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Exit-Based Empowerment in Democratic Theory

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From a normative perspective, democracy is about including those who are potentially affected by collective decisions in making those decisions (Goodin 2007). It follows, then, that contemporary democratic theory should mostly be about institutions and practices through which the voices of those affected find a place in collective decision making. And it also follows that contemporary democratic theory should, and does, focus on the means for voice-based inclusions: distributions of rights, including rights to vote, speak, associate, individuals' standing as citizens and their capacities of citizenship, as well as the practices, organizations, and institutions that translate voice into collective decisions. For these reasons, contemporary democratic theory is modeled primarily on membership defined through empowered voice.

The alternative to voice is exit: by deciding to leave a collectivity, members forego voice and choose exclusion. As conceived in Hirschman's classic work *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (1970), given the opportunity, dissatisfied members may choose to exit a collectivity rather than to seek reform or response by voicing their dissatisfactions. If voice is associated with democracy, exit is associated with market: members/customers choose the organizations that best serve their needs, "voting with their feet."

The trade-offs and interactions between voice and exit have been extensively and brilliantly examined by Hirschman and a wave of literature generated by his work (Hirschman 1970, 1974, 1978, Dowding, et. al. 2000.). Hirschman's goal in *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* was to introduce the concept of voice to economists, who are habituated to conceiving exit as the mechanism through which firms are held accountable to their customers. Voice, Hirschman argued, is essential to renewing organizations because it conveys information from the most quality conscious and active members/customers to organizational leaders, enabling the kinds of responsiveness necessary for organizations to recuperate from mistakes and to hold at bay the more destructive option of exit.

If Hirschman sought to introduce the concept of voice to economics, I would like to reintroduce the concept of exit into democratic theory. I use the term "reintroduce" because the concept has played a major, though under-theorized, role in the institutions and practice of democracy. Exit mechanisms have always been recognized as essential to electoral democracy, as citizens leave one party and join another. Rights of exit are logically implied by all democratic theories with roots in liberal contract theory (Kukathas 2003, Green 1998). Theorists who see a civil society comprised of voluntary associations as a key element of democratic government assume that "voluntariness" brings with it the rights as well as capacities for exit from associations (Rosenblum 1998, Warren 2001). More recently, theorists of multiculturalism and feminism have advocated rights of exit from groups as a hedge against the coercive capabilities of ethnic and religious groups within liberal-democratic societies (Okin 2002, Philips 2007, chap. 6, Benhabib 2002, Kukathas 2003, Deveaux 2006, 47-53).

But with a few important exceptions (Sørensen 1997, Gastil 2000, Shapiro 2003, 43-64), exit has not been theorized as a generic feature of democratic organization. Tellingly, "exit" is not found in the indexes of works of contemporary democratic theory. When the concept does make an appearance, it is often viewed as an undesirable alternative to democracy, one which atomizes collectivities and damages collective loyalties, erodes collective choice and undermines

provision of common goods, encourages excessive individualism, drains collectivities of their best and brightest, and substitutes silence for voice (see, e.g., Barry 1974, Held, 2006, 94-8, 235; Elster, 1997, 33-34, Olson 2006, 48-52, 92, Healy 2007, Newman 2007).

I argue here that *exit-based empowerment*—the rights and capacities for exit—are as central to the design and integrity of democracy as the distribution of votes and voice long considered its key structural features. I suggest, first, that exit-based empowerment is increasingly important for democratic norms owing to the changing structures of collective action—particularly changes in state monopoly powers—that undermine membership-based forms of voice. Second, I note that exit-based mechanisms are little theorized within democratic theory, largely because exit has been equated with markets, which have in turn been understood as an unattractive alternative to collective, membership-based decision-making. Instead, (third) democratic theorists implicitly work with a “voice-monopoly” model characterized by limited exit and focused on voice-based institutions and practices. Fourth, I suggest that this model exacts a price in democratic values that is too heavy, not the least of which is that monopolies—even democratic ones—have high thresholds for individual influence, which biases toward those with more resources. In contrast (fifth), an exit-based empowerment comes with features that underwrite democratic norms. Among these are a lower threshold for effective use by those affected by collective decisions, and greater inducements for organizations to respond to those they affect. Sixth, once we identify exit-based empowerment, we can see that it is quite generic to democracy and broadly practiced, not least in competitive electoral systems. Despite its ubiquity I argue (seventh) that the democratic potentials of exit have been masked because the concept has not been well formulated. Although Hirschman’s exit-voice dichotomy represented a theoretical breakthrough, it confused the dimensions of empowerment and communication: the alternative to exit is rights-based inclusion, while the alternative to voice is what I shall call “signal,” which is the communicative feature of exit. By distinguishing these dimensions, we can identify at least two exit-based classes of responsiveness and accountability mechanisms that are not theorized within the voice-monopoly model. Like markets, both must be constructed through institutions or through distributions of rights and entitlements. One—which I call *enabled exit*—exists when political institutions empower choices but do not structure or determine the organizations individuals choose to join or leave. Enabled exit is not *laissez faire*: it requires political institutions that protect the spaces in which associations and other kinds of groups or organizations can thrive. These institutions must also underwrite the conditions of choice so members can exit to other organizations, should they find the group or organization to be unresponsive, unaccountable, or even oppressive. The other, which I call *institutionalized exit*, exists when institutions construct a limited range of options from which citizens may choose, and citizens are empowered through equally distributed capacities to choose, as in the distribution of votes or entitlements to services such as education or healthcare. Parties or other public entities compete for votes or money. In both kinds of cases, the mere presence of exit options—*exit-based empowerment*—provides incentives for elite responsiveness and accountability, the logics of which I develop in the final sections of the paper.

The contemporary relevance of exit-based empowerment

If the democratic potentials of exit have not been well theorized, it is for good reason: modern democracy was born of monopoly. In its eighteenth and nineteenth century origins, the democratic project focused on increasing inclusions within states that had effectively

consolidated power by controlling territory, developing administrative capacities, and regularizing sovereignty through constitutional means. The justifications for voice are intimately related to these elements of monopoly in two ways. First, when a collectivity controls key features of livelihood, such as security, and solves collective action problems through coercion, the individuals subject to that control and coercion should have a say in how it is deployed. Second, the greater the costs of exit to individuals, the greater the need and justification for voice. When voice is effective and monopoly extensive, the bare fact of monopoly is, on average, good for democracy: violence monopolized can also be tamed, turned into capacities for collective provision of common goods, and legitimated through various kinds of democratic devices (Pogge 1990, Warren 2006). Under these circumstances, democracy is not only inclusive, but also directive: through public opinion formation and electoral representation, peoples' interests, preferences, and values are formed into voice and translated into policies. The meanings of exit in this standard model of liberal democracy are closely tied to "private" zones of choice, protected but not controlled by the state, and hence beyond the proper domain of democracy.

While the assumptions inherited from the liberal-democratic tradition are contestable, they are also of decreasing relevance. State monopolies over collective capacities are less extensive than they once were. They compete and cooperate with transnational economic and security regimes, international organizations, and civil society actors such as NGOs. They must anticipate market structures and reactions, even as they plan for their operations and clean up externalities. An important consequence of these developments is that policies and policy-making are increasingly decentred and decentralized, while the locations of collective responsibility and accountability are more diffuse (Offe 1996, Beck 1996, Sørensen 1997. The impacts of collective decisions on those affected—"chains of 'affectedness'" (Bohman 2007) —are remote and often impossibly complex. Owing to these developments, voice-based mechanisms that function through voting and related forms of representation now have less impact on those collective decision-making that affect people's lives.

If these trends undermine the powers of voice because they erode the powers of states, two other kinds generate new sites of collective action not subject to voice. One trend follows directly from interdependencies across political jurisdictions which, as Bohman puts it (2007, 25), "nonvoluntary inclusion"—that is, inclusion within collectivities that follow from decisions that people or organizations with resources take that have effects—externalities—that reach far beyond the parties to the decision. When the costs are to commons—as in environmental degradation—there are few options but to scale up political regimes to encompass common goods, ideally simulating a voice-monopoly model of decision. "Exit" in such cases amounts to free-riding by despoilers (Ostrum 1991). In other cases, however, interdependencies—often but not necessarily globalized—produce monopoly-like effects *not* because the goods cannot be exited in principle (as with commons and other public goods), but *rather because individuals lack capacities to exit owing to their vulnerabilities*—poverty, lack of education, or cultures that limit choice. In such cases, lack of choice maps onto domination, which is itself a situation in which individuals are included in an effective collectivity with neither voice nor exit.

Another trend operates within political jurisdictions: in all developed countries, much policy-making is shifting into the executive agencies of government, domains of the state that are

not structured to incorporate voice. A large part of the reason is the complexity of government with the rise of welfare states in the post WWII era: legislatures can at best function in ways that are broadly directive, leaving much policy to be developed by entities that have the capacity and expertise, but are not structured for empowered voice. We have thus seen an upsurge in policy-driven, extra-legislative participatory mechanisms over the last couple of decades (Cain, et. al. 2003). These mechanisms, however, are also typically extra-democratic, in that they are advisory rather than empowered, that thus lack mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness equivalent to elections. Thus, while states are *losing* monopoly over collective actions as a whole, they have been *creating* functionally-differentiated monopolies in policy areas as a residual of legislative incapacity, modified primarily by consultative and participatory governance practices (Warren 2009), but also—as we shall see below, some new experiments in exit-based empowerment (Kamarck 2007, Sørensen 1997)

The final trend of relevance here is cultural, and relates to the demand side for exit-based empowerment. As the developed democracies become more “postmodern,” citizens increasingly value life-choices (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Postmodern individuals are thus more likely to value exit in principle—it is implied by choice—even if they do not use it. Forms of participation such as voting that do not elicit clear responses are less attractive to postmodern individuals than those that are targeted toward problems and more likely “to make a difference”—the kinds of participation offered by organizations such as voluntary associations and advocacy groups (Dalton 2007). However necessary, standard “monopoly-voice” forms of democracy may be at an increasing cultural disadvantage—victims, most probably, of their very success in protecting, developing, pluralizing, and energizing the societies of which they are a part (Van Deth 2000).

The voice-exit dichotomy in democratic theory

Owing to this changing political landscape, democrats need to pay closer attention to models of empowerment that can work when the conditions of the voice-monopoly model are weak or do not apply. One form that responds to these new conditions is a voice-exit model, which would increase the incentives of decision-makers to shorten “chains of affectedness” by cultivating voice, responsiveness, and accountability. The conditions for voice-exit empowerment are not universal, as I shall suggest below. But under the contemporary circumstances of politics, they are sufficiently wide-spread relative to the narrowing scope of the voice-monopoly model to bear close consideration as a key design feature of democratic political systems.

Hirschman (1970) introduced the exit-voice dichotomy to explain how organizations repair and regenerate themselves in response to the dissatisfaction of their members. Voice and exit are two ways members can pressure organizations to change: they can speak up or they can leave. Voice presupposes that an organization is structured in such a way that it can respond to its members. Exit assumes the existence of competing sources of goods, and it assumes that members have the opportunities and capacities to choose from them. In organizations that are responsive, voice and exit are complementary: the availability of exit induces organizations to provide its members with voice precisely so that it can respond to their needs and lessen the likelihood that they will leave with their dollars, their votes, their good will, or their capacities to contribute to the organization (Hirschman 1970, 36). *Loyalty*, the third term in Hirschman’s model, is a resource organizations can cultivate to counter exit and stabilize a core of its most

committed and “quality sensitive” members, which in turn helps to ensure its long-term capacity to regenerate, reform, and thrive.

In the absence of loyalty and the presence of choices for members, exit and voice may trade off: dissatisfied members will prefer exit to voice. In the basic model, exit has a low threshold of difficulty relative to voice. It has the advantage of being “impersonal—any face-to-face confrontation between customer and firm with its imponderable and unpredictable elements is avoided and success and failure of the organization are communicated to it by a set of statistics.” By contrast, voice is “a far more ‘messy’ concept because it can be graduated, all the way from faint grumbling to violent protest; it implies articulation of one’s critical opinions rather than a private, ‘secret’ vote in the anonymity of a supermarket; and finally, it is direct rather than roundabout. Voice is political action par excellence.” (1970, 15-16)

The messiness of voice can be a barrier to its use, so that voice-based political action—the essential feature of democracy—is relatively disadvantaged whenever exit is available, at least when loyalty is not factored into the model. When individuals choose exit, they have control over the consequences of their acts, and they reap both the rewards and costs. When they exercise voice, however, they are subject to inherent qualities of politics—the “slow grinding of hard boards” (as Max Weber 1946 [1919], **, put it), the inherent unpredictability of collective actions (in Hannah Arendt’s (1958) terms), the risks of speaking up, the possibility of large investments with little or no payback, and the psychological burdens of overt conflict. Thus, Hirschman notes,

while exit requires nothing but a clear-cut either-or decision, voice is essentially an *art* constantly evolving in new directions. This situation makes for an important bias in favour of exit when both options are present: customer-members will ordinarily base their decision on the *past* experience with the cost and effectiveness of voice even though the possible *discovery* of lower cost and greater effectiveness is of the very essence of voice. The presence of the exit alternative can therefore tend to *atrophy the development of the art of voice*.” (43)

Without members who are willing to take on these burdens, organizations, including democratic states, are unlikely to be able to rejuvenate, reform, and perform. For these reasons, Hirschman suggests, a “no-exit” situation is sometimes preferable, assuming (1) “exit is ineffective as a recuperation mechanism, but does succeed in draining from the firm or organization its more quality-conscious, alert, and potentially activist customers or members; and (2) if voice could be made into an effective mechanism once these customers or members are securely locked in” (1970, 55).

Hirschman’s reasoning provides, of course, the structural logic that maps onto the normative logic of democracy. As suggested above, voice is not only normatively required by monopoly-based democracy, but also enabled: dissatisfied citizens will pressure for change, and democratic institutions should both empower and channel this dissatisfaction. There are two logics that drive democratic attachment to monopoly. The first derives from the logic of collective action: defectors from collectivities undermine democracy by undermining the possibility of collective choice (Barry 1974). Union organizing is the classic case: the worker

who breaks with the solidarity of the bargaining unit also undermines the capacity of the union to serve its members. More generally, as Olson (1971) famously detailed, when individuals are left to weigh the costs and benefits of collective actions, larger groups tend to return fewer benefits, causing individuals to exit the collectivity, and undermining the provision of public goods.¹ So it is understandable that democratic theorists—particularly those focused on the important relationship between solidarity and collective choice—view exit opportunities as harmful, indeed, as Hirschman observes, so much so that exit is often branded criminal or treasonous (1970, 17).

A second logic is closely related: democrats fear that opportunities for exit from public and publicly-provided goods will tend to drain collectivities of their talent, which will degrade public provision (Barry 1974, Olson 2006, 48-52, 92, Healy 2007, Newman 2007). Hirschman identifies the structural logic through which public services can be transformed into expensive, low-performing public entities through a “noxious combination” of exit and voice (1970, 44-46). The presence of some amount of exit—from government rail to private trucking in Nigeria, or from public to private schools in the US, and from high tax to low tax municipalities—drains organizations or jurisdictions of their “quality conscious” members, who are, typically, those who have the resources that enable them to exit. In this way, organizations are transformed into what Hirschman calls “lazy monopolies”—expensive, inefficient, unresponsive, and poorly performing entities that have a lock on those without the resources to exit. The “lazy monopoly” phenomenon probably extends to pressures for democratization as well. Many authoritarian states—China, for example—encourage their most vocal dissidents to exit, thus reducing internal pressure for voice. Nineteenth-century Britain sought colonies to relieve internal pressures on internal labour markets, which elites feared could result in disorder—and certainly reduced pressures for democratic reform.

The third logic is more general, and is expressed in the well-theorized tensions between democracy and markets (Macpherson 1977, Lindblom 2001, Dahl 1998). Democratic theorists often equate exit with market organization, and conceive markets as an alternative to democracy and collective choice (see, e.g., Macpherson 1977, Bowles and Gintis 1987, Barber 1984, Held, 2006, 94-8, 235; Elster, 1997, 33-34, Olson 2006, 48-52, 92; cf. Shapiro 2003, 56). The concept of exit is similarly associated with high mobility capital: investors shop for the cheapest places to do business, while the wealthy seek to free-ride on societies that are well-ordered because they have strong public services and security (Hirschman 1978, 96, Lindblom 2001, chap. 17). Libertarians and public choice theorists who prefer markets over government—the latter necessarily dangerous and almost always oppressive owing to its monopoly character—also equate democracy with state monopoly and exit with markets (Buchanan 1975, Hayek 1944). The dichotomy was replayed once again in the resurgence of “neoliberalism” in the 1980s—the British concept that identifies the privatization of government services with more market, less government—and, thus, a shrinking of the domain of democracy in favour of the market.

¹ No doubt similar reasoning is behind Rawls’ assumption that that a society enabling justice is one in which members enter by birth and only exit through death (Rawls 1993, 41).

For these kinds of reasons, democratic theorists often view exit less as a complement to democracy than a threat, with the result that they have taken on, sometimes explicitly but more often implicitly, a bias in favour of tight monopoly combined with voice (Hirschman 1970, 47).²

Costs of the voice-monopoly model to democracy

While the costs of exit are often noted in contemporary democratic theory, the costs of the voice-monopoly model to democratic values are rarely tallied. The most important of these bear directly on the basic norm of democracy: that those potentially affected by decisions should have opportunities to influence these decisions. Liberal-democratic states are distinguished from authoritarian states not by the presence of exit—though, in fact, some authoritarian states legally control exit. Both kinds of orders function as *de facto* monopolies. Though liberal-democratic states do not control exit by law, exit from states is costly: it is disruptive of family, social support networks, language, culture, and the various welfare rights and entitlements of citizenship. These monopoly-like effects are well-recognized and justified by the existence of voice mechanisms—that is, democratic processes that legitimate the monopoly-like properties of the state. Thus it is appropriate that democratic theory has focused on equalities of political resources, secured by positive political rights (voting, speech, association), related welfare rights (education and income security), as well as on the mechanisms such as electoral systems, judicial systems, public sphere discourse, and civil society activism through which citizen voice is translated into influence over law and policy (see, e.g., Habermas 1996, chap. 4).

But even with the best distributions of voice-enabling resources, the mechanisms of voice must be very good indeed for those affected to exercise voice. This point is normatively important because, within a monopoly structure, the difference between effective and non-effective voice is the difference between democracy and domination. And, of course, not even liberal-democratic states are exempt from factors and forces that result in high thresholds for effective voice.

Consider the well-known problem of size. As political units and jurisdictions integrate, the effective voice of each individual is diluted, often to the point that any one individual's voice or voice reduces to significance. This problem is long-standing and generic, since the effectiveness of collective actions often depends upon scaling collective units to the magnitude of problems (Dahl and Tufte 1973). The problem is magnified by contemporary circumstances of politics, in which effective jurisdictions are often regional or global. As scale and size increase, so does the effective threshold for voice. And the effects are not equally distributed: those with greater political resources—education, organization, attentiveness, and time—are more likely to breach these thresholds than those without, a pattern extensively documented in the literature on participation (e.g., Verba, et. al. 1995).

Second, it is in the nature of democratic political decision-making, that, if successful, it rests on a broad basis of assent. For individuals (or the groups that represent them) to have influence in polities of any significant size requires long-term commitments of resources and attention for the sake of uncertain outcomes. As in the case of size, this feature of democratic decision-making in itself biases collective choice in the direction of citizens with political

² Similarly, Ian Shapiro notes that “liberal constitutionalists” implicitly work with a “monolithic” model (2003, 56).

resources. These situations count as “democratic” only on the assumption that the interests of active, well-organized citizens and interest groups look very much like those of the inactive citizens, such that those who are active might be said to represent the inactive individuals. But we know that, on average, active citizens are unlike passive citizens, whose voice is, typically, insufficient to cross the organizational threshold.

Third, as noted above, numerous collective decisions have migrated out of the state or state-like political jurisdictions owing to thickening interdependencies which produce “nonvoluntary inclusions,” resulting from long and complex “chains of affectedness” to which every individual is subject (Bohman 2007). As Bohman has convincingly argued, imagining that state-like regimes might be scaled up or out to match these chains of affectedness such that it could be locus of democratic control is very difficult to imagine, either politically or technically. In this dimension, the monopoly-voice model is overextended to the point of irrelevance, with the cost measured in distraction from what is possible—maximizing the choices individuals have in the face of complex and remote effects on their lives (Bohman 2007; see also Petit 1999, Richardson 2003)

Fourth, within the developed democracies, high thresholds for voice are aggravated by migration of collective decisions out of legislatures and elected executives into administrative agencies and systems. Standard theories of representative democracy hold that administrative agencies should take direction from the formally democratic branches of government. Voice outside of formally democratic channels corrupts democratic control over collective actions. Administrative agencies should thus operate as no-voice, no-exit entities, precisely to ensure their democratic integrity and legitimacy. If, however, the elected branches of government in fact farm out much political work to administrative agencies—as they have done for decades owing, in large part, to the technical and political complexity of the modern functions of government—then accountability to those affected fails, leaving only monopoly. Universal health care in the Canadian provinces is a case in point. Democratic accountability is, presumably, provided via elected governments. But because elections are information poor and function primarily as judgments about the performance of entire governments, they provide only the loosest of linkages between citizens (who are both payers and patients) and the ministries of health, within which key structural decisions are consolidated. Because there is no formal way for citizens to exercise voice within the system, effective voice is left to well-organized groups with powers of veto—in Canada, often unions) whose members represent only a small subset of those affected by the health care system. Under these circumstances, responsiveness to those affected fails, leaving the system to respond to powerful stakeholders. As with many universal services, in the Canadian health system exit options exist—private health care—for those who have resources, leading to the “noxious combination” of monopoly combined with enough exit to drain the system of its most quality-conscious members.

This example aside, the key theoretical point is that such democratic failures are foreseeable consequences of the voice-monopoly model operating under conditions of complexity. As Davies (2007) notes, even the best voice-based procedures include barriers that are very difficult to engineer out of institutions. These include, for example, the penetration of organized interests resulting in corporatist arrangements, the capacities of insiders to set and control agendas, and differences between cultures professional and citizen cultures and levels of

education. The alternative to voice for those with few resources is not exit, but silence, even when standard voice mechanisms are in place.

Finally, the voice-monopoly model also exacts the cost of trading democracy off against individual freedoms and choice, and replaying long-standing tensions between democracy and liberalism (Macpherson 1977). It is uncomfortable at best that democrats should find themselves viewing individual choice and liberties as threats to collective voice (e.g., Bowles and Gintis, 1987, Olson 2006; cf. Bohman 2007).

The more general problem with the attachment many democratic theorists have to the voice-monopoly model is that it presupposes, often counterfactually, not only effective mechanisms for voice, but also effective incentives for the monopoly organization to respond to voice—a point Hirschman notes but does not develop. Importantly, intrinsic properties of the voice-monopoly model, aggravated by contemporary conditions of politics, will keep these barriers high. If these barrier approximate no-voice, no exit situation—as they may for those with fewer resources—then the proper description, formal democratic institutions notwithstanding, is domination, not democracy.

Generic benefits of the voice-exit model

Let us now consider the potential benefits of exit for democracy from a generic perspective—that is, purely as a mechanism related to the democratic goods of empowerment and voice of those potentially affected by collective decisions. In theory, the potential democratic goods of empowered exit are considerable: under the right conditions, exit can make consent effective, reinforce equality, induce elite responsiveness to voice as well as trustworthiness, and underwrite deliberation.³

Early modern liberalism placed a proto-democratic value on exit by viewing *consent* of the governed as a necessary to justify state power (Green 1998). In Locke, of course, the legitimacy of civil government derives from the consent among equals, imagined as a hypothetical contract. This kind of justification remains fundamental to democratic theory today (see, e.g., Hirst 1994, chap. 3, Benhabib 2002, 47, Habermas 1996). But while democratic theorists have focused primarily on consent *as voice*, the concept logically implies that (a) consent is voluntary in the sense that it is freely given, and (b) participants can withhold consent, and thus exit from the contractual relationship. As Kukathas puts it, the “right of exit is, in fact, nothing more or less than the right repudiate authority. It arises out of what might be called the ‘no-right’ of any authority to coerce people into becoming or remaining members of a community or association” (2003, 97). For certain kinds of goods—public security and certain kinds of commons—exit undermines collective choice, as critics of exit rightly argue. That said, as I shall suggest below, exit can be designed into many kinds of political institutions (e.g., competitive party systems), public services (e.g., public school choice), and even some kinds of common goods such as environmental integrity (e.g., green-branded products), in such a way that consent is actual rather than hypothetical.

³ I am mindful of, but do not consider here, classically liberal goods, particularly those of liberty and freedom, which logically imply rights and powers of exit (Green 1998, Kukathas 2003).

Second, exit typically has a lower threshold of effective empowerment than voice, which can serve democratic norms of *equality*. As suggested above, because voice within a low-exit context is inherently resource-intensive, voice options inherently favour those with greater political resources. While certain forms of exit are resource intensive (e.g., capital flight), others are not (e.g., joining or leaving a voluntary association, changing public schools, voting for a non-incumbent party or candidate, or refusing to buy an environmentally destructive product). When exit options are available, they can be exercised by individuals, often within a time horizon that makes a difference for the ways in which organizations affect their members. From the standpoint of equality, exit can be structured in ways that are not resource-intensive, thus spreading empowerments to those with fewer resources. This said, powers of exit—choices for individuals—can neither be assumed, nor deduced from formal rights of exit. They too must be constructed, which will mean focusing on the choices individual can actually make, particularly to exit relationships of domination (Okin 2002, Phillips 2007, Bohman 2007)

Third, insofar as elites *represent* members, their roles require *proactive responsiveness* (Pitkin 1967). When members of organizations have options for exit, elites within organizations have positive incentives for responsiveness. Under voice-monopoly conditions, voice can be directive, but the incentives for responsiveness are often lacking, negatively embedded in regulations, or purely normative. When organizations do not need to worry about losing members, accountability will be driven by citizen demand, subject to the threshold factors detailed above. But if organizations are subject to exit, then elites are more likely to proactively respond to citizens, even designing *voice and deliberation* into organizations to forestall the possibility of exit (Hirschman 1970, 5, 36, Mintrom 2003, Olson 2006, 57, Sørensen 1997, Gastil 2000). For citizens, elite-incentivized responsiveness lowers the effective threshold for voice.

There is also another, less-well theorized dimension of responsiveness. In a democracy, warranted *trust* in authorities is an alternative to voice (Warren 1999). From an economic perspective, trust is cheap and efficient. If elites are not being constantly monitored and second-guessed, they can work with more creativity, flexibility, and intelligence in serving their constituents. So elites should have an interest in guarding trustworthiness as a valuable resource, just as members have an interest in the trustworthiness of elites (Thompson 2000, 92-93; Philp 2001). The logic of “trusted brands” works in politics as in economic markets, and, ideally, elites guard their reputations with the same attentiveness to citizens that name-brand firms apply to their customers. Exit options should provide incentives for elites to secure the trust of those they serve and represent.

A short history of constructed exit in democratic theory

These democratic benefits of exit are, of course, contingent rather than necessary. They depend upon distributions of chances for exit, which is to say that the resources enabling choice must be available for individuals. That is, not only must competing providers of similar goods exist, but also individuals must have the capacities to avail themselves of alternative providers. From this perspective, exit is almost always *constructed* through the selective deployment of state monopoly powers to protect, develop, and underwrite the powers of individuals to make choices. Economic markets depend, for example, upon common and binding contract law, a credible currency, certain kinds of enforced transparency, regulations barring monopolies, and other features of the enabling environment that enable buyers to exit relations with particular

sellers. Of course, even with these constructed elements, individual capacities for exit from sellers depends upon the distribution of effective demand (wealth and income), and exit from labour contracts is contingent upon the availability of alternative employment.

Less well recognized is that constructed exit has a deep history in democratic theory and practice. Exit has never been simply a market concept. The argument for exit as a constitutive feature of civil society is most central, and linked logically and practically to the state recognition and establishment of liberties. Locke, a proto-democrat, argued in his *Letter Concerning Toleration* in favour of liberty of conscience, the effect of which would be to set religious organization into competition with one another. Exit would hold them accountable to their followers for their theological offerings, while putting an end to “conversion by the sword”. In Book V of the *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith explicitly detailed a similar logic regarding religious competition. Tocqueville argued in favour of freedom of the press that the accountability to the truth provided by competition among news sources was superior to any that censorship might achieve, on the assumption that sources falsehoods would, over time, be subject to the discipline of exit. In *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill likewise argued for liberty of thought and speech on the basis of similar logic. Deliberative democratic likewise understand that there is a close correlation between the force of speech and the freedom of deliberators to exit arguments they do not find credible. Arguments can only be “won” when agreement is voluntary (Habermas 1996). Likewise, civil society associations need not practice procedural democracy as long as they are voluntary—that is, members are free to vote with their feet through exit (Benhabib 2002, 19-20; Goodin 2003; Warren 2001). Paul Hirst (1994) extended the logic of exit to a fully-developed theory of democracy in which most collective actions are performed by associations and exit functions as the primary guarantor of democracy.

Constructed exit has likewise figured into recent debates within liberal multiculturalism. Purely liberal approaches to multiculturalism—particularly, the question as to the extent to which liberal societies should tolerate domination of individuals, especially women, within groups—may assume that formal rights of exit from groups assure individual autonomy (Kukathas 2003). Critics point out that formal rights of exit do not reliably translate into effective powers of exit. Failures to understand the difference between rights and effective empowerments blind liberals to domination within groups (Okin, 2002, Phillips 2007, 133-57, Deveaux 2006, 47-53). Nor do liberals fully appreciate that some kinds of goods cannot be exited without their destruction, such as religion and community. As both Deveaux and Phillips argue, practices within groups should be open to deliberation, so women have the effective opportunity to transform group relationships. “The right to exit does not provide enough protection to people living in oppressive conditions, but it also does not offer enough of a solution to those with a strong normative commitment to their cultural or religious group. Voice matters as well as exit” (Phillips 2007, 157). In short, these critics are not arguing against the exit-based *empowerment*, but against the ideological effects of formal rights of exit in masking context within which effective empowerments are weak. So the structural complement to voice empowerment, even by this logic, is the effective power of exit, which must be constructed through education and job skills training, rights of property ownership, legal rights to divorce, and other conditions of choice.

The history of constructed exit within state institutions is primarily that of elections and electoral competition. The logic of exit here is highly developed (Schumpeter 1942, chap. 22, Hirschman 1970, chap. 6, Gastil, 2000, chap. 2, Shapiro 2003, 44-64): voters can hold officials and parties accountable for representation and performance only to the extent that elections are competitive. Votes function as empowerments just to the extent that voters can exit one candidate or party in favour of another (Disch 2002). Exit and democracy are linked because the possibility of exit is a condition of using votes to signal and enforce representative relationships. This is also why non-competitive elections such as plebiscites or districts with no effective party competition are held to be non-democratic: voters have no alternatives to which to exit. Many of the issues surrounding electoral system design and electoral rules have to do with questions of competition: the question as to whether voters have effective choices are, in part, about whether voters have a chance to discipline or remove their representatives from office—that is, exit one representative relationship in favour of another (Przeworski, et. al. 1999). If the vote is to function as an *empowerment* (and not just, say, an *expression* of approval or disapproval, as it would in a one-party situation or a plebiscite), the option for exit must be real and effective (Burnham 1970, 133). Indeed, some of the most interesting proposals for electoral systems aim to increase voters powers of exit by dramatically expanding their voting options (Guinier 1994, see also Pogge 2002)

A final arena of constructed exit can be found in the provision of public services. One well-developed example is the public school choice system (in contrast to voucher systems). In this model, students have equal entitlement to education, but their entitlements are mobile among schools within a public system. Such systems equalize capacities for demand and enable choice among schools—the two necessary conditions of empowering exit for individuals in a way compatible with the all-affected principle. A consequence of this constructed exit capacity is that school officials have positive inducements to respond to students (and their “representatives”—parents). One study suggests that schools within choice systems respond by increasing their internal democracy (Mintrom 2003), as the theory of constructed exit would predict. Danish public services have experimented with constructed exit in a number of service areas, including child care and elderly care, effecting higher quality care and greater citizen satisfaction (Sørensen 1997).

In short, there is nothing “natural” about exit-based empowerments. It is *constructed* into society and institutions by combining of individual protections, rights, and opportunities, with institutional environments that provide individuals with effective choices for group membership, political party allegiance, and provision of public services. Thus, exit-based empowerment is not an *alternative* to state monopoly powers, but rather a way of constructing, constraining, and deploying them. In the domain of society, state powers are deployed to underwrite individual conditions of choice through actionable rights and welfare-supported capacities such as education. In the domain of the public sphere, states underwrite competition in the provision of information and opinion by breaking up monopolies and protecting speech and association. In the domain institutionalized politics, states use their monopoly powers to construct competitive electoral systems. And, finally, in the provision of public services, states can construct choices for citizens ways they enable them to avoid monopoly providers.

Exit-based empowerment underwrites democracy through several individual and structural effects. From the perspective of the individual, each such choice is an empowerment. From the perspective of society and institutions, collectivities find themselves in competition for the allegiance, loyalties, and energies of members, such that none can exercise powers of domination over the individuals they affect. Exit is constructed “democratically” when individuals have effective choices among the collectivities that affect their lives. From the perspective of democratic representation, constructed exit induces collective responsiveness and accountability to individuals. Finally, from the perspective of deliberative democracy, the presence of effective exit is the structural condition that authenticates “voice”: it is individuals’ capacity to stop talking, to exit deliberation, that ensures that deliberation does occur is transpiring among free individuals—“free” in the sense that they could, without threat to life, livelihood, or limb, exit the conversation.

Rethinking the exit-voice dichotomy

Given the centrality of the exit mechanism to democracy, why has it not played a larger role in democratic theory? That is, why have recognitions been ad hoc rather than figuring among the generic mechanisms of democratic empowerment?

One reason, I believe, is that most democratic theories conflate what are really two theories—a theory of the distribution of power, and a theory of collective decision-making. The theory of the distribution of power is generally focused on the means through which those affected by collective decisions *gain standing* to have a say in those decisions, effected through distributions of political rights. The theory of collective decision-making is, typically, about the ways and means through which participants *make* collective decisions—through bargaining and deliberation, for example. One theory has to do with how people get to the table; the other with what happens at the table. But democratic theories combine (and often conflate) theories of *empowerment* with theories of *collective judgment*, leading them to polarize exit-based and voice-based institutions, as if they trade off on the same register.

But exit is mostly (but not only) about empowerment, and voice is mostly about judgment. Ironically, it was a theorist of the thinnest version of democracy we have—Schumpeter—who understood this distinction, which he deployed to refocus “democracy” away from judgment and decision-making, and toward power. He develops the distinction in the course of introducing his famous (or infamous) definition of democracy:

It will be remembered that our chief troubles about the classical theory centered in the proposition that ‘the people’ hold a definite and rational opinion about every individual question and that they give effect to this opinion—in a democracy—by choosing ‘representatives’ who will see to it that the opinion is carried out. Thus the selection of the representatives is made secondary to the primary purpose of the democratic arrangement which is to vest the power of deciding issues in the electorate. Suppose we reverse the roles of these two elements and make the deciding of issues by the electorate secondary to the election of the men who are to do the deciding. To put it differently, we now take the view that the role of the people is to produce a government, or else an intermediate body which in turn will produce a national executive or government. And we define: the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political

decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote." (Schumpeter 1942, 269)

This passage is usually noted within democratic theory for its view of the people as passive selectors of elites who make decisions (Held 2006, chap. 5). This (valid) critique notwithstanding, Schumpeter here suggests two important innovations.

First, he notes that democracy has two "elements"—empowering the electorate and making collective decisions. Whether or not Schumpeter is accurate in his characterization of "classical" democratic theory (he was not: see Pateman 1975, Macpherson 1977), he was right in characterizing that theory as a theory of decision, conceived in terms of a directive voice of the people. Schumpeter argues that democracy should instead ensure that power resides with the people. He thus distinguishes empowered inclusion from decision, and thus empowerment from judgment. (Schumpeter understands democracy as a theory of power, not judgment—though this point is not essential to the analysis here.)

Second, as Ian Shapiro (2003, 55) insightfully notes, Schumpeter identifies competition as the primary means of empowerment. "The underlying logic of his argument," writes Shapiro, "is disarmingly simple. It reduces to a double claim: (1) that structured competition for power is preferable both to Hobbesian anarchy and to the power monopoly that Hobbes saw as the logical response to it, and (2) that the choices among anarchy, monopoly, and competition are the only meaningful possibilities."

Schumpeter's distinction lays bare the fact the mechanics of democracy require means of empowerment. We do not need to follow Schumpeter in concluding that decision-making is a matter for elites, as this point is distinct in both theory and practice. We simply need to note that it is different kind of "element" in a theory of democracy. Once we do, we can see that exit is a means of empowerment, not a means of collective judgment. We will also see that *voice* is not a means of *empowerment* in itself, but an element of *communication* necessary to collective decision-making. As I shall argue below, *exit* combines one kind of empowerment—the capacity to break a relationship with a group or organization—with a specific form of communication, to which I refer as *signal*.

We thus have two dimensions, empowerment and communication, in which democratic institutions can vary. In the analysis I offer here, *empowerment* can take three forms, the first two of which are exit-based. First, it may take the form of *enabled exit*, which is a consequence of the liberties and protections which enable individual to enter and exit groups and organizations. It may also take the form of *institutionalized exit*, in which choices are structured into a political system or bureaucracy, say, among political parties or public schools. Finally, empowerment may take the more traditional form of *collective inclusion*, in which individuals are empowered to direct an organization, typically through the distribution of equal votes.

Communication can take on a variety of forms, but here I shall distinguish only *voice* (including expression, protest, and deliberation) and what I shall call *signal*—that is, the non-linguistic communications that are consequences of entrance into and exit from organizations. Although the act of exit may combine with voice, the act is, *in itself*, its own mode of

communication—a signal—even when not combined with voice. Signals register in prices, membership numbers, and followings registered, say, in votes. Or, stated otherwise, the capacity to exit is a form of power; but it is *also* a form of communication that indicates satisfaction or dissatisfaction, as Hirschman’s (1970, chap. 9) analysis recognized. Signals are relatively information-poor as utterances. But if the cost of exit are relatively low (e.g., if they have been designed into an institution such as a competitive party system), signal has a lower effective thresholds of use relative to voice. There are two potentially democratic implications: first, a *lower threshold of use* means that signal is less resource sensitive—and thus, in principle, available even to individuals who lack the resources for voice. Second, dissatisfaction may be *signalled long before it is expressed*, enabling organizations to anticipate dissatisfactions and seek to cultivate voice as a proactive response.

If we represent these distinctions in the form of a table [Table 1 about here], we can see that the dichotomies of voice and exit can be disaggregated into a horizontal dimension of communication and a vertical dimension of empowerment. With respect to communication (the horizontal dimension), we can distinguish *signal* from the more familiar *voice and deliberation*, as suggested. In the vertical dimension, we can distinguish three forms of empowerment, two of which are exit-based. *Enabled exit* represents the empowerments such as rights, liberties, and capacities that enable individuals to enter and exit organizations such as groups, associations, and firms. From the standpoint of politics, conflict tends to be externalized, though responsive organizations may seek to stem conflict-driven exit by cultivating voice. *Institutionalized exit* represents institutions that design competition into its workings, as with competitive party systems or public school choice systems. In this domain, political conflict is institutionalized, with competition used to manage conflict and enable advocacy. Finally, *collective inclusion* represents positive empowerments to direct organizations with low exit (monopolies): typically, a vote. In these cases, political conflict is internalized, and must be managed within the organization through deliberation and voting. Importantly, each form of empowerment—including the two exit-based forms—must be constructed through the distribution of protections, rights, and capacities to those potentially affected by collective decisions. The *democratic* logics of these empowerments range from the “negative” functions of providing protections against domination (Richardson 2003, Petit 1999, Bohman 2007) to the “positive” functions of enabling inclusions in collective decision-making (Habermas 1996).

Table 1 reveals that voice and exit are far from exhaustive of the possible workings of democracy (shaded in dark gray). The standard exit-voice dichotomy is captured by the upper left hand cell (enabled exit-signal), and the lower right hand cell (voice-monopoly). Three other combinations capture what are, in fact, workable and often working democratic mechanisms. The upper right hand cell represents the effects of the “market” in voluntary organizations and associations insofar as it underwrites attentiveness to members, and competitive advocacy for causes (Warren 2001). The two middle cells represent the logic of competition designed into institutions, such that entities like political parties or public schools attend to signals (e.g., in memberships or votes), and—ideally—respond proactively to argue for their followings and to induce voice from actual or potential constituencies.

Table 1: Combinations of empowerment and communication

Modes of empowerment	Conditions of empowerment	Modes of communication	
		Signal	Voice/deliberation
Enabled Exit	Collective assignment of negative liberties; broad choices; conflict is externalized	1. Prices, sales, followings, and memberships	2. Expression through voluntary association and public sphere advocacy
Institutionalized Exit	Collective assignment of actionable positive rights; restricted choice; conflict is institutionalized into competitive processes	3. Voting and elections; choice-based services	4. Constituency-oriented communication and deliberation
Collective Inclusion	Collective assignment of actionable positive rights; conflict is internalized	----	5. Collective communication and deliberation

Thus, notwithstanding the brilliance of Hirschman's analysis, the voice-exit dichotomy hides as much as it reveals about the workings of democracy: it maps too easily back onto the distinction between inclusion-based politics (cell 5) and exit-based markets (cell 1), thus obscuring the relationship between exit-based empowerment and voice in the organization of democratic institutions. The broad point of the table is that it identifies the theoretical rationale for extending democratic possibilities beyond the inclusion-voice-monopoly model which—as the example of electoral democracy suggests—was never adequate in any case. Three of these possibilities—represented by cells 2, 3, and 4, bear closer examination.

Enabled exit and voice

The combination of enabled exit and voice (Table 1, cell 2) is exemplified best in the domain of voluntary associations—that is, organizations that build on the expression of common purposes and attract members just because the organizations serve these purposes. This domain has been well-recognized and theorized over the last fifteen or so years, and so I will not dwell on it here (Warren 2001, Hirst 1996, Rosenblum 1998, Putnam 1994, Goodin 2003). From the perspective of exit-based empowerment, however, it is worth noting that because robust civil societies typically offer many kinds of membership choices, entering and exiting from these voluntary associations provides a low threshold for effective empowerment. In the case of voluntary associations, the requirements for empowerment are relatively minimal: for the most part, the negative liberties suffice for democratic purposes (Warren 2001). “The negative right to leave an association at one's choice,” Paul Hirst notes, “and the legal defence of that right by the public power, is more important than any positive interventions by the public power to ensure that the association is democratic.” (Hirst 1994, p. 51; see also Benhabib 2002, 131-32). This is not to say that exit ensures equality in civil society: there is here a well-documented resource bias in the numbers of memberships individuals hold in the US (Verba, et. al. 1995)). Rather, enabled exit lowers the threshold of organizational responsiveness in civil society, adding to the mix of empowerments that make democracies work (Warren 2001, Warren [M. R.] 2001). And the exit-based responsiveness of civil society organizations may explain why, even as voting is relatively stagnant, the domain of voluntary associations is robust. When individuals have choices and they “wish to make a difference”—as many in post-modern democracies do—we should expect to see responsive organizations that cultivate the voices of members in ways that voice-monopoly institutions cannot. The challenge for democracies will be find ways of connecting those institutions that *must* function as monopolies to these voice-based forms of organization—a strategy that is central to the increasingly common “two track” approaches to democracy which emphasize the complementarities of civil society and constitutional states (Cohen and Arato 1992, Habermas 1996, Benhabib 2002).

A second example, the family, suggests that the indirect empowerments of exit may transform relations internal to an association, even if the association has non-voluntary characteristics—as many families have had in the past, and which any family takes on over time owing to common investments in children and property. If we understand democracy in the family as a matter having a say over decisions that affect the members, we can also see that “democracy” is contingent upon real exit possibilities. For women, the greater possibilities for exit from the family have depended not only on changes in social expectations and the technological demands of the economy, but also crucially on legal changes, as states have reduced the “property rights” of men in their wives and daughters, expanded women's rights to

own property, and provided opportunities for women's education and careers. Such changes in control over self and property function to provide choice, which in turn increases powers of exit. We might expect the voice and decision-making relations between partners within the family to change whenever options for exit increase the "voluntary" qualities of family relationships (cf. Hobson 1990). In this case, the family is "democratized" indirectly, by increasing opportunities for exit. The capacity to exit the family is an empowerment, one that also conditions the terms upon which families are constructed.

Institutionalized exit and signal

A second domain revealed by Table 1 is the combination of institutionalized exit and signal (cell 3). As suggested above, the combination of institutionalized exit and signal describes the competitive electoral systems at the core of democratic government. Once this logic is identified, however, we can see similar mechanisms at work in public school choice systems, public university systems, and public health care systems. In all of the cases, parties to relationship have institutionalized powers of exit: from representative relationships, contractual relationships, and necessary public services. Unlike "enabled exit," which depends primarily upon distributions of negative liberties and capacities (such as education), *institutionalized exit* designs exit-based empowerment into a system by combining multiple "suppliers" (parties, schools, clinics, etc.) with an (equal) distribution of the capacity to demand responsiveness: equal votes, equal rights to a public education, equal access to health care, or equal power to break a contractual relationship (as in collective bargaining).

From the perspective of democratic theory three conceptual hurdles need to be surmounted in order to recognize the democratic potentials of institutionalized exit. The first conceptual hurdle involves a move to a reflexive conception of collective decision-making. The "we" that makes decisions can produce rules that increase the spaces for individual choice and thus introduce exit-based empowerment. In such cases, the expression of democracy is indirect, and resides in the collective choice of rules that empower individual choice.

Implied in the first point is a second: democratic theorists should pay close attention to the democratic powers of exit-based accountability. Traditionally, democratic theorists conceive of accountability as something that happens through voice, votes, or a combination of the two. Both are direct and expressive; both require collectivities for their effectiveness. Through the vote, individuals hold parties accountable, which then hold governments accountable. Through advocacy groups, individuals can make demands of governments. As suggested above, however, these forms of accountability have high thresholds for individual effectiveness. Moreover, as centres of accountability shift into agencies or dissolve into transnational or other kinds of semi-state or non-state structures, these voice and vote based forms of accountability become less effective. Exit-based accountability, however, is direct, effective, and usable by individuals. From the perspective of collectivities, the "policing" costs of exit-based accountability are low; from the perspective of performance, exit provides inducements for constant attentiveness to citizens. In theory, democratic accountability should be able to benefit from these exit-based mechanisms.

Third, as suggested above, democratic theorists will need to expand their conception of communication from its natural domain of voice and deliberation to include signal. Prices are not

the only form of signal: the *democratic* forms are votes and memberships. In both cases, entrance and exit lead; the signal is the consequence of choice. So while exit may be mute (though it need not be), it is not the same as silence. When exit is institutionalized, signal can become the basis for distributions—not just distributions of powers to officials or parties, but also distributions of resources to institutions according to the numbers of individuals who choose their services. In this way, signal carries not only information, but also positive incentives for organizations to attract members and to establish voice-based communication. In this spirit, Philippe Schmitter (2000) has proposed that vouchers for associational membership and representation be distributed to citizens of the European Union, a scheme that would not only enable new, highly attentive forms of representation, but also overcome the resource biases of enabled exit (discussed above).

Relative to enabled exit, however, institutionalized exit can reduce the information provided by signals, simply because institutionalization will tend to constrain the number of “suppliers”. Whereas civil society may supply a wide variety of associations, for example, a system of institutionalized exit will have, typically, a limited numbers of political parties, public clinics, or public schools. If choices of organizations become too constrained (as they arguably are in the US two-party system even discounting uncompetitive districts) then signals carry less information, and individuals may exit the system into relative silence (as they do the US electoral system) Thus, when systems of institutionalized exit work—supply exit-based empowerment consistent with democracy—they do so because they provide a range of choice sufficient to cover the interests of those affected by the collectivity in question.

Institutionalized exit and voice

The final combination (Table 1, cell 4) follows straightforwardly from the institutionalized exit-signal combination: the existence of exit requires organizations to cultivate voice, not only to stem exit, but also—and equally importantly for democratic systems—engage in advocacy in order to attract members. The logic of retaining loyal members, particularly the “quality conscience” who are particularly valuable in organizational renewal and leadership, was well-developed by Hirschman, and needs no additional development here. What Hirschman did not develop were the broader effects of a systems of institutionalized exit: when organizations are advocating for members, both potential and actual, they bring into existential public spheres—that is, systems of advocacy, argument, persuasion, and deliberation which *would not exist* except for the *competitive need* for organizations to continually make their cases to those affected. This point is an old one, traceable to Kant and John Stuart Mill (Habermas 1996). What we need to notice here, however, is that the robust public spheres that characterize liberal democracies depend, structurally, upon systems of enabled and institutionalized exit.

Conclusion

The voice-monopoly model remains important in those areas of collective decision that must be binding upon all affected. Yet that model ought not to hold a monopoly over democratic mechanisms. Exit-based empowerment is deeply embedded in democratic societies, institutions, and practices. The voice-monopoly model is not “wrong”—but it is (often implicitly) over generalized within democratic theory, descriptively inadequate for the practices of democracies, increasingly irrelevant to the changing nature and locations of collective choice. Most importantly, the voice-monopoly model is insensitive to the problems of empowering those

affected by collective decisions owing to the intrinsically high barriers for individuals to have a say in those matters that affect them. For these reasons, democratic theorists should look more closely at the democratic potentials of exit-based empowerment, which, carefully designed into institutions, can help carry democracy into a post-statist era.

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