DEMOCRATIC THEORISTS’ CHILDHOOD ISSUES:
COPING WITH THE INCLUSION/INCAPACITY DILEMMA

by

SHANNON NICOLE GORMLEY

B.A. University of Ottawa, 2007

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
(Political Science)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Vancouver)

April 2009

© Shannon Nicole Gormley, 2009
Abstract

Children pose a problem for democratic theorists. On the one hand, democratic theorists place a high premium on citizens’ inclusion in decision-making processes; on the other hand, they believe that children have a low capacity to participate in political life. I call this the inclusion/incapacity dilemma, and consider three coping strategies that democratic theorists have devised to cope with it: the denial of the problematic nature of children’s exclusion from democracy, the diversion of children’s democratic rights to adult fiduciary authorities, and the delay of children’s inclusion through education. Arguing that none of these strategies have resolved the tension between theorists’ desire for citizens’ inclusion and their perception of children’s incapacity, I advocate a fourth strategy for theorists: broadening the meaning of democratic inclusion to incorporate participatory, rather than only representative, decision-making spheres, and broadening their understanding of capacity to account for many, rather than only two, life stages.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii  

Table of Contents ................................................................................................................ iii  

Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................. iv  

Dedication ............................................................................................................................. v  

Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1  

Part 1: The Problem of Children and Democratic Theory .................................................. 4  
  1.1 Understanding Democratic Theorists ............................................................... 4  
  1.2 Democratic Theorist’s Understanding of Inclusion ........................................ 5  
  1.3 Democratic Theorist’s Understanding of Capacity ......................................... 6  

Part 2: Dealing with the Inclusion/Incapacity Dilemma: Three Coping Strategies ........... 9  
  2.1 The First Coping Strategy: Denial ................................................................. 9  
  2.2 The Second Coping Strategy: Diversion .................................................... 13  
  2.3 The Third Coping Strategy: Delay ............................................................... 18  

  3.1 Re-defining Inclusion in Democratic Politics ............................................... 27  
  3.2 Redefining Capacity for Democratic Participation .................................... 37  
  3.3 Resolving the Inclusion/Incapacity Dilemma: Re-Defining the Terms .......... 43  

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 49  

Bibliography ....................................................................................................................... 51
Acknowledgements

UBC's Political Science Department is lucky to have the faculty members and students it does in its halls, just as I am lucky to have had them in my life. With respect to the first group, I am very grateful to my supervisor, Mark Warren — who is as thoughtful a teacher as he is a theorist — for the support he offers, the example he sets, and his way of knowing when to give a student’s ideas space and when to give them shape. I am equally grateful to Laura Janara, whose work and way of being in the world endlessly inspire. And I am grateful to Bruce Baum, whose devotion to detail and hard work ethic are given in service of his students.

Faculty members such as these have drawn exceptional students to the department. I am grateful to all of them for the intellectual insights and deep friendships they have shared, but especially to Adam Bower, Steven Klein, Maddie Lyons, Michael Mackenzie, Kate Neville, Jeffrey Phillips, and Ashley Van Damme. (And also to James White, who is in the Urban Planning rather than Political Science Department, but who would, I sometimes suspect, secretly like to switch).

Many heartfelt thanks go to one department friend in particular, Sean Gray, who I once knew long before I was introduced to political science, and with whom political science later re-acquainted me. Not only do his strength, sense of humour, and support make my life better, but his razor-sharp mind, uncanny book-finding abilities, and PowerPoint prowess made my thesis better.
Dedication

For Ashley:

Much like democratic theorists, you are terrified of children. Quite unlike democratic theorists, however, you were never the source of my own anxieties while writing this thesis – you were the antidote to them. Thank you, for that and for more.
Introduction

Children typically make democratic theorists uncomfortable.

Granted, children make many people uncomfortable, not just democratic theorists. And, granted, many democratic theorists like children, maybe because — or maybe despite the fact that — many democratic theorists have children of their own. The idea of children, however, is a serious problem for democratic theory. Specifically, democratic theorists’ aspiration to include citizens in collective decision-making is tempered by their assumption that the youngest citizens are too “undeveloped,” too “unreasonable”, or even just too downright “naive” to do so (Ethier and Lefrancois 4). As Francis Schrag wryly observes (Schrag 443-444):

Children are a nuisance to most adults. [However,] they are a particular nuisance to the democratic theorist who wishes to exclude them from having a voice in the direction of a polity with as much vehemence as [s/]he wishes to include every adult.

The first section of this paper explains why democratic theorists consider children such a nuisance and explores how they cope with it. Democratic theorists’ desire for citizen’s inclusion in public decision-making processes is frustrated by their perception of children’s incapacity for democratic participation. Those scholars who are most concerned with processes by which citizens exert control over leaders I will call democratic theorists, and the problem within democratic theory that is of particular concern to me I will call the inclusion/incapacity dilemma.

To deal with the inclusion/incapacity dilemma, many democratic theorists use three coping strategies: they deny the dilemma’s existence, they divert attention from the dilemma,
and/or they delay the dilemma’s resolution. Some theorists use the first strategy — the denial strategy — to ignore the problematic nature of children’s exclusion and focus solely on perfecting adult’s inclusion. Whether explicitly defined in opposition to children’s inclusion or implicitly understood as such, democratic politics has been fundamentally conceptualized as an adults-only activity. Other democratic theorists use a second strategy — the diversion strategy — in two interconnected ways: first, they distract attention from the problem of children’s exclusion by debating which adults may legitimately exert authority over them and, second, they divert children’s rights over to those adult authorities for protection. Finally, some democratic theorists use the third strategy — the delay strategy — to prolong children’s exclusion until children are no longer children at all: they are adults. The third coping strategy may function as an elaborate procrastination device: theorists call it ‘democratic education.’ I explore three of democratic education’s expressions, that is, three tactics used to implement their third coping strategy: ‘democratic knowledge and skill-building,’ ‘democratic citizenship-building,’ and ‘democratic pedagogy.’ Despite their differences from (and with) each other, all three tactics are primarily future-regarding and spatially-restricted: children are taught as citizens-in-training, and schools are built as citizenship-training-sites. In considering schools not-quite-real and students not-quite-citizens, pedagogical energies are exerted and learning resources are expended in anticipation of and preparation for ‘future citizens’ to eventually enter the ‘real world’ of politics.

Clearly, none of these three coping strategies has satisfactorily resolved the inclusion/incapacity dilemma. The second section of this paper proposes that democratic theorists should try a fourth one: they must redefine its component parts. That is, they must apply contemporary, complex understandings of both inclusion and capacity to the case of
children. First, in redefining democratic inclusion, democratic theorists should support a deliberative and transformative model rather than a strictly representative model — support, that is, what I call a ‘voice-centric’ model as opposed to a ‘vote-centric’ one. Under a voice-centric democratic model, trustees of citizens’ interests — democratic representatives — must protect their constituents’ rights to participate in decision-making processes by expressing and transforming their preferences, and trustees of children’s interests — adult guardians and teachers — must similarly protect children’s participatory rights. Second, in redefining children’s capacity, democratic theorists must resolve their ambivalence with developmental theory, an important discipline by which democratic theory is heavily influenced and yet of which democratic theory is largely ignorant. That is, democratic theorists must pull away from the future-regarding general principles propagated by developmental theory, while pulling out specific valuable insights from developmental research. In this way, democratic theory could reject pejorative notions of children’s comparative ineptness while appreciating the development of many phase-specific abilities that crop up throughout the human life-cycle. Ultimately, I argue that by using a broad ‘voice-centric’ notion of democratic participation, and by broadening their understanding of children’s strong capacities for transformation and expression, democratic theorists can support a more inclusive mode of democratic life that responds reflexively to children’s abilities to participate in it.
Part 1 - The Problem of Children and Democratic Theory

Before they are accused of denying, diverting attention from, or delaying the resolution to the inclusion/incapacity dilemma, the distinguishing features of democratic theorists should be sketched out and the motives behind their dealings with children identified. I explain that while democratic theorists value mass inclusion in public decision-making channels, they believe that only those with the capacity to exercise self-government have the right to do so. This logic underpins democratic theorists’ conviction that children’s incapacity for democratic participation justifies their exclusion from it.

1.1 Understanding Democratic Theorists

Democratic theorists can be enigmatic characters. Defining ‘democracy’ is already a notoriously difficult project and, while defining ‘democratic theory’ is less infamously challenging, it is equally fraught with conceptual perils (Connolly 40). Robert Dahl, an important democratic theorist himself, warns that in defining democratic theory, “one of the difficulties one must face at the outset is that there is no democratic theory—there are only democratic theories” (Dahl 1). Our task is further complicated by the fact that “theorists trained in a variety of disciplines have contributed to the development of democratic theory” (Nelson 1). I make no claim, therefore, that any single body of theory about democracy constitutes “the theory of democracy” in general or the theory of democracy and children in particular”; clearly, “no such claim could be sustained” (Pennock xiii). Although the term “‘democratic theory’ is
often used as if it stood for a clearly demarcated and agreed-upon body of doctrine,” it is better understood as “a loosely knit family of ideas” (Pennock xviii).

There is indeed an “appalling range of possibilities” from which to choose within democratic theory’s extended family (Dahl 2). To coax many distantly-related — and sometimes even estranged — theorists of democracy under one roof, Dahl proposes that we use a broad definition of democratic theory, one that “can easily be translated into a variety of more or less equivalent statements,” lest any other theorist finds Dahl’s “particular language” objectionable (Dahl 3). So, as “it seems to” Dahl, as he tentatively suggests, “democratic theory is concerned with processes by which ordinary citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over leaders” (Dahl 3).

1.2 Democratic Theorist’s Understanding of Inclusion

Dahl himself would probably not object if we were to translate his statement into an articulation of the democratic principle of collective self-government. According to Ian Shapiro, this principle unites democratic theorists of all stripes—they are, without exception, devoted to it (Shapiro 30). Honouring the principle of the people’s sovereignty, they believe that “in all matters of public life [citizens must] rule over themselves” (Shapiro 30). For democratic theorists, this means that public decision-making channels must be open to members of democratic communities. Traditionally — in democratic theory and practice — “struggles for political inclusion have ultimately concentrated on” opening “formal, legal channels of political participation” to democratic citizens, “such as the right to vote or hold office” (Kulynych 6). In
this essay, citizens for whom formal and/or informal public decision-making channels are open are said to be ‘included’ in collective self-government, while citizens for whom they are closed are said to be ‘excluded’ from it. Clearly, not all community members are included in public decision-making processes: children, for instance, are almost without exception excluded from self-government in democratic theory as well as in democratic practice.

1.3 Democratic Theorist’s Understanding of Capacity

If democratic theorists regard all community members as equal citizens and want to include all citizens in collective decision-making, then on what basis do they exclude some of them? Most concepts of democratic citizenship “demand a certain level of human capacity,” and those citizens who cannot meet those demands of self-government need not be included in it (Kulynych 18). In democratic “theory, in order for anyone to be legitimately a member of” democratic communities and organizations, “they must at the very least be capable of the act of consent” (Kulynych 18). Most theorists believe that self-government requires “an actual psychological capacity” or a “set of capacities”, “that enable people to be secure in their personhood and to make independent decisions regarding appropriate life choices” (Kulynych 18). For instance, David Held specifies the capacities required to exercise democratic self-government as the capacity to "reason self-consciously," the capacity to “be self-reflective,” and the capacity to “be self-determining” (Held 54).

Adult members are assumed to have — and children are assumed to lack — these capacities essential to democratic participation in their democratic communities. That is, all
“normal, sane adult human beings” are expected to be “capable of making sensible choices about how to lead their lives” – and all children are expected to be incapable of the same. ‘Rational autonomy’ is thought to be the most important constituent part of civic capacity, and rationality, maturity, and interdependence thought to comprise its axis (Archard 65). First, children are thought to be as rational as adults only in the sense that “from birth” people have both the fundamental desire “to control and make sense of the world” and the fundamental “ability to use mental models” of it (Archard 66). In the sense that they have a limited experience of the world, however, children are considered highly irrational (Archard 66). Second, regarding maturity, John Stuart Mill, for instance, expects citizens to be “in the maturity of their faculties,” by which he means at least two things: first, ‘maturity’ means ‘fully-developed’ and ‘resistant to significant change’; second, ‘maturity’ implies ‘emotionally balanced’. In stark contrast to Mill’s fully-developed and emotionally-balanced adult, then, the child is regarded as “tempermentally unstable,” “prone to sudden and dramatic changes of emotion,” and “flitting from one desire to another” (Archard 66). Finally, in respect to independence, an autonomous agent is able to make choices and act those choices out. Children, however, “may be incapable of acting upon and in the world as an adult can” (Archard 67). Thus, far being the autonomously rational individuals that democratic societies require, children are imagined as precisely the opposite: “incompetent, irrational, [and] irresponsible” (Turmel 22). The ideal of the child is conjured up as a foil for the idea of the adult, as Barbara Arneil illustratively suggests (Arneil 70):

Ultimately, the individual child is largely a tool to illuminate the nature of the autonomous adult citizen by providing the perfect mirror within which to reflect the negative image of the positive adult form.
So, irrespective of the specific capacities they cite among those necessary for democratic participation, most democratic theorists assume that children do not exhibit them. It is not that children lack participation rights merely because they are young, but that, being children, “they are assumed to lack capacities relevant to the holding of rights” (Archard 48). Thus, most democratic theorists believe that children should be excluded from democratic participation. As Schrag puts it, democratic theorists’ “reason for according children marginal membership is this: children lack not merely wisdom, which would be insufficient grounds for excluding them, but the capacity to participate fully” (Schrag 443; emphasis added). In this way, Ian Shapiro excuses children’s exclusion in terms that make explicit the assumptions of his fellow democratic theorists: “children are not much capable of meaningful decision-making or effective opposition to the power relations that structure their lives” (Shapiro 87; emphasis added). In justifying their exclusion, democratic theorists are making a judgment call about the psychological abilities of children. Furthermore, their easy dismissal of children’s psychological capacity works in concert with their breezy acceptance of adult’s psychological capacity: children are said to be barred from democratic participation because they are not “mentally adult” – because they are children (Schrag 445).
Part 2 - Dealing with the Inclusion/Incapacity Dilemma: Three Coping Strategies

This constitutes a highly problematic state of affairs for democratic theorists: their own commitment to mass inclusion is challenged by their own observation that many citizens — that is, all young citizens — are incapable of making meaningful contributions to public decision-making processes. Theirs is what I call the inclusion/incapacity dilemma, a dilemma that is particularly unnerving because it cuts right to the heart of democratic theory: collective self-government. Democratic theorists have drawn upon three coping strategies to deal with it; I will consider each in turn.

2.1 The First Coping Strategy: Denial

One way to deal with democratic theory’s problem of children’s inclusion is to not deal with it at all. Usually preoccupying themselves with adult citizenship — and usually neglecting to name it as such — democratic theorists largely ignore children’s marginalized status in democratic communities. In fact, for some democratic theorists, not only does children’s incapacity implicitly pre-empt their political participation, but the definition of politics explicitly prevents it: theorists such as these describe politics as an “activity in which every member of the group who is neither a child nor a lunatic has some part and some responsibility” (Oakeshott 218). Mill gives another “classic exposition” on democratic politics as an exclusively adult activity: “It is perhaps, hardly necessary to say that this doctrine” on democratic politics “is meant to apply only to human beings in the maturity of their faculties” he says. He makes it clear that “we are not speaking of children” (Kulynych 18). Definitions of politics such as those
articulated by Michael Oakeshott and Mill deny the problematic nature of children’s exclusion from democracy by writing the denial of children’s inclusion into the definition of democracy itself. Children’s “inclusion is made impossible by theoretical conceptions of citizenship…that are constructed in opposition to the cultural meaning of childhood” and that “not only allow, but in fact require the exclusion of children” (Kulynych 18; emphasis added). It is easy to avoid the problem of children’s inclusion in democratic politics if democratic politics is defined as an activity that excludes them.

While adult-centric definitions of democratic politics always inform democratic theory, children usually receive no explicit mention in most theories or definitions of democracy. Democratic theorists often avoid altogether the subject of children and their condition of exclusion from democratic life. Of course, the omission of children is not a feature peculiar to democratic theory; in “both contemporary and classical sociological theory,” for example, “one can find hardly any trace of that particular social agent, children, or of that special feature of social life, childhood,” leading one critic to accuse mainstream sociologists of committing mass “scientific neglect” (Turmel 17; Amhert 11). Democratic theory’s critics, meanwhile, lament that when “the bulk of liberal political theory focuses on adults,” children become “forgotten citizen(s)” (Dhillon and Miron 32). One such critic notes that children’s status “requires more attention than the paragraph or footnote it usually receives” in democratic theory (Schrag 441). Another argues that the child’s role as theory’s “unthinkable object” “constitutes a crucial weakness that needs to be addressed” (Turmel 17). Scholars have posited a few theories about why their colleagues usually ignore children. Virginia Sapiro believes that the general scholarly consensus about children’s “cognitive incompetence” leads democratic theorists to regard them with a yawn: “the first 10 or fifteen years of people’s lives” are simply “uninteresting” to them.
Francis Schrag, on the other hand, speculates that children may “remain invisible to the political theorist because their presence creates an embarrassment to his conceptual creations” (Schrag 444). Of course, theorists’ motives for avoiding the subject of children are uncertain; far more certain is the fact that, by ignoring children’s existence, democratic theorists also ignore children’s current condition of exclusion in democratic mechanisms, and thereby deny them any future possibility for inclusion. As long as the inclusion/incapacity dilemma sits in democratic theory’s blind spot, it cannot be resolved.

Children’s condition of invisibility has lent itself to obvious parallels with the condition of other historically marginalized social groups. In that children “have existed unseen for so long” Schrag, along with many child liberationists, asserts that they are “not unlike blacks” (Schrag 443). And just as “feminist philosophers and historians of ideas rightly point out in criticism of the canon that women do not really figure within the classic texts of moral and political philosophy” some critical scholars rightly point out that “something similar may be said to be the case with children” (Archard and Macleod 1). Of course, comparing children to African-Americans or to women is provocative (and problematic), because exclusion has manifested in different ways, and for different reasons, for different identities. To equate children with other historically marginalized social and political groups would be to make a gross misperception; to miss perceiving children at all in social and political systems, however, has been to make a grave mistake. There is at least one important similarity with the manner in which democratic theorists traditionally dealt with women, minorities, and children — they by-and-large failed to deal with them at all. Democratic theorists’ denial of and complicity in gendered and racialized oppression has been chronicled in The Sexual Contract by Carol Pateman and in a book by Charles Mills that hers inspired, The Racial Contract. While Pateman
uses a metaphor of the untold story of the 'sexual contract,' and Mills uses a metaphor of compromised vision of the ‘racial contract,’ here, the metaphor of psychic denial can be used for the ‘adult contract.’

After all, while the reasons underpinning exclusion certainly differ amongst varying social groups, one central point remains the same: by allowing it to escape detection, we enable the exclusion of social groups. The fact that “the standard commentators on the classic stories of the original contract do not usually mention that women,” children, and racialized and ethnic minorities “are excluded from the original pact” perpetuates the myth that “only [white, adult], masculine beings are endowed with the attributes and capacities necessary” for inclusion in democratic spheres (Pateman 5). By refusing to acknowledge systems of exclusion — namely, race, gender, and age-based — and declining to interrogate the assumptions that underpin them — namely, lack of capacity — we deny ourselves the opportunity to open democratic decision-making channels to all citizens. Just as Pateman’s book attempts to tell a counter-narrative to the social contract, and Mill’s book “attempts to redirect [our] vision” to race-based oppression “to make [us] see what, in a sense, has been there all along,” this section of my essay attempts to trigger an awareness of children’s exclusion from democratic theory (Mills 2). The simple act of acknowledging a hierarchical political system makes it somewhat contingent; we denaturalize age-based democratic exclusion just by admitting that it exists. Although acknowledging children may be the first step toward their inclusion, the next section argues that it cannot be the last.
2.2 The Second Coping Strategy: Diversion

Whereas the denial strategy makes children invisible to theorists, the diversion strategy may be democratic theory's answer to that old edict that 'children should be seen, but not heard.' Theorists who use this strategy do acknowledge children's presence in democratic society and absence from democratic participation, but they divert attention away from the problem of children's subordination by diverting children's rights over to adult authorities. The diversion strategy is thus double-pronged, like the definition of diversion itself: to divert may mean "to distract attention" from something, and/or it may mean "to turn from one course or use to another" (Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary). In the first sense of the word, instead of attending to children's exclusion from democratic politics, democratic theorists create a diversion from their exclusion, often by focusing on adult's competition for authority over children. In the second sense of the word, the diversions that theorists create frequently entail a diversion of children's democratic participation rights to adult authorities. Rather than asking "how can children legitimately participate in self-governance?" most democratic theorists only ask "who can legitimately be entrusted with children's interests?"

This is of course not to say that questions about trust relationships are illegitimate in democratic theory, only to point out that they should be asked in concert with rather than in opposition to questions about participation. In democratic societies, trust and participation may be distinct, but they may also be complementary (Warren 337). And, while it is true that when people are bound by common interests "trust can stand in for participation", it is also true that "where there are high levels of warranted trust within society and between individuals and
"participatory democracy "is easier to conceive and organize" (Warren 337). It is argued that when interests diverge between the truster and the trusted, and conflicts emerge "about things that matter," democratic participation becomes necessary. In such instances, the trusted party's discretion must be challenged, argued about, and accounted for because the primary condition of "warranted trust — a commonality of interests — cannot be taken for granted" (Warren 337). The notions of democratic trust and democratic participation, therefore, are not mutually exclusive; however, to divert attention from the problem of children's, many democratic theorists do exclude the issue children's participation from dialogues about trust, and thereby succeed in excluding children from democratic systems.

The question these theorists ask — 'to whom should children's interests be entrusted?' — usually provokes a war for authority over children, a war which diverts attention away from the question of children's participation. The school has emerged as the primary battle site on which adults fight for principle control over children's lives and education (Shapiro 67). This fight is usually waged among parents, politicians, and pastors, and watched closely by democratic theorists. Perhaps no contemporary democratic theorist has followed this diversion more closely than Amy Gutmann. The question "who should have the authority to shape the education of future citizens?" is central to her book, *Democratic Education* (Gutmann 16). On the surface, Gutmann's answer is that no agent should monopolize educational authority. Defending "the right of [all] citizens to deliberate collectively about how to educate future citizens," Gutmann argues for "the broad distribution of educational authority among citizens, parents, and professional educators [that] supports the core value of democracy...inclusion" — she just neglects to include children (Gutmann 317, 42). Her actual tolerance of the adult monopoly of authority (a tolerance shared by most democratic theorists) belies her supposed aversion to
monopolies of authority in general (an aversion shared by most deliberative democrats). As James Dwyer says, “the over-riding point of Democratic Education is that adult rights to control the lives of children are not distributed broadly enough” (Dwyer 318; emphasis added). The matter of the extent to which children have rights to control their own lives is left nearly unmentioned.

Although Gutmann diverts us from the matter of children’s inclusion by directing our attention to adult’s fight for authority, Ian Shapiro reminds us that “the expansion of state authority over children is not always at the expense of parental authority,” and vice versa (Shapiro 67). Disparate adult agents may wage perpetual border disputes with each other, but they ultimately create “a system of overlapping authority structures that must often seem indistinguishable to children” (Shapiro 67). When different adults fight over the authority to govern children, they simultaneously affirm each other’s right to do so. Partly competing, they are also partly mutually reinforcing (Shapiro 67). So while there may be a revolving door allowing authority figures access to children’s lives, it is always an adult who passes through it. The struggle to determine whether governments or parents should primarily govern children ultimately distracts theorists from what Shapiro perceives to be “the central challenge that adult-child relations pose for democratic justice”: the fact that “they are inevitably hierarchical and inegalitarian” (Shapiro 68).

In an attempt to justify these hierarchical and inegalitarian adult-child relations, theorists divert children’s rights to adult protectors. The law frequently characterizes the child/adult relationship as beneficiary/fiduciary, so in liberal-democratic societies there is a strong contractual element to these relationships (Shapiro 3; Pateman 2). A fiduciary is anyone who holds anything in trust for another party, deriving its name from the Roman law *fiducia*, meaning
"the transfer of a right to a person subject to the obligation to transfer it again at some future time or on some future condition being fulfilled" (Hurley 2; Shapiro 70). Fiduciary authority is always limited in both scope and duration, and adult's authority over children is no exception.

In regard to scope, a fiduciary must meet high standards of "loyalty and good faith in order to protect the beneficiary, who is usually vulnerable and dependent on them" (Reynolds 9). Beneficiaries of fiduciary relationships are vulnerable, and fiduciary authority flows from their need for protection. Limits on the scope of fiduciary authority also derive from their vulnerability. The fiduciary position exists entirely for another's benefit, so fiduciary powers must be exercised on the beneficiary's behalf (Finn 8). Since a fiduciary is obligated to exercise its authority in a way that benefits the party for which it exists, a fiduciary obligation functions as both a check on and justification for fiduciary authority. In liberal-democracies, "the notion of childhood developed along this protective model", meaning that children were understood not as self-sufficient, but as vulnerable, and thus that adult power over them "was understood not as arbitrary power, but as responsibility" (Kulynych 10). Adult's fiduciary authority is thus legitimate exclusively on the basis of children's incapacity, vulnerability, and dependency; adults must exercise their fiduciary powers solely on their ward's behalf. Children's missing capacities, thought to justify adult fiduciary authority, are similar to those thought to justify children's political exclusion: Children are thought to merit paternalism both because they lack the capacity to make intelligent decisions in "light of relevant information about themselves and the world", and because "they are prone to emotional inconstancy such that their decisions are likely to be wild and variable" (Archard 53).

Much of democratic theory casts a wide net over children's rights: the scope of adult's fiduciary authority is vast. Many democratic theorists "suggest that it is in the best interest of
children to have their political exposure, responsibility, and rights severely limited” (Kulynych 3). “Self-determination,” by this account, is “too important to be left to children” (Archard 52).

When a refrain that is all-too-familiar to most children — ‘This is for your own good’ — is sung by democratic theorists as justification for withholding children’s participation rights, we should listen with suspicion for two reasons. First, children’s interests must be recognized as complex and evolving, worthy of more careful consideration than “positing a simple harmony” them and those of the adults charged with guarding them (Archard and Macleod 4). Not even democratic theory has been a good steward of children’s interests. Its “philosophical debate over educational authority,” which itself diverts attention from the matter of children’s inclusion, has “treated children’s schooling as an instrument for serving ends of society as a whole and ends of parents” rather than the ends of children: this, some philosophers claim, constitutes a breach of fiduciary powers, the purpose of which are to protect children’s interests (Dwyer 327). To increase society’s sensitivity and receptivity to children’s interests, in the second section of the paper I argue that deliberative structures should allow children to articulate them. Second, the prevailing strict interpretation of adult’s fiduciary guardianship over children’s democratic rights rests on the incorrect evaluation of children’s total incapacity for democratic participation. The third section of this paper will also contest widespread assumptions about children’s incapacity in greater depth. For now it should be noted that, if the scope of children’s incapacity for democratic participation is in dispute, then the extent to which adults can use their fiduciary powers to override rather than protect children’s participation rights must be disputed also.

While fiduciary power is limited in duration, it does expire when the beneficiary can pursue his or her own interests. The position of adult fiduciary is thus a temporary one, its end being synchronic with childhood’s closing. This is why John Locke once called adult authority
“self-liquidating.” He and democratic theorists argue that “parental authority is limited to the period of the child’s temporary incapacity…but that it only ends with no age,” otherwise known as adulthood (Shapiro 71). Until that time, adults must choose for children as children would choose for themselves if they were adults. The fiduciary, that is, “chooses for the child in the person of the adult which the child is not yet but will eventually be” (Archard 53). Once children finally reach the age of emancipation — designated as adulthood — democratic theorists demand that structures of power be receptive to them as full participants in democratic society (Shapiro 69). This leads us to their third coping strategy: delay.

2.3 The Third Coping Strategy: Delay

The third way theorists deal with children is to not deal with them as children, but as eventual adults. An expert on children’s literature puts it bluntly: “all children die — they must, to become grown-ups” (Lerer 84). Of course, all adults die, too, but in a literal rather than figurative sense; therefore, much of democratic theory is concerned with the question of how best to raise children as “future replacements for the adult members” that will eventually — and inevitably — expire (Ambert 23). In democratic theory, the child is regularly referred to, and primarily valued as, a “future citizen” or “potential citizen.” Most democratic theorists believe that all “children must develop or acquire certain capacities or competencies before they are eligible for citizenship”, and assume that all adults have developed or acquired those capacities and competencies (Kulynych 18). Children’s “diminished capacity” is not permanent, they assume: “in the normal course of events children will become rational, autonomous adults”
This is why Arneil says that “If there is one word that might summarize the role of children in early liberal theory” — and, one might add, in early democratic theory — “it is that of ‘becomings’ rather than ‘beings’” (Arneil 70).

Here we may recall that democratic theorist’s first coping strategy, denial, treats children and other marginalized social groups similarly in at least one crucial respect: like women and (in)visible minorities, the fact and problematic nature of children’s exclusion have historically been ignored in democratic theory. Conversely, the third coping strategy, delay, treats children differently from other marginalized social groups in at least one important way: unlike women or minorities, in the case of children “every person so disenfranchised may look forward to his eventual enfranchisement” (Schrag 454). The expectation of children’s eventual emancipation also distinguishes children from lunatics, to whom others compare them, as previously noted. Presumably the position of the child is at least slightly more enviable than that of the woman, the Black, or the madman; unlike them, the child is ‘suffering’ from only a temporary condition. The period of childhood is only a temporary state of unreasonableness — he or she will grow out of it. Rather than being treated via surgical procedures that alter sex or race, or pharmaceuticals that alter the mind, the child’s identity is remedied by time and education: once enough has passed and transpired, the child-turned-adult can rule him or herself.

Some theorists who mobilize the delay strategy are armed with the concept of teleology. Aristotle understood development as the unfurling of latent abilities toward a definite goal or telos: adulthood. Life “at any stage short of completion of this goal is merely an unfolding toward it,” and the child is “nothing more than a human form maturing toward adulthood” (Dewey 56; Turnel 19). Childhood, then, is primarily regarded as a necessary pit stop on the road to adulthood, the ultimate destination: children are just in transit. For Aristotle, “the child’s
potential being — as a human animal, and as ethical and political — resides in a prior actuality and must be explained in terms of it” (Tress 21). According to this view, children require a “specific period of development in order to become admirable human beings” (Kulynych 3).

Time is not the only engine driving children’s development, however: it is also powered along by education. Aristotle maintained that children must be taught how to participate — as adults — in the political community (Tress 21). For him, “education should be directed to the needs connected with one’s role in adult life, especially the lives of statesmen and citizens” — the needs of children in the role they presently occupy are secondary (Tress 33). Aristotle’s teleological conception of development has heavily influenced how some theorists and teachers think about the education of children. Assuming children to be incapable of democratic participation, they conclude that society is only obligated to give children the “skills and capacities… that the children are going to require” when they have grown into adults (Shapiro 87; emphasis added).

Democratic theorists claim that, through schools, society must prepare children for democratic participation well in advance of its actualization. The logic of teleology cuts through many democratic thinkers’ theories of education: James Dwyer believes that “schooling is about…preparing children for adult life” (Dwyer 322); Shapiro admits to applying “something of an Aristotelian philosophical psychology” to childhood development (Shapiro 72); Ann Allen calls public education “the training ground for citizenship” (Allen 11); and John Goodlad exuberantly claims that “nothing would be more uplifting for teaching as a profession and more compelling for those engaged in it or attracted to it than for our schools and education-preparing programs to be called on to provide for the nation’s young an apprenticeship of democracy” (Goodlad 16). All of these theorists regard education as a process of preparation, and the state
echoes their demarcation of children and schools from citizens and the real world. Even America's Department of Education begrudges its own schools real-world status: claiming that the "central purpose of schools is to prepare young people to enter...into the life of their society," it implies that children are dislocated from society which attending school. These authors and agents often regard education as a drawn-out inauguration ritual for democratic citizenship. The notion of education-as-preparation for democracy calms the urgency of the inclusion/incapacity dilemma, so some democratic theorists postpone children's entry into the public sphere by theorizing about the school.

To put off children's inclusion democratic theorists put three delay tactics to work. First, 'democratic knowledge and skill-building' emphasizes learning about democratic procedures that children will participate in — when they are adults. 'Democratic citizenship-building' emphasizes learning about 'civic values and virtues' that children will embody — when they are adults. Finally, 'democratic pedagogy' emphasizes learning through egalitarian relationships that will train children to participate in democratic politics — when they are adults. Each of these tactics is different, but all of them fall under the delay strategy. As Gert Biesta says, "there is a strong tendency to think of democratic education as the preparation of children for their future participation in democratic life through the cultivation of a particular set of knowledge, values, and dispositions" (Biesta 743). Children's school world is generally segregated from adult's societal world, cut off from "the actual locus of participation" in the public sphere (Sapiro 12).

Although the "child as future citizen" paradigm may be culture-specific, within America at least it unites left and right: liberals and conservatives are both future-focussed. Debates over
education do “divide into liberal statists who give primacy to creating the right kind of future citizens, and conservatives who give primacy to protecting the power of parents and minority cultural communities to create the kind of future persons they want,” but the future, rather than the present, is always at issue when children’s education is the subject of discussion in America (Dwyer 316; emphasis added).

Many democratic theorists who place a high premium on representative institutions advocate democratic knowledge and skill building learning. Mary Dixson sums up the purpose of their preferred educational tactic nicely: “Those who know vote; those who don’t won’t” (Dixson 246). This slogan’s criers correlate high levels of political knowledge with high levels of voter turn-out, hoping to foster one by fostering the other in a virtuous circle of voting-based citizenship. The perceived correlation between knowledge and participation animates Henry Milner’s notion of ‘civic literacy,’ defined as "the knowledge and capacity of citizens to make sense of their political world" and participate in their political communities (Dixson 245) (Newton 165). The penultimate participatory act, for supporters of civic literacy, is casting a ballot (Newton 165).

The notion of civic literacy automatically delays children’s inclusion in democracy: if we need only concern ourselves with “the public policies, voting systems and political institutions that support or undermine civic literacy,” then we need not worry about children’s political participation until they are of voting age (Newton 165). Schools must only equip children with the knowledge and skills required to enact their enfranchisement when they reach the age of enfranchisement, or so the argument goes. This essay, of course, rejects any argument which prolongs children’s exclusion; therefore, it rejects the logic of democratic knowledge and skill-building.
Democratic theorists who know that democratic knowledge and skill-building alone cannot support democratic life also reject the logic of democratic knowledge and skill-building. They acknowledge the fact that “citizens need certain sorts of knowledge and skills” but claim that citizens “also need to be certain sorts of people, to exercise civic virtues” (White 69). Advocates of democratic citizenship-building believe that children should develop civic virtues when they are very young, ideally “beginning in the first school” (White 59). Rather than focusing solely on the act of voting, democratic citizenship-building shapes students at the attitudinal level. For instance, some deliberative democratic theorists cite the “willingness to deliberate,” rather than just the ability to vote, among the more important civic virtues. They propose to cultivate this willingness “by demonstrating to future citizens how the search for deliberative agreement can be mutually advantageous in the long-term” and activate it “via a form of education in which future citizens learn to demonstrate mutual engagement oriented towards the attainment of deliberative agreements supported by...arguments” (Lefrancois and Ethier 3; emphasis added).

Democratic theorists aspire to educate children about virtuousness and patriotism in addition to reading and arithmetic—in other words, to educate them as exemplary citizens; however, “as a result, citizenship became the exclusive territory of adults,” while, “for children, it was the final destination of their childhood” (Jans 32). Theorists of democratic citizenship-building often phrase children’s citizenship status in the future-tense. Gutmann rarely refers to democratic participation in the classroom but, on the rare occasions that she does, she categorizes children as “future citizens” (Gutmann 16). The ideal of citizenship education, she says, is that “children must be taught enough to participate intelligently as adults in the political processes that shape that society” (Gutmann xi; emphasis added). In an ideal democratic society, “adult
members are... equipped by their education and authorized by political structures to share in ruling” (Gutmann xi; emphasis added). For Gutmann, an ideal society neither equips nor authorizes children to share in ruling, and nor does an ideal school.

Advocates of democratic pedagogy believe that democratic skills and virtues can be taught most effectively in democratic environments. For them, democratic learning depends as much on context as curriculum. Students, they say, “not only learn from what they are being taught; they also learn — and often learn more and learn more strongly — from many of the other situations in which they take part” (Biesta 747). Theorists of democratic pedagogy reason that participating in democratic life within the classroom is the best way to prepare for democratic life outside the classroom — that schooling through democracy is the best way to school for democracy (Biesta 747). Schools must incorporate internal deliberative democratic practices only to the extent that they prepare children for their eventual exercise.

These democratic theorists’ claim, correctly, that “teaching children about politics without letting them participate indicates to them that their participation is not really wanted” (Cohen 250). In this way, the logic of democratic pedagogical theory is consistent with the logic of democratic participatory theory. As Schrag points out, not only have many democratic theorists “argued that participation contributes to the development and realization of the capacities of the citizen,” but they have also argued that the more the citizen participates in democratic participates in democratic politics, the better he or she is able to do so (Schrag 441; Pateman 25).

Unlike democratic skill-building and democratic citizenship-building, the tactic of democratic pedagogy is not solely future-regarding: it squeezes in moments of democratic
inclusion for children while they still are children. For many democratic theorist, however, democratic pedagogy is primarily future-regarding: children's initiation to democracy in schools is seen as an "apprenticeship in democracy" rather than as an actualization of democratic life (Godlad 13). Children participate in ruling only so that they may anticipate and prepare for it as citizens-in-training. The premise that "children may not have the capacities and maturity to be effective participants" undergirds the purpose of democratic pedagogy: to prepare children for a time when full participation will be possible (Cohen 250). Democratic participation by children in schools is valued as "probably the best way to rectify" the problem of their current inability to participate in "society" (Cohen 250). Like democratic theorists who use delay tactics such as democratic skill-building and citizenship-building, theorists of democratic pedagogy still partially devalue children's citizenship status by treating the child's political participation as a dress rehearsal for real life democracy. M.A. Lefrancois and D. Ethier write that "democracy will never be attractive if the future citizen does not already live it, if he does not gain experience with its most important gearwheels" (Lefrancois and Ethier 11; emphasis added). They value "all forms of deliberative and democratic school self-management as...structural opportunities to prepare the young person to take a stand on decisions which will concern him" rather than as participatory opportunities of immediate concern for the child (Lefrancois and Ethier 11, 13). Furthermore, they situate 'democratic schools' outside 'democratic society.' Children are regarded as full members of the former but eventual citizens of the later. Even John Dewey, a theorist of democratic pedagogy who resists the notion of education as preparation, implicitly denies schools real-world status and allows children only a make-believe-citizen role. He seems not to think that the young already compose part of present democratic society when he writes that "the young at a given time will at some later date compose society" (Dewey 41;
emphasis added). Ultimately, in limiting children's democratic inclusion to participation in school-based decision-making procedures, and in rigidly differentiating democratic schools from democratic societies, democratic pedagogy fails to fully resolve democratic theory's inclusion/incapacity dilemma.
Part 3 - An Alternative Coping Strategy: Redefining Inclusion and Capacity

In general, democratic theorists have not coped well with the fact that their assumptions about children’s incapacity frustrate their own aspirations for mass political inclusion: the denial, diversion, and delay strategies employed by them cannot resolve the inclusion/incapacity dilemma. Rather, a redefinition of its terms is required. To satisfy theorist’s desire for inclusion while assuaging their concerns about children’s incapacity, both halves of the inclusion/incapacity dilemma should addressed. First, an expanded understanding of democratic inclusion informed by a ‘voice-centric’ theory of democracy, one that focuses on multiple spheres of deliberation and transformational learning rather than just elected representation, may be more amenable to children’s inclusion. Second, a more sophisticated understanding of children’s capacity informed by developmental research, one that takes into account multiple stages of development, may be more illuminating of children’s capacities. Re-defining inclusion and incapacity, it is hoped, will ease the tension between them.

3.1 Re-defining Inclusion in Democratic Politics

By “overemphasiz[ing] formal, legal interpretations of political participation,” many democratic theorists have historically obscured the communicative dimension of democratic life. Fortunately, as Will Kymlicka points out, contemporary democratic theory has undergone an “important shift” from “‘vote-centric’ to ‘talk-centric’ theories” of democratic inclusion
‘Vote-centric’ models of inclusion sought to minimize the formal inequalities between individuals or groups and thereby reform unfair or impartial decision-making procedures in the democratic state. The expressed goal of a vote-centric model is to superimpose individual citizen’s pre-existing preferences directly upon public forums – particularly upon elected representational bodies. Politicians and elected representatives ideally hold their constituent’s preferences ‘in trust,’ however, and use their powers of discretion to act in voter’s best interests (much like parents ideally hold their children’s preferences ‘in trust’ and use their powers of discretion to act in ward’s best interests, an important similarity upon which I will soon elaborate). Conversely, ‘talk-centric’ theories of inclusion throw the very basis of citizen’s preference formation into question. Talk-centrism focuses on what happens ‘between votes’, whereas vote-centrism focuses on the votes themselves. All ‘talk-centric’ models of democracy — that is, all deliberative models of democracy — place a high premium on the formation and articulation of citizen’s preferences in formal and informal decision-making processes.

Not all talk-centric democratic models, however, are oriented toward the same democratic goods or operate according to similar assumptions about talk; most importantly, nor do they make equal auxiliaries in the struggle for children’s inclusion in democratic deliberation. Kymlicka’s differentiation between vote and talk-centric democratic models is more helpful here if two talk-centric models are differentiated from each other: I call these reason-centric and voice-centric models. If vote-centric and talk-centric models are understood as different families of democratic inclusion, reason-centric and voice-centric models can be called sibling rivals. While the first type of deliberative model hopes to reveal sources of sameness through mutually-agreed upon reasons, the second type aspires to illuminate different
interests through diverse types of speech. As I will explain, the second type, the voice-centric type, is a much more natural defender of children's inclusion than the first.

Reason-centric deliberative models, most clearly articulated and strongly advocated by Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, are committed to deriving consensus from rigorously pitting argument against argument: This, Thompson says, is deliberative talk's "essential aim" (Thompson 7). According to this view, democratic deliberation's other purposes, "such as learning about issues, gaining a sense of efficacy, or developing a better understanding of opposing views," are merely instrumental to reaching a consensus (Thompson 7). Seeking to "replace the language of interest with the language of reason," such a model would both underemphasize children's specific social position and overemphasize forms of communication which are defined in direct opposition to their own (Held 241).

In contrast, voice-centric models of democratic inclusion are well-suited to children's inclusion. Encouraging rhetoric and even story-telling, voice-centric models accommodate any and all forms of communicative where participants aim to reach understanding" (Young 125). Whereas reason-centric deliberation favours "a form of expression and discourse that makes it likely that the talk of an identifiable and privileged sector of the American public will dominate public dialogue," voice-centric deliberation amplifies disenfranchised voices by soliciting different kinds of talk (Sanders 370). Rather than editing out positions articulated in immoderate, provocative, or emotionally laden ways, the voice-centric deliberative model resonates with a broad range of political inflections (Sanders 372). Similarly, it "attends to social difference" in a way that the consensus-seeking reason-centric model cannot accommodate (Young 122-123).
While vote-centrism tends to choke off individuals' democratic inclusion by channelling citizens' participatory energies into selecting others to represent their interests, voice-centrism can inflate social groups' democratic inclusion by giving expression to interests of their own. This particular democratic model emphasizes the communicative processes by which — and domains in which — political perspectives are articulated and preferences transformed. So, under voice centric models, inclusion is more about transformation than representation. Democratic theory's shift from representation to deliberation bodes very well for the prospect of bringing children into the democratic fold — as long as deliberation entails transformation. Such an expansive understanding of democratic inclusion can push the boundaries of democratic spheres far enough to make room for young people. And while representative structures remain off-limits to children, other democratic domains with deliberative and transformative potential are open to them. It is in these highly transformative domains — ones which will be specified in the more detailed discussion of voice-centrism that follows — that an ethos of inclusion can both be cultivated and come to immediate fruition.

Vote-centric inclusion generally means adult-centric inclusion: Paradigmatic frames of democratic participation that focus on political representation are structured to exclude children. This is not merely fact or circumstance. Democratic theory, it should be noted, characterizes adults as trustees of their children's interests just as it understands elected representatives as trustees of their constituents'. Arguments that justify political representative's far-reaching discretionary authority to make decisions on their constituents' behalf are synchronic with arguments that justify adult's far-reaching discretionary authority to make decisions on their children's behalf. So, in discussing political representation as a mode of inclusion, it is very useful to recall our earlier discussion of fiduciary authority. Fiduciaries and political
representatives share a fundamental raison d'etre: both are obligated to protect the interests of another party by making decisions on their behalf and assumed to have the expertise to do so, justifying their authority to disregard the vulnerable party's wishes. Indeed, Paul Finn, a legal expert on fiduciary authority, notes that "a striking feature of the fiduciary" "is the close resemblance he bears to the public ministerial officer who, while entrusted with duties and discretions by statute or statutory instrument, discharges those duties and exercises those powers in the interests of the public" (Finn 13). Certainly Finn's contemporary conception of a fiduciary authority bears a distinct likeness to Edmund Burke's classical conception of a trustee representative. Burke phrased types of representatives in either-or terms: "the legislator is either a mere spokes-man for his constituents" he claimed, "or he represents them as he believes best" (the latter type of legislator being a political trustee) (Meller 474). When interpreted in terms as strict as these, holders of adult fiduciary — and political trusteeship — positions use their discretionary powers to determine their beneficiaries' — and constituents' — interests, serving those interests as they see fit.

Democratic theorists have thus observed what appear to be two different dramas playing out on separate stages — one plotline based on adult's fiduciary authority over children and another based on representatives' fiduciary authority over citizens — but have missed the parallels between them: The parental and educational actors who play adult trusteeship roles and the political actors who play democratic trusteeship roles read from similar scripts. When their roles are strictly interpreted, actors of both types seek to protect children's or constituent's interests by minimizing, or even nullifying, their opportunities to participate in decision-making processes. Pressing hard for lower voting ages, child liberationists have missed the theoretically analogous parts often played by parental and political fiduciaries and have thereby added no
small degree of irony to their project. Attempting to defy the paternalism of parental guardianship, they have sought to include children in largely paternalistic representative structures. That is, they have simultaneously called for an end to adult’s parental fiduciary authority over children and for children’s enfranchisement in fiduciary representative arrangements. Their anxiety about children’s democratic exclusion is thus misplaced. Furthermore, like some of the democratic theorists whom they oppose, they too “divert attention from the underlying principle”: “it is children’s exposure to and input into the decision-making process that is important” (Campbell and Rose-Krasno 215).

Rather than calling for children’s inclusion in formal vote-centric democratic institutions, the spheres in which they already live and learn should first be made more inclusionary, more democratic — more voice-centric. To this end, a broad, deliberative understanding of democratic inclusion is indispensible. Although strict representative and trusteeship “understandings of democracy justify the exclusion of children as actual participants as long as their interests are otherwise represented”, “transformative or deliberative understandings of democracy cannot justify that exclusion” (Kulynych 11). It is to such understandings of democracy that we now turn.

To overcome the shortcomings of vote-centric approaches to democracy, many democratic theorists now focus on the opinion-formation processes that precede voting (Kymlicka 291). They have “shifted their attention from what goes on in the voting booth to what goes on in the public deliberations of civil society” (Kymlicka 291). As discussed previously, some of these theorists have longer lines of sight than others, perceiving deliberative value in political discourse that is oriented to more than just consensus-formation and meets more than just stringent reason-giving criteria. Iris Marion Young is one such theorist. She
advocates what she calls "deep and inclusive democracy" (Young 18). Appeals to deep inclusion demand that "social groups and positions...be included in their specificity in political discussions," rather than just demanding that individual interests be represented in formal institutions (Young 19). Young identifies three reasons to support deep democratic inclusion – advocates of deep inclusion frequently cite two of these, and Young herself develops a third (Young 19). The first reason concerns the democratic value of "recognition": "a polity that tries to include all groups" "in their specificity in processes of political decision-making thereby gives specific recognition to those groups" which is "especially important where the polity has a history of marginalizing or ignoring [those] groups" (Young 19). The second reason concerns "the democratic value of interest promotion": "the democratic ideal of political equality states that every citizen is the best" "judge of what is in his or her interest, and that every citizen should have the right and effective opportunity to pursue his or her legitimate interests" (Young 20). Finally, Young suggests a less explored reason why democratic decision-making processes should amplify the voices of all social segments such that every perspective is given a fair hearing (Young 20). This third reason concerns transformation: deep democratic inclusion that "takes into account the interests of everyone" engenders wiser decision-making by "promot[ing] a shift in the perspective of everyone" (Young 20).

Inclusive democratic deliberation, then, can not only shore up equal respect for positions and equal expression of interests – "though these are fundamental reasons for democratic inclusion" – but also maximize a democratic public’s social knowledge and motivate democratic participants to transform their claims (Young 26). Transformation is a fundamental good supported by theorists of deliberative democracy that requires the participation of different groups. It is important to stress that these theorists do not advocate the total dissolution of
trustee authority; they seek instead to dilute trustee discretionary power by making it a representative’s responsibility — and, in my reading, a fiduciary’s responsibility — to deepen different social groups’ participation in deliberative spheres.

Children, I argue, should be acknowledged as a social group and afforded fiduciary protection of not only their general interests but also their specific right to express their interests. Ultimately, allowing young citizens to share their particular perspectives would serve the general interests of all citizens. If Young’s argument about the transformative potential of deep inclusion is correct, then “the participation of children in matters that affect them is a fundamental right that is beneficial to both children and society” (Campbell and Rose-Krasnor 213). Certainly many legal scholars now argue that children should be recognized “as people with particular attributes, qualities, sensibilities and vulnerabilities which make them different than adults” and, as such, have the right to express their particular views (King and Piper 130).

Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child is emblematic of this general right of expression. It states that adults must assure “the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views” (Campbell and Rose-Krasnor 209). Again, recognizing children’s participatory rights does not mean relinquishing adult’s fiduciary duties. It means that adults have a responsibility to protect all of children’s rights, including their right of expression. While the UN Convention clearly articulates children’s right to express themselves, it “does not say they have a right to make all decisions themselves” (Campbell and Rose-Krasnor 210). Article 5 of the Convention is explicit: “adults have a responsibility to provide children with guidance in exercising their rights in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities” (Campbell and Rose-Krasnor 210). Children themselves have expressed this principle, according to one research project. Most children in the study claimed that ‘having a say’ was
more important than ‘getting their way’ (Campbell and Rose-Krasnor 215). Social institutions, many children’s rights advocates argue, should uphold this right of expression, “adapting themselves in ways which…recognize children as different than adults,” and according the child self-assertive and protective rights under the law (King and Piper 131; Bevan 11).

According to the legal convention, “children’s participation rights apply to decisions made in ‘all matters’ that affect them” and, therefore, “children’s participation rights apply within various domains” (Campbell and Rose-Krasnor 215). In certain domains to which children have easy access, such as the family and the school, these rights can be easily upheld. Legal scholars understand that “there are social institutions which are well-suited to adapt in this way” (King and Piper 131). For now, it is sufficient to say that they have in mind the school as one such institution and the family as another (King and Piper 131). The best possibilities for children’s political participation are anchored in the learning processes which can transform interests through reciprocal dialogue in these domains (Kulynych 7). Voice-centric deliberative democracy underscores the educational potential of institutions and identifies them as a primary factor that influences the behaviour, attitudes, and goals of individual citizens (Zittel 11).

"[P]romoting a conception of democracy as social practice that can be seen as a crucial prerequisite for the process of self-transformation into a citizen," it also promotes a conception of democracy as social practice that can be seen as a crucial source of children’s inclusion (Zittel 13). And, cultivating a "subjective faith in one's own ability to influence decision-making and to make a difference in public life," it cultivates a desire to participate in public life (Zittel 12). This conception of democratic practice and this faith in one’s ability to enact it are learned in transformative environments (Zittel 12). These environments are both participatory and widely dispersed: they are an antidote to apathy and exclusion that simply cannot be located at the level
of constitutional structures (Zittel 12). Fortunately, children can access transformative environments more easily than they can constitutional structures.

Obviously — and importantly — children are not the only citizens who can access transformative environments. The process of cultivating and enacting citizenship certainly does not come to an abrupt halt when the subject reaches adulthood: it entails a positive-feedback cycle in which political education and empowerment are thought to reinforce each other throughout the life-cycle by means of deliberative institutional frameworks. Such frameworks would resist the notion that "children are the ones who need to become qualified and adults the fully qualified" (Jans 30). Following the logic of voice-centric deliberative democracy, exposing citizens to different perspectives illuminates — and thus transforms — their own positions' particularity, meaning that exposing adults to children's perspectives would only add to democratic communities' bodies of social knowledge (Kulynych 13).

The voice-centric strategy, by working through transformative microstructures which shape citizen's daily experiences of democracy rather than representative macrostructures, builds up a more easily accessible democratic infrastructure for political learning and socialization, one that includes citizens of all ages (Zittel 13). In this way, it demonstrates that democratic education need not put off children's inclusion: adults are certainly capable of engaging in democratic learning until the end of their lives and, as I will argue in the next section, children are also capable of participating in democratic structures at the beginning of theirs'. One may not be "born a citizen," but the process of becoming and being one is life-long. Even for children, school structures alone cannot contain it.
3.2 Redefining Capacity for Democratic Participation

A richer notion of democratic inclusion demands a deeper understanding of children’s ability to enact it. An exploration of developmental theory can carry us to this end. Currently, democratic theory’s relationship with developmental theory is fraught with ambivalence. Although a few key principles of developmental theory influence democratic theory, democratic theory remains largely in ignorance of specific developmental research. So, on the one hand, democratic theorists who think about children cannot help but be guided by developmental thinking, which is “the predominant way of thinking and acting with relation to the child in western societies and, certainly, beyond” (Turmel 303). In fact, “developmental theory is so pervasive, so overwhelmingly accepted from the outset” that “it is almost hopeless” for child psychologists, let alone democratic theorists, “to imagine any alternative” (Turmel 265). On the other hand, most democratic theorists “have not kept up with research in developmental psychology” (Sapiro 13).

From the perspective of this paper, both developmental theory’s influence on democratic theorists and democratic theorist’s ignorance of developmental theory are problematic. Developmental theory, like democratic theory, sequences children’s growth “in a teleological model” that “presupposes the state of adulthood to be the ultimate goal, the terminus” (Turmel 261). Within this model, “the incompetent ‘developing child’” is regarded by both democratic and developmental theorists as only an “adult-in-becoming,” and the period of childhood regarded as only a “preparation stage” of socialization (Turmel 25). In developmental theory, as in democratic theory, “the focus of theoretical interest is apt to be adulthood,” not childhood, and “the issue of concern is the functioning of the adult, not the life of the child”’ (Turmel 20). Both
developmental theory and democratic theory strive to transform the child—"irresponsible, unproductive, and in need of protection"—into a "competent, rational, mature adult being" (Turmel 58, 264). However, the influence of developmental theory on democratic theory is accompanied by democratic theory's ignorance of developmental research. While democratic theorists may take their cue from developmental theory in assuming that children lack capacities that adults have, they often miss subtler cues from developmental 'stage' theory, which asserts that "not only is childhood itself a stage in any human life, but there are stages within childhood" (Archard 61). Unlike developmental theorists, democratic theorists are "disinclined to countenance the idea that children might be more competent than we presume," a presumption which "retains its plausibility only by generalizing across all childhood and ignoring the real differences between children of various ages," and a presumption which no developmental theorists would dare make (Archard 68).

The result is that democratic theorists, their perspective inspired by but not well-informed of developmental psychology, often understand children's political capacity in three problematic ways (Sapiro 13): in democratic theory, children's capacity is routinely oversimplified, underestimated and, when contrasted with that of adult's, expressed in terms denoting subordination rather than difference. In considering each of these three mischaracterizations in turn, I will argue that children's capacities enable them to participate in democratic life earlier than most theorists assume, and in ways that adult theorists themselves would likely find difficult. Here, I am also disputing the claim advanced by theorists who admirably defend children's citizenship status, but mistakenly believe that "no developmental approach is equipped to take seriously the voices of children" (Kulynych 18). Although democratic theory has sometimes taken a "developmental approach to citizenship" to "ensure the exclusion of
children's voices from public life,” developmental theory can also generate a nuanced approach to capacity to ensure the inclusion of children’s voices in public life (Kulynych 18).

Democratic theory tends to grossly oversimplify human development. Schrag points out an obvious, albeit important, fact: children do not become adults in the way that caterpillars become butterflies (Schrag 443). Democratic theory, however, sharply bifurcates stages of human growth by strongly associating capacity with adulthood and incapacity with childhood. For instance, both Rawls and Habermas “set up citizenship as a sort of club with entrance requirements” which they presume that all adults pass and all children fail (Kulynych 19). Of course, if the capacities of children could be clearly demarcated from those of adults, then “one might accept democratic theorist’s account of the basis for inclusion in and exclusion from the franchise” (Schrag 443). Although many democratic theorists believe that “the critical competency question” is “to determine the age at which children’s cognitive capacities begin to allow them to learn and retain knowledge from their experiences that can contribute to shaping political orientations and practices,” they are unlikely to find a correct answer (Sapiro 14). Capacity is more complex than democratic theory suggests in two crucial respects: first, humans move through many stages of development in many different ways and, second, dependence is a condition with which the oldest as well as the youngest citizens must contend.

First, researchers have clearly demonstrated that, one, children develop very incrementally and that, two, their development is facilitated or obstructed by a very wide range of variables. Thus, while children are certainly not ‘miniature adults,’ the age of enfranchisement, usually set at eighteen, is a radically misleading mark of capacity. Democratic theorists must meditate deeply on the complex development of the human psyche before they exclude people from all domains democratic politics on the basis of age. Beginning even before
their second year, most children have the capacity to remember, "which, in turn, allows them to start to use language, be aware of their own feelings and abilities, and infer the intentions and feelings of others" (Sapiro 14) From then, over approximately the next five years "the ability to form semantic networks, linking symbolic representations (such as words) with sensations, memories, anticipated consequences or causality, and more abstract and higher-order classifications of experience" develops (Sapiro 14). Political thinking and action involve so many "different kinds of capabilities that develop through childhood in ways" which are so dependent on so many different biological and sociological variables, that links between age and capacity are always tenuous (Sapiro 14).

Second, many democratic theorists have oversimplified 'dependency' as a childhood-specific incapacity. Democratic theory reflects the mythology of children as "cultural symbols for the opposite of autonomy" and thus perpetuates "a fiction that the incapacity to function as a fully cooperating societal member is an exception in human life, not a normal variation" (Kulynych 20). Of course, there is no doubt that children are biologically dependent on adults and that their vulnerability distinguishes them from the adults on whom they depend (Kulynych 20). Dependency, however, is a "periodic and often prolonged phase of our lives" rather than an episodic childhood condition. Senior citizens as well as junior ones usually experience deep dependency. It is the task of democratic theory to deal with people's varying degrees of dependency while still including all citizens in self-government.

Democratic theory also underestimates children's capacities just as it overestimates adult's capacities. Developmental research has wholly discredited the belief that "adults routinely possess citizenship capacities that young people lack" — this idea, although intuitively powerful, is simply "not substantiated by the data" (Archard and Macleod 4). Even very young
children are capable of forming political conceptualizations and judgements. For instance, recent developmental research strongly suggests that children at least as young as five can identify social categories and stereotype accordingly. By this age, they can “perceive and react to people through social-group categorization, and they are certainly capable of developing social identities that are...politically relevant” (Sapiro 13). When Mark Bennett and Fabio Sanie conducted research on five-year old children to determine whether or not they explicitly associate certain traits with sex, and their conclusions were clear: “these findings demonstrate unambiguously that even young children are capable of stereotyping” (Bennett and Sanie 69).

Young children are even more adept at moral reasoning than one might expect; in fact, they even have the capacity to make judgments about the basis of moral reasoning (Danovitch and Keil 33). Judith Danovitch and Frank Keil conducted a fascinating experiment in which they asked children as young as five to imagine a computer with access to every historical or scientific fact and of unlimited computational abilities (Danovitch and Keil 34). The children were asked whether they would trust the hypothetical computer to solve a moral dilemma, or a hypothetical human with less knowledge and computational power. Overwhelmingly, the children trusted the human, suggesting that they perceived “the ability to experience emotions oneself and to comprehend emotions in others as important components of moral reasoning” (Danovitch and Keil 36). Some children even explicitly identified the capacity for empathy as the basis for their trust in a human being rather than a computer. Dubbing children “young Humeans,” the researchers concluded that even very young children are able to understand that important decisions are partly emotive (Danovitch and Keil 37).

In addition to oversimplifying and underestimating children’s capacity, democratic theory overlooks the fact that children naturally exhibit certain capacities that adults find difficult to
master, some of which could enrich democratic life. In democratic theory, the “capacities of children are frequently underrated and those of adults overrated” (Kulynych 2). For instance, theorists’ dismissal of children seems ironic to those who observe that “children make the best theorists” (Eagleton 59; emphasis added). Terry Eagleton envies children’s ability to effortlessly pose to routine social practices “the most embarrassingly general and fundamental questions, regarding them with a wondering estrangement which we adults have long forgotten” (Eagleton qtd. in hooks 59). While critical theorists work hard to denaturalize political and social arrangements, children make natural ‘denaturalizers.’ Other qualities inherent to childhood are integral to political participation, yet they too are often deliberately suppressed rather than harnessed. Traits associated with children are generally treated as nuisances rather than native abilities, obstacles to be overcome rather than talents to be admired, developed, and put to use. John Dewey pushes against adult’s inclination to “bring children up” to their own standards (Dewey 42). “The child,” he says, “has specific powers: to ignore this fact is to stunt or distort the organs upon which his growth depends” (Dewey 42).

Among the child’s innate abilities, his or her capacity for growth itself stands out in high relief. Dewey “means by capacity, an ability and a power,” and observes that children’s ability and power to grow are remarkably strong (Dewey 42). In this vein, Dewey proposes radical revisions to the notion of immaturity. While ‘immaturity’ usually designates a “mere lack” of capacities that “the child will not have until [s/]he becomes a man [or woman],” Dewey claims that “immaturity designates a positive force or ability—the power to grow” (Dewey 42). While some liberal theorists regard children as disadvantaged because they “lack preference structures that are stable over time,” the fact that children’s preference structures are in a state of flux is a boon for voice-centric deliberative democracy (Noggle 100). It might be said that children have
a talent for transformation. In light of the emphasis that democratic theory places on transformative political participation, children’s acute capacity for growth appears particularly remarkable. Adult citizens should develop in themselves this quality so naturally expressed by those they call “future citizens”. Dewey writes that “there is excellent adult authority for the conviction that for certain moral and intellectual purposes adults must become as little children”: transformative citizenship is one such purpose (Dewey 42). “With respect to sympathetic curiosity, unbiased responsiveness, and openness of mind, we may say that adults should be growing in childlikeness” (Dewey 42, 50).

Dewey’s notion of immaturity finds expression in the citizen’s present capacity for growth; it does not focus on future manifestations of growth. He clarifies that although the notion of immaturity signals potential growth, he is “not referring to the absence of powers which may exist at a later time”; rather, he is indicating “a force positively present—the ability to develop” (Dewey 42). His orientation to growth is resolutely anti-teleological, for teleology denies children full social membership in political society, granting them mere candidacy status and placing them on a waiting list (Dewey 55). There is no end to growth, he perceives, for it is an end in itself. And while children and adults both have the capacity to grow, it just may be that children are better at it.

3.3 Resolving the Inclusion/Incapacity Dilemma: Re-Defining the Terms

The inclusion/incapacity dilemma can only be resolved if democratic ‘inclusion’ and political ‘capacity’ are redefined. When democratic theorists focus on the representative
dimension of democratic politics and disregard children’s capacity for participation they necessarily exclude young citizens from democratic politics. If democratic politics is thought to infuse multiple domains of human interaction, particularly transformative environments, and children are thought to exhibit certain capacities essential to democratic politics – particularly the capacity for transformation – then democratic theorists may propose that children should exercise appropriate forms of democratic self-rule. Only if we redefine inclusion and capacity may we “define children as actual citizens” (Jans 40).

Expanding democratic theory’s conceptions of both democratic politics and childhood capacity pushes education beyond the period of childhood and the place of schools: if democratic learning were considered essential to democratic life and open to all members of a democratic community, its pursuit would be neither temporally restricted to adulthood nor spatially restricted to adults-only locations. Surely learning cannot “exclusively belong to the domain of the school” and cannot be “restricted to the youth phase” – rather, it must sustain democratic life “at every age and in diverse domains” (Jans 30).

First, democratic learning must not serve to postpone children’s inclusion in democratic politics. Delaying children’s inclusion by regarding education as preparation undermines the fact that “children proverbially live in the present” which is “not only a fact not to be evaded, but...an excellence” (Dewey 55). The present moment is where citizens are transformed and transformation, along with living in the present, is another exercise for which children have a knack — this, too, is “an excellence.” By neglecting the present, education “fails most just where it thinks it is succeeding — in preparing for the future” (Dewey 55). Democratic learning must entail democratic practice – and by ‘practice,’ it is meant ‘action,’ not only ‘preparation.’ Within schools, “every energy should be bent to making the present experience as rich and
significant as possible” (Dewey 55). Outside of schools, transformative democratic environments must open to both children and adults. Temporal restrictions on democratic education undermine the transformative changes that adults may undergo through educational enactments and expressions of citizenship as well as undermine children’s capacity for democratic participation. By rejecting the teleological approach to democratic education, democratic learning can accommodate both adults and children.

Second, in refusing to postpone children’s inclusion, democratic learning can also resist the notion that schools are separate from and less “real” than society, and that they are democracies’ sole sites of political learning. This notion must be “challenged...not only because of the unrealistic expectations it raises about what schools can actually achieve,” but also because it puts too heavy a burden for democratic learning on schools and too light a burden on society in general (Beista 745). Rather than demanding schools to be places that prepare students for democratic life “on the outside,” we must expect schools to be “places where children and students can act -- that is, where they can bring their beginnings into a world of plurality and difference” (Biesta 760). This would require an “educational environment in which” children “have a real opportunity to begin, to take initiative” and in which they may “respond in their own, unique ways to...learning opportunities” (Biesta 760). A society animated by an ethos of democratic learning would illuminate rather than obscure connections between schools and other transformative environments. Of course, schools are an important transformative environment for children: their democratic potential, as well as the democratic potential of families, should be explored.

The family is the first transformative domain that most people ever enter, and the first with democratic potential. As such, it is the first domain we will think about here. In fact, we
already think of our democracies as families. Whether we are conscious of this fact or not and usually we are not — the metaphor of the Nation as Family pierces through our conceptual systems, driving liberal citizens, conservative citizens, and every citizen somewhere in between to imagine themselves and each other as children, their governments as their parents, and their nation as a great, big, not-always-happy family. When George Lakoff, an American linguist and Democratic Party hero, made this startling proposition, he did so with two objectives in mind: first, to demonstrate that we all reason about nations on the basis of what we know about families and, second, to show that liberal metaphorical reasoning is better than conservative metaphorical reasoning (Lakoff 153). This is what he argues: Both liberals and conservatives think that, just as parents function to protect their children, governments function to protect their citizens. Both ideological groups also believe that, just as parents have responsibilities toward their children and authority over them, governments have responsibilities toward their citizens and authority over them. The conceptual path taken by both liberals and conservatives, however, forks here. The Nation as Family metaphor itself is ambiguous about what kind of family the nation is. And this is where two different models, Strict Father and Nurturant Parent models, step in: “they fill in such information” (Lakoff 155).

These two political ideologies correspond to two family models. While Conservatives look up to a Strict Father to govern the nation, Liberals look for a Nurturant parent. Conservatives’ ideal Strict Father exhibits a distinct ‘father knows best’ mentality, strongly asserting his own authority and “discouraging verbal give-and-take between parent and child” (or political representative and citizen) (Lakoff 352). Conversely, while Liberals’ ideal Nurturant Parent sets rules clearly and enforces them firmly, he or she encourages “open communication” with “verbal give and take,” and “recognizes the rights” of all family members (or of all citizens)
Lakoff observes that his familial models of the nation correspond almost exactly to Diana Baumrind’s famous developmental models of childrearing: certainly, his Strict Father bears an uncanny resemblance to her Authoritarian Parent, and his Nurturant Parent could be her Authoritative Parent’s ideal partner. This is an important point for Lakoff to make, because, as he notes, “most of the child development literature within the field of developmental psychology points in one direction”: childrearing according to the Authoritarian Parent model and, thus, to the Strict Father model, “harms children” — the Authoritarian model and, thus, the Nurturant Parent model, “is far superior” (Lakoff 340). Research on Baumrind’s Authoritative Parenting model, essentially what Lakoff calls the Nurturant Parent model, indicates that open discussion in families leads to independence and social responsibility in societies (Lakoff 357).

Just as Lakoff connects his Nurturant Parent model, which encourages citizen’s communicative participation in national decision-making processes, to Baumrind’s Authoritative Parent model, which encourages children’s communicative participation in familial decision-making processes, I connect both models to the voice-centric model, which encourages the communicative participation of all citizens, including children, in the decision-making processes of transformative domains, including the family. Their models and mine, however, diverge in one important way. The Nurturant Parent and Authoritative Parent models only regard children’s and citizens’ participation as desirable; conversely, the voice-centric model, in requiring all fiduciaries to protect their beneficiary’s participation rights, and specifically requiring adult guardians to protect their children’s rights of expression, regards participation as a right. The idea that children benefit from an appropriate level of decision-making is not new: Baumrind first discussed her classic parenting styles in 1966. What is relatively “new, however, is the assertion that children have the right to have opportunities for participation”: this is
precisely the assertion that I make, along with a growing cohort of legal scholars and children’s advocates (Campbell and Rose-Krasnor 209). Children have a right to participate in decision-making processes, and adults have a responsibility to protect this right. Of course, “establishing an appropriate balance between protection” of participation rights with protection of other rights “requires sensitivity to the children’s changing needs and abilities,” and few people are better suited to this task than parents — with teachers perhaps being a rare exception (Campbell and Rose-Krasnor 231).

We examined three variants of democratic education in some detail, and it is evident that all three err in primarily educating for the future citizen. It is equally evident, however, that of these, democratic pedagogy is the most promising for the child citizen. By giving children meaningful participatory opportunities for children in the present—albeit for the future—democratic pedagogy also gives children a voice. Even so, democratic pedagogy, as understood by most democratic theorists, cannot be yet called truly voice-centric. Like the family’s Authoritative Parenting model, the school’s democratic pedagogical model values meaningful participation as an instrument of effective teaching rather than as an indispensable element of democratic justice. Of course, democratic pedagogy is an effective child-rearing strategy, but it is more than that: it is a right. Certainly educators, like parents and other adult fiduciaries, must balance children’s participatory rights with other rights, but rights they are. If they were respected as such, and protected as such, then democratic theory would go a long way to making democratic society, of which schools are certainly a part, more inclusive for all citizens, of which children are certainly a kind. To regard democratic pedagogy primarily as an instrument of child-rearing rather than as a requirement of justice is to miss the point. Democratizing classrooms is not only a good idea — it is a just one (Coleman 179)
Conclusion

In this paper, I first mapped out the trajectory that the inclusion incapacity dilemma has taken through democratic theory, and tracked three strategies -- denial, diversion, and delay -- that theorists have used to navigate it. Finally, I sketched out new directions that democratic theorists can take toward more expansive understandings of democratic politics and children’s ability to participate in it. I argue that the resolution to the inclusion/incapacity dilemma is found in the larger terrain of transformative multi-sphere — rather than solely representative single-sphere — understandings of democracy, and in sophisticated multi-stage — rather than simplistic single-stage — understandings of human development.

The relationship between democratic theory and children is a tense one: theorists are pulled between their professed desire for inclusive democratic communities and their conviction that children’s incapacity automatically excludes them from democratic participation. The three coping strategies devised by democratic theorists have not resolved the inclusion/incapacity dilemma. By denying the problem of children’s exclusion, they deny the solution for children’s inclusion; by diverting children’s rights over to adult authorities, they divert attention away from participatory modes of democratic inclusion; finally, by delaying individual children’s inclusion in democratic politics until children are adults, they delay children groups inclusion in perpetuity.

Democratic theorists’ various responses to the inclusion/incapacity dilemma have failed to resolve it. To come to terms with the tension between their aspiration for inclusion and assumption about incapacity, democratic theorists must redefine their terms. When theorists
conceive of a broad, deliberative definition of democratic inclusion, and perceive that development of children's capacities is complex, that some of their capacities are high, and that some capacities associated with childhood are particularly well suited to democratic participation, then the inclusion/incapacity dilemma can be resolved, for children as well as for democratic theorists.
Bibliography


