* deliberation. Enthusiasts argue instead that deliberation is a 'universal practice' that 'arises from [. . .] basic human capacities' (Sass and Dryzek 2014, 4) and that 'deliberation is for all' (Curato et al. 2017, 30). Still, they also often remain pessimistic about human nature in that they expect people only to become inclined to deliberate when they have first undergone extensive deliberative pedagogy or when political discussion takes place within fora that enforce deliberative norms via explicit rules and moderation (for example, Gutmann and Thompson 2018; Niemeyer 2011; Niemeyer and Jennstål 2018; Ryfe, 2005).

This pessimistic outlook on deliberation and human nature has far-reaching practical implications. It has provided critics with ammunition to argue that we should abandon any hope for deliberation to become a regular practice in our societies (Achen and Bartels 2016), and it has pushed enthusiasts towards the promotion of extensive institutional engineering and educational reforms, including 'remedial institutions' and various sorts of deliberative fora (Dryzek et al. 2019;

Dryzek and Niemeyer 2019; Niemeyer 2011; Rosenberg 2007, 347; Rosenberg 2014; Samuelsson and Bøyum 2015). However, despite its sweeping implications for deliberation research and practice, the prevalent assumption that people by nature are not so inclined to engage in respectful give-and-take of arguments about politics has received little scrutiny so far.

That is problematic because how scientists think about human nature in relation to a wide range of behaviours has changed dramatically over the past decades in light of new insights from disciplines as diverse as archaeology, anthropology, biology, and psychology. Take for instance the widespread 'myth' that people are inherently 'war-prone' (Fry and Söderberg 2014). This view, grounded in the Hobbesian idea of a state of nature marked by a war of all against all, now seems implausible, not least because '[t]he worldwide archaeological evidence shows that war was simply absent over the vast majority of human existence' (Fry 2013, 15). What if pessimistic views on deliberation turn out to be equally inaccurate? What if, say, people are instead predisposed to spontaneously engage in deliberation, if only under certain conditions?

In this article, my main objective is to move the discussion on deliberation and human nature beyond philosophical speculation by embedding it in the wider literature on human evolution. While evolutionary theory was not so long ago listed as one of the 'next big things' in political science (Goodin 2009; McDermott and Hatemi 2018), evolutionary theorizing on deliberation remains surprisingly sparse (notwithstanding important exceptions related to reasoning about politics, see Mercier and Landemore 2012; Mercier and Sperber 2017).[1] To illustrate, the *Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy* contains only two brief references to human evolution regarding 'the likely evolutionary reasons behind [the] human use of reasoning' (Estlund and Landemore 2018, 125) and the idea of deliberation being 'central to the constitution of all human groups' (Sass 2018, 86). Likewise, in the more recent edited volume *Research Methods in Deliberative Democracy* (Ercan et al. 2022), the part devoted to 'theorizing deliberation' does not feature evolutionary theory.

This article starts to fill this gap. First, I give an argument for why it seems plausible that deliberation is not a recent cultural invention but reflects a shared human nature that evolved between 250 and twelve thousand years ago. Then, I discuss in what ways it may be a product of evolution, after which I advance two testable hypotheses regarding its potential evolutionary roots: deliberation as a byproduct of reasoning and deliberation as an adaptation to the problem of ingroup political disagreement. I end by highlighting how a research agenda focused on human evolution can further the study and practice of deliberation.

A Recent Invention?

Some have argued that deliberation is a cultural invention originating in the Western Enlightenment period (see the discussion in Min 2009). Deliberation, then, would presumably have little to do with the nature of our species. Yet, the argument that it is a recent Western invention seems increasingly implausible in light of the accumulating evidence of its occurrence in disparate contexts and cultures in world history (Sass 2018). Examples of deliberation range from the ancient Athens of Pericles (Elster 1998) to Indian 'Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu traditions as early as the fifth century BCE' (Parthasarathy and Rao 2018, 806–807), to the 'consultative and deliberative traditions [in China that] go back thousands of years' (He 2014, 66). Importantly, deliberation appears to have occurred – to varying degrees – in diverse cultures prior to Western

[1]Note that these works focus on deliberation as reasoning; they do not deal with deliberation commonly understood as a composite behaviour of *exchanging arguments* (reasoning) in a conversation about politics *while treating others as equals* (mutual respect). As Mercier and Landemore (2012) explicitly state: 'It is important to stress that the theory used as the backbone for the article is a theory of *reasoning*. The theory can only make predictions about reasoning' (p. 253 [emphasis in original]). The present article moves beyond the works of Mercier and colleagues by putting forward novel hypotheses on the evolutionary roots of deliberation, understood as interpersonal verbal communication involving reasoning *and mutual respect* about (potential) political decisions (see section, 'Noise, Byproduct, or Adaptation?').

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424000632 Published online by Cambridge University Press

colonization and the Enlightenment (Gagnon et al. 2021; Sen 2003). This makes it unlikely that its cross-cultural observation is solely the result of the diffusion of a Western practice (cf. Tooby and Cosmides 1992).

The empirical documentation of deliberation in hunter-gatherer societies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century casts further doubt on the idea that deliberation is a recent cultural practice (for details, see van der Does 2024). Experts generally consider life in these small-scale, hunter-gatherer societies the closest available approximation of ancestral life defining humanity until some twelve thousand years ago (Tooby and Cosmides 1992; Marlowe 2005; Van Vugt, Hogan, and Kaiser 2008). Empirical traces of deliberation occurring in hunter-gatherer societies in different parts of the world – from the Aranda in Australia (Spencer and Gillen 1927) to the Mbuti in the Congolese Ituri forest (Turnbull 1962; Turnbull 1965) to the Comanche in North America (Wallace and Hoebel 1952) – thereby make it conceivable that deliberation has deep roots in our species' history. A more plausible explanation of its apparent universality than cultural diffusion, hence, is that deliberation reflects a shared human nature that can be retraced to a common ancestor.

Human Nature and Evolution

There is an emerging consensus in the social behavioural sciences that inquiries into human nature should derive from our understanding of human evolution, specifically the evolution of the human brain (Scott-Phillips, Dickins, and West 2011). From this perspective, 'human nature' consists of three products of evolution: adaptations, byproducts, and noise (Barkow 2006; Goetz and Shackelford 2006).

In relation to the human brain, *adaptations* amount to psychological mechanisms that evolved because they improved the odds of survival and/or reproduction of humans who lived as (semi-) nomadic hunter-gatherers during the long stretch of our species' evolutionary past between 250 and twelve thousand years ago (Cosmides, Tooby, and Barkow 1992; Lewis et al. 2017; Scott-Phillips, Dickins, and West 2011; Van Vugt, Hogan, and Kaiser 2008). These mechanisms only trigger specific cognitive, physiological, emotional and, ultimately, behavioural responses when they detect the specific kind of environmental input that would have made those responses effective in solving adaptive problems; that is, recurrent problems impinging on the survival and/or reproduction of our distant ancestors (Cosmides, Tooby, and Barkow 1992; Pietraszewski and Wertz 2022; Tooby and Cosmides 2010). Recent research suggests that evolution has equipped the human brain with a suite of politically relevant psychological mechanisms (DeScioli and Bokemper 2019; Lopez and McDermott 2012; Petersen 2015; Von Rueden and Van Vugt 2015). For example, people seem to share an evolved mechanism that makes them quick to single out individuals who do not reciprocate in social exchanges; makes them inclined to become angry upon the detection of such cheaters; and motivates them to broadcast acts of cheating and to avoid sharing with cheaters (Bøggild, Aarøe, and Petersen 2021; Cosmides 1989; Cosmides and Tooby 1992; Cosmides and Tooby 2013; Petersen et al. 2012).

Note, then, that it makes little sense from an evolutionary perspective that our human brain would be pre-programmed (read: adapted) to motivate us to refrain from deliberation (or any other social behaviour) *unconditionally*. To return to the example of warfare, it seems improbable that an incessant urge for (no) warfare would have promoted our ancestors' chances to survive. As Boyer (2018, 58) indicates in his review of the relevant literature: 'What makes humans go to war or cooperate is not stable, general, and context-free preferences for aggression or for peace, as Hobbesians and Rousseauists believed, but a set of conditional mechanisms that weigh the value of either strategy, given the current environment.' It follows that unconditional statements about human nature and deliberation – like the contention of deliberation's most fervent critics that people, by nature, are invariably averse to respectful, reason-based political discussion (Achen and Bartels 2016, 301–302) – do not accord with evolutionary theory.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424000632 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Byproducts refer to 'concomitants or side effects of adaptations [. . .] that did not evolve to solve an adaptive problem' and, hence, did not result in a specialized psychological mechanism (Al-Shawaf et al. 2020). For example, in the context of religion, some have argued that 'beliefs about supernatural agents seem to emerge readily and spontaneously' not because that solved an adaptive problem among our distant ancestors but because people share evolved psychological mechanisms to (overly) quickly detect agents and ascribe goals and motives to those agents (Kirkpatrick 2011, 332). *Noise* refers to a variety of random effects, amounting to a 'variation in the structure and function of adaptations or byproducts that [were] not selected for and did not evolve for any specific reason' (Al-Shawaf et al. 2020). The next section applies this discussion on evolution's three products (that is, noise, byproducts, and adaptations) to deliberation.

Noise, Byproduct, or Adaptation?

A 'deliberation-as-noise' hypothesis would hold that deliberation qualifies as a random effect and, hence, lacks any signs of special design (Buss et al. 1998; Williams 1966). It can thereby function as the null hypothesis that deliberation is in no way a product of natural selection; that is, neither an adaptation nor a byproduct (Al-Shawaf et al. 2020). What speaks against this hypothesis is deliberation's complexity. Understood as interpersonal verbal communication involving mutual respect and reasoning about (potential) political decisions[2] (cf. Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019, 21), deliberation's behavioural complexity seems indicative of an equally complex psychological apparatus that is unlikely to be the result of mere chance (Cosmides et al. 1992, 9). What is more, there exist plausible alternative hypotheses that deliberation *is* a product of natural selection, to which I turn next.

A 'deliberation-as-byproduct' hypothesis would hold that deliberation is not itself an adaptation but 'emerged as a byproduct of another adaptation' (Al-Shawaf et al. 2020). One plausible candidate is that deliberation is a byproduct of reasoning. The 'argumentative theory of reasoning' (Mercier and Sperber 2011, 2017) holds that reasoning evolved for a social purpose: 'to find and evaluate arguments so as to convince others and be convinced when it is appropriate' (Mercier and Landemore 2012, 248). More specifically, reasoning formed an adaptive response to the problem that language allows for lying and deceit, threatening the efficient communication and cooperation language otherwise allows for. As this only presents a problem when people do not already agree, the relevant environmental input that should trigger reasoning is 'disagreement between at least two individuals in the course of a conversation' (Mercier and Landemore 2012, 248).

Following this theory, we could hypothesize that deliberation constitutes a universal human behaviour because people (a) are adapted to exchange arguments when faced with disagreements and (b) regularly find themselves in discussions over politics where sociocultural constraints complicate social dominance and thereby require them to treat each other as equals. This accords with evidence of deliberation occurring regularly in contexts where cultural norms of egalitarianism are in place, such as in small-scale hunter-gatherer societies (Gintis et al. 2015; van der Does 2024) or social movements (Min 2015; Polletta 2002), as well as with evidence of deliberation being prevalent where rules on turn-taking and, for example, norms of 'self-depreciation' complicate the domination of political discussions, such as in town hall meetings and various small-scale societies (Boehm 1996; Cossart et al. 2019; Liberman 1980; Mansbridge 1983).

[2]'Reasoning' here involves the production and evaluation of arguments as to why something should (not) be done (Mercier and Landemore 2012; Steiner et al. 2004); 'mutual respect' involves treating others as equals, manifesting itself in active listening to what others have to say, seeking shared understandings and common ground, and refraining from domination in discussion (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019; Gutmann and Thompson 2004). 'Political' decisions are meant to refer to decisions about what other people beyond the immediate family should do (cf. Bartolini 2018). This definition fits with two common understandings of politics: politics as dealing with collective choice and action (Hay 2007; Ostrom 1998) and politics as dealing with the question of 'who gets what, when, how' (Lasswell 1936).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424000632 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Such a byproduct hypothesis hinges on the idea that deliberation 'does not appear to exhibit evidence of special design for solving an adaptive problem' (Al-Shawaf et al. 2020). A 'deliberation-as-adaptation' hypothesis would hold instead that it did solve an adaptive problem in the environment of our common ancestors, ultimately resulting in an evolved psychological mechanism specialized in addressing that respective problem. One possibility is what I will call the 'ingroup hypothesis' of deliberation (for details, see van der Does 2024). It holds that deliberation evolved as an effective solution to a problem recurrently faced by our hunter-gatherer ancestors: disagreement over upcoming political decisions with other members of one's group. This problem would have threatened group cohesion and thereby the cooperative efforts required for both group and individual survival (cf. de Waal-Andrews and van Vugt 2020). Per the ingroup hypothesis, deliberation formed a solution to this problem because it cushioned the threat to group cohesion via *respectful* discussion, increasing the odds of finding common ground and signalling individuals' worth to the group. As this could have introduced the kind of conformity that would have led to empirically inaccurate decisions (Brennan 2016), swapping one type of threat to survival (that is, the group falling apart) for another (that is, making the wrong decision), political discussion would have had to involve *reasoning* too, enhancing rather than undermining the group's collective intelligence.

This leads to the expectation that people share a specialized mechanism summarized in the heuristic 'IF I disagree with someone from my ingroup about an upcoming political decision, THEN deliberate.' In line with such a heuristic, there is evidence that deliberation is particularly likely when people disagree about political decisions but share strong social bonds (Myers 2022; Niemeyer et al., 2024), such as within political parties (Wolkenstein, 2018; Steiner and Dorff 1980), congregations (Djupe and Olson 2013; Wood and Bloch 1995), or work teams (Mansbridge 1983). It also accords with evidence of deliberation subsiding when strong social bonds break down, societies become more divided, or affective polarization increases (della Porta 2013; Dryzek 2005; O'Flynn 2006; Polletta 2002; Strickler 2018).

These initial byproduct and adaptation hypotheses lead to testable expectations. The byproduct hypothesis would expect deliberation to be triggered by any disagreement in contexts constraining discursive dominance. Furthermore, it suggests that the respectful, argumentative communication characteristic of deliberation does not rely on any mechanism specialized to address political problems and, hence, that we should observe such communication in response to the same environmental inputs in politically and non-politically oriented discussions alike. By contrast, the adaptation hypothesis would expect it to be triggered specifically by disagreements *among ingroup members* over *political decisions*.

To adjudicate between the two hypotheses, future work could start by testing to what degree people are inclined to deliberate when they converse together in political and non-political situations of ingroup disagreement, much like prior experiments have tried to tease out whether psychological mechanisms respond to socio-political problems specifically (Bøggild 2020; Cosmides 1989). Furthermore, as the adaptation hypothesis holds that political disagreement among people from one's own group was the relevant environmental input for triggering deliberation in an ancestral environment lacking clear power differentials (van der Does 2024), future work could test to what degree people tend to be inclined to deliberate in response to ingroup political disagreements *even when the situation allows for discursive dominance* (contra the byproduct-of-reasoning hypothesis).

Concluding Remarks

How we think about human nature has profound effects on how we try to change human behaviour – and deliberation is no exception to that rule (John et al. 2011). If we think that people are naturally predisposed to refrain from deliberation, we might try to convince policymakers that

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424000632 Published online by Cambridge University Press

expensive projects to stimulate deliberation will not be worthwhile. If we think that deliberation is only triggered when specific rules or norms are in place, we might argue for strict moderation of town hall discussions, work team meetings, and, say, citizens' assemblies. And if we think instead that people are, by nature, inclined to deliberate under certain conditions, we might argue that they should be left alone once those conditions are in place, as detailed instructions and careful facilitation cost time and energy and might also be unduly paternalistic. It follows that, for those interested in the questions of whether and how we should enhance deliberation in today's societies, it is key to have an informed understanding of human nature.

In this article, I have argued that it is plausible that, one way or another, deliberation reflects a shared human nature; that we can only come to grips with this by engaging with the evolutionary sciences; and that we can formulate plausible hypotheses about humans' evolved psychology, which expect deliberation to be triggered by the environmental inputs that would have triggered it, too, among our distant ancestors who lived in small-scale, hunter-gatherer societies. Much of the current pessimism about human nature and deliberation thereby seems unwarranted. Against deliberation's critics, evolutionary theory makes it clear that unconditional statements about human nature and deliberation seem dubious. Against many of deliberation's enthusiasts, hypotheses grounded in evolutionary theory suggest that deliberation might require little special instruction or facilitation (cf. Mercier 2011 on argumentation), and can be triggered quite spontaneously when people disagree and face constraints on discursive domination (the byproduct-of-reasoning hypothesis) or simply when they disagree about a political decision with people from their ingroup (the ingroup hypothesis).

My hope is that this will provide sufficient pointers for starting a research programme on the evolutionary psychology of deliberation. Not only will such a programme allow scholars of deliberation to move beyond sheer philosophical speculation about human nature (cf. Alford and Hibbing 2004), it also holds the promise of integrating existing explanations of the conditions (un) favourable to deliberation (Farrell, Mercier, and Schwartzberg 2023; Sass and Dryzek 2014; Thompson 2008, 499–500) by providing an underlying theory as to *why* some conditions trigger deliberation and others do not (cf. Mercier and Landemore 2012). Such insights into the psychology of deliberation will inevitably also improve our understanding of *how* it functions, as 'we become better able to understand how something works when we know why it exists' (Bøggild and Petersen 2016, 253).

Acknowledgements. For their valuable feedback on earlier drafts of this article, I would like to thank Jolijn Hooghwinkel, Vincent Jacquet, Florian van Leeuwen, Honorata Mazepus, Christoph Niessen, Emilien Paulis, Jean-Benoit Pilet, Donatella della Porta, Min Reuchamps, Nathalie Schiffino-Leclercq, Graham Smith, Virginie Van Ingelgom, participants at the Democratic Innovation and Citizen Participation panel of the 2022 NIG Annual Work Conference, and two anonymous reviewers.

Financial support. This research was supported by an Aspirant grant from the F.R.S.-FNRS (grant number FC27855).

Competing interests. None.

References

Achen, CH and Bartels LM (2016) *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Alford JR and Hibbing JR (2004) The origin of politics: An evolutionary theory of political behavior. *Perspectives on Politics* **2**(4), 707–723.

Al-Shawaf L et al. (2020) The products of evolution: Conceptual distinctions, evidentiary criteria, and empirical examples. In Shackelford TD (ed), *The Sage Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology: Foundations of Evolutionary Psychology*. New York, NY: Sage, 70–95.

APA (2016) 1 in 4 employees negatively affected by political talk at work this election season, finds new survey. Available from https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2016/09/employees-political-talk, accessed 30 June 2023.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424000632 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Bächtiger A and Parkinson J (2019) *Mapping and Measuring Deliberation: Towards a New Deliberative Quality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Baekkeskov E, Rubin O and Öberg P (2021) Monotonous or pluralistic public discourse? Reason-giving and dissent in Denmark's and Sweden's early 2020 COVID-19 responses. *Journal of European Public Policy* **28**(8), 1321–1343.
Barkow JH (2006) Introduction: Sometimes the bus does wait. In Barkow JH (ed.), *Missing the Revolution: Darwinism for Social Scientists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 3–59.
Bartolini S (2018) *The Political*. Colchester: Rowman & Littlefield/ECPR Press.
Boehm C (1996) Emergency decisions, cultural-selection mechanics, and group selection. *Current Anthropology* **37**(5), 763–778.
Bøggild T (2020) Cheater detection in politics: Evolution and citizens' capacity to hold political leaders accountable. *The Leadership Quarterly* **31**(2), Article no: 101268, 1–12.
Bøggild T, Aarøe L and Petersen MB (2021) Citizens as complicits: Distrust in politicians and biased social dissemination of political information. *American Political Science Review* **115**(1), 269–285.
Bøggild T and Petersen MB (2016) The evolved functions of procedural fairness: An adaptation for politics. In Shackelford TK and Hansen RD (eds.), *The Evolution of Morality*. Dordrecht: Springer, 247–276.
Boyer P (2018) *Minds Make Societies: How Cognition Explains the World Humans Create*. London: Yale University Press.
Brennan J (2016) *Against Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Buss DM et al. (1998) Adaptations, exaptations, and spandrels. *American Psychologist* **53**(5), 533–548.
Cosmides L (1989) The logic of social exchange: Has natural selection shaped how humans reason? Studies with the Wason selection task. *Cognition* **31**(3), 187–276.
Cosmides L and Tooby J (1992) Cognitive adaptations for social exchange. In Barkow JH, Cosmides L and Tooby J (eds), *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 163–228.
Cosmides L and Tooby J (2013) Evolutionary psychology: New perspectives on cognition and motivation. *Annual Review of Psychology*, **64**, 201–229.
Cosmides L, Tooby J and Barkow JH (1992) Introduction: Evolutionary psychology and conceptual integration. In Barkow JH, Cosmides L and Tooby J (eds), *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3–15.
Cossart, P, Felicetti A and Kloppenberg J (2019) Introduction: The New England Town Meeting: A founding myth of American democracy. *Journal of Public Deliberation* **15**(2), 1–39.
Curato N et al. (2017) Twelve key findings in deliberative democracy research. *Daedalus* **146**(3), 28–38.
Curato N (2022) The Philippines: An uneven trajectory of deliberative democracy. In He B, Breen M and Fishkin JS (eds), *Deliberative Democracy in Asia*. Abingdon: Routledge, 120–135.
de Waal-Andrews W and Van Vugt M (2020) The triad model of follower needs: Theory and review. *Current Opinion in Psychology* **33**, 142–147.
della Porta D (2013) *Can Democracy Be Saved? Participation, Deliberation and Social Movements*. Cambridge: Polity Press
DeScioli P and Bokemper SE (2019) Intuitive political theory: People's judgments about how groups should decide. *Political Psychology* **40**(3), 617–636.
Djupe PA and Olson LR (2013) Public deliberation about gay rights in religious contexts: Commitment to deliberative norms and practice in ELCA congregations. *Journal of Public Deliberation* **9**(1), Article 1, 1–35.
Dryzek JS (2000) *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Dryzek JS (2005) Deliberative democracy in divided societies: Alternatives to agonism and analgesia. *Political Theory* **33**(2), 218–242.
Dryzek JS et al. (2019) The crisis of democracy and the science of deliberation. *Science* **363**(6432), 1144–1146.
Dryzek JS and Niemeyer S (2019) Deliberative democracy and climate governance. *Nature Human Behaviour* **3**(5), 411–413.
Elster J (1998) Introduction. In Elster J (ed), *Deliberative Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1–18.
Ercan SA et al. (eds) (2022) *Research Methods in Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Estlund D and Landemore H (2018) The epistemic value of democratic deliberation. In Bächtiger A et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 113–131.
Farrell H, Mercier H and Schwartzberg M (2023) Analytical democratic theory: A microfoundational approach. *American Political Science Review* **117**(2), 767–772.
Fry DP (2013) War, peace, and human nature: The challenge of achieving scientific objectivity. In Fry DP (ed.), *War, Peace, and Human Nature: The Convergence of Evolutionary and Cultural Views*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1–22.
Fry DP and Söderberg P (2014) Myths about hunter-gatherers redux: nomadic forager war and peace. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* **6**(4), 255–266.
Gagnon JP et al. (2021) The marginalized democracies of the world. *Democratic Theory* **8**(2), 1–18.
Gintis H, Van Schaik C and Boehm C (2015) Zoon politikon: The evolutionary origins of human political systems. *Current Anthropology* **56**(3), 340–341.
Goetz AT and Shackelford TK (2006) Modern application of evolutionary theory to psychology: Key concepts and clarifications. *The American Journal of Psychology* **119**(4), 567–584.

Goodin RE (2009) The state of the discipline, the discipline of the state. In Goodin RE (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 3–57.

Guttmann A and Thompson DF (2004) *Why Deliberative Democracy?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Guttmann A and Thompson DF (2018) Reflections on deliberative democracy: When theory meets practice. In Bächtiger A, Dryzek JS, Mansbridge J and Warren ME (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 900–912.

Hay C (2007) *Why We Hate Politics*. Oxford: Polity.

He B (2014) Deliberative culture and politics: The persistence of authoritarian deliberation in China. *Political Theory* **42**(1), 58–81.

Jacquet V and van der Does R (2021) The consequences of deliberative minipublics: Systematic overview, conceptual gaps, and new directions. *Representation* **57**(1), 131–141.

John P et al. (2011) *Nudge, Nudge, Think, Think: Experimenting with Ways to Change Civic Behaviour*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Kirkpatrick LA (2011) The role of evolutionary psychology within an interdisciplinary science of religion. *Religion* **41**(3), 329–339.

Lasswell HD (1936) *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How*. New York, NY: Whittlesey House.

Lewis DM et al. (2017) Evolutionary psychology: A how-to guide. *American Psychologist* **72**(4), 353.

Liberman K (1980) The organization of talk in aboriginal community decision-making. *Anthropological Forum* **5**(1), 38–53.

Lopez, AC and McDermott R (2012) Adaptation, heritability, and the emergence of evolutionary political science. *Political Psychology* **33**(3), 343–362.

Mansbridge J (1983) *Beyond Adversary Democracy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Marlowe FW (2005) Hunter-gatherers and human evolution. *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews* **14**(2), 54–67.

McDermott R and Hatemi PK (2018) To go forward, we must look back: The importance of evolutionary psychology for understanding modern politics. *Evolutionary Psychology* **16**(2), 1474704918764506, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1177/147470491876450.

Mercier H (2011) Reasoning serves argumentation in children. *Cognitive Development* **26**(3), 177–191.

Mercier H and Landemore H (2012) Reasoning is for arguing: Understanding the successes and failures of deliberation. *Political Psychology* **33**(2), 243–258.

Mercier H and Sperber D (2017) *The Enigma of Reason*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Min SJ (2009) Deliberation, East meets West: Exploring the cultural dimension of citizen deliberation. *Acta Politica* **44**(4), 439–458.

Min SJ (2015) Occupy Wall Street and deliberative decision-making: Translating theory to practice. *Communication, Culture & Critique* **8**(1), 73–89.

Mouffe C (2005) *On the Political*. London: Routledge.

Myers CD (2022) The dynamics of social identity: Evidence from deliberating groups. *Political Psychology* **43**(2), 237–254.

Niemeyer S (2011) The emancipatory effect of deliberation: Empirical lessons from mini-publics. *Politics & Society* **39**(1), 103–140.

Niemeyer S et al. (2024). How deliberation happens: Enabling deliberative reason. *American Political Science Review* **118**(1), 345–362.

Niemeyer S and Jennstål J (2018) Scaling up deliberative effects: Applying lessons of mini-publics. In Bächtiger A, Dryzek JS, Mansbridge J and Warren ME (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 329–347.

O'Flynn I (2006) *Deliberative Democracy and Divided Societies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

OECD (2020) Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1787/339306da-en, accessed 30 June 2023.

Ostrom E (1998) A behavioral approach to the rational choice theory of collective action: Presidential address, American Political Science Association, 1997. *American Political Science Review* **92**(1), 1–22.

Parthasarathy R and Rao V (2018) Deliberative democracy in India. In Bächtiger A, Dryzek JS, Mansbridge J and Warren ME (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 805–818.

Paulis E et al. (2020) The POLITICIZE dataset: An inventory of deliberative mini-publics (DMPs) in Europe. *European Political Science* **20**, 521–542.

Petersen MB et al. (2012) Who deserves help? Evolutionary psychology, social emotions, and public opinion about welfare. *Political Psychology* **33**(3), 395–418.

Petersen MB (2015) Evolutionary political psychology: On the origin and structure of heuristics and biases in politics. *Advances in Political Psychology* **36**(S1), 45–78.

Pietraszewski D and Wertz AE (2022) Why evolutionary psychology should abandon modularity. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* **17**(2), 465–490.

Polletta F (2002) *Freedom Is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Rosenberg SW (2007) Rethinking democratic deliberation: The limits and potential of citizen participation. *Polity* **39**(3), 335–360.
Rosenberg SW (2014) Citizen competence and the psychology of deliberation. In Elstub S and McLaverty P (eds), *Deliberative Democracy: Issues and Cases*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 98–117.
Ryfe DM (2005) Does deliberative democracy work? *Annual Review of Political Science* **8**, 49–71.
Samuelsson M and Bøyum S (2015) Education for deliberative democracy: Mapping the field. *Utbildning & Demokrati* **24**(1), 75–94.
Sass J (2018) Deliberative ideals across diverse cultures. In Bächtiger A, Dryzek JS, Mansbridge J and Warren ME (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Deliberative Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 86–99.
Sass J and Dryzek JS (2014) Deliberative cultures. *Political Theory* **42**(1), 3–25.
Scott-Phillips TC, Dickins TE and West SA (2011) Evolutionary theory and the ultimate–proximate distinction in the human behavioral sciences. *Perspectives on Psychological Science* **6**(1), 38–47.
Sen A (2003) Democracy and its global roots. *The New Republic* **229**(14), 28–35.
Spencer B and Gillen, FJ (1927) *The Arunta: A Study of a Stone Age People*. London: Macmillan.
Steiner J et al. (2004) *Deliberative Politics in Action: Analyzing Parliamentary Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Steiner J and Dorff RH (1980) Decision by interpretation: A new concept for an often overlooked decision mode. *British Journal of Political Science* **10**(1), 1–13.
Strickler R (2018) Deliberate with the enemy? Polarization, social identity, and attitudes toward disagreement. *Political Research Quarterly* **71**(1), 3–18.
Thompson DF (2008) Deliberative democratic theory and empirical political science. *Annual Review of Political Science* **11**, 497–520.
Tooby J and Cosmides L (1992) The psychological foundations of culture. In Barkow JH, Cosmides L and Tooby J (eds), *The Adapted Mind: Evolutionary Psychology and the Generation of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 19–136.
Tooby J and Cosmides L (2010) Groups in mind: The coalitional roots of war and morality. In Hogh-Olesen H (ed), *Human Morality and Sociality: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives*. London: Red Globe Press, 191–234.
Turnbull CM (1962) *The Forest People*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
Turnbull CM (1965) *Wayward Servants: The Two Worlds of the African Pygmies*. Garden City, NY: The Natural History Press.
van der Does R (2024) Deliberation and human nature: A companion piece. Available from https://osf.io/2xuha/ (accessed July 4, 2024).
Van Vugt M, Hogan R and Kaiser RB (2008) Leadership, followership, and evolution: Some lessons from the past. *American Psychologist* **63**(3), 182–196.
Von Rueden C and Van Vugt M (2015) Leadership in small-scale societies: Some implications for theory, research, and practice. *The Leadership Quarterly* **26**(6), 978–990.
Wallace E and Hoebel EA (1952) *The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
Williams GC (1966) *Adaptation and Natural Selection: A Critique of Some Current Evolutionary Thought*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
Wolkenstein F (2018) Intra-party democracy beyond aggregation. *Party Politics* **24**(4), 323–334.
Wood JR and Bloch JP (1995) The role of church assemblies in building a civil society: The case of the United Methodist General Conference's debate on homosexuality. *Sociology of Religion* **56**(2), 121–136.

Cite this article: van der Does R (2025) Deliberation and Human Nature. *British Journal of Political Science* 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123424000632