“Democracy” is a term used today in America as common as we use the word “society”. They both have several definitions. A society is an extended social group having a distinct cultural and economic organization. How is this “cultural and economic organization” structured? In America we say that our society is democratic; or we live in a “democracy”. Democracy has many different definitions. The most common definition of democracy is government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives. This too can be vague. To say that a town in America is automatically a democracy would be an uncertain fact unless one was to research all aspects of that town. In the small town of Royersford, Pennsylvania I have researched many aspects. We have a little story of a small protective participatory democratic town struggling with the interference of big business and government as it is rapidly expanding. In the past few decades Royersford has grown from a small personal community, with limited government, in which reduced the scope of issues that could be subject to political conflict. A community that maintains active non-political community events in which government heads will attend and engage on a personal level with its citizens. The town is increasing exponentially on a commercial and industrial level, I feel due to the Route 422 Expressway and the King of Prussia Mall, which has been the cause of creation for many jobs in its surrounding area.

( encyclopedia.com )

The Schuylkill River provides a natural boundary separating sections of Montgomery and Chester Counties in southeastern Pennsylvania. The settling of the land started with the Royer brothers, Benjamin and David, settling there accompanied by two other men cultivating four farms in the area with one little road dividing the farms. In
just a few years plans were made to build a railroad through the town. This meant progress, which then eventually leads to prosperity. This railroad initiated much of the progress of the town. Industrial growth was rapidly expanding. In 1879 the community had grown to the point organizing into a borough. The application was granted on June 14th. Glass companies, an iron foundry, a hosiery mill, and brick work mills were popping up as soon as one year after the community organized. (Royersford Centennial)

Between 1879 and 1891, eight churches had started. They were all of the Protestant faith. Today there are twelve different places of worship. This number is pretty high considering there are only 4,246 people who reside in the township. Tocqueville would immediately point to this fact as a healthy sign of democracy. He believes that religion is needed in democracy as a way of lessening our self-interest that is found in today’s world. For Tocqueville, “religion teaches men and women that they are not the center of the universe and that democratic citizens should be concerned not only about the present, as many democrats are apt to do, but also about the future as well.”. (Toqueville, pg. 5 in Terchek and Conte) Religion challenges individualism and materialism that is prevalent in all democratic societies. In this small town of Royersford, religion plays an important part in mostly all of its citizen’s lives, even to this day. In surveying the town, twenty different households were asked of their organized religious affiliation and attendance of religious establishments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious</th>
<th>Non-Religious</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Methodist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tocqueville states, “the first duty which is at this time imposed upon those who
direct our affairs is to educate the democracy; to warm its faith, to purify its morals; to
direct its energies; to substitute a knowledge of business for its inexperience, and an
acquaintance with its true interests for its blind propensities; to adapt its government to
time and place, and to modify it in compliance with the occurrences and the actors of the
age.” He is telling us to first establish a foundation of faith, morals, knowledge, and
finally help to integrate it with the rest of the world. The Christian religion does adapt a
stoic philosophy which emphasizes tolerance. This can be a good thing for democracy
since it suppresses individualism and materialism. Although too much tolerance can be a
bad thing if political elites are to use their powers unjustly. This is why a good
democratic society must be educated; something that Tocqueville says is another duty of
“those who direct our affairs.” (Tocqueville, pg. 27 in Tercheck and Conte) Dewey also
insists that “there is no substitute for intelligence and integrity in cultural life. Anything
else is a betrayal of human freedom no matter in what guise it presents itself.” (Dewey,
pg. 167 in Terchek and Conte) The first school in Royersford was erected in 1871. The
school year only lasted six months to allow time for the children to work on the farms.
Between 1871 and 1931 7 different school buildings were built to accommodate for the
rise in the population. There now exists 10 schools in the town. All of which required
new buildings to be erected from the originals in order to accommodate for the growing
population. Royersford is home to one of the largest schools high schools in the
surrounding area. Spring-Ford high school is a PIAA “quad A” size school, which
enrolls more students than all of its surrounding area high schools. 80% of the people
living in Royersford have a high school degree or higher; 25 percent have a bachelors degree or higher.

In the Royersford town meeting on March 8th, 2005 15 school students attended from one of the local high school political science classes, along with their teacher to take notes. When asked they said that the class was divided up in groups. One group was supposed to come on this night and take notes of the issues discussed. They would then review these issues in class on the following day. The teacher would discuss in depth each topic covered and the structure of the meeting in class. The students were learning at an early age how their town was being run. The teacher stated that each student in the high school was required to take some form of American Government or Political Science class. If 80% of the people residing in Royersford have a high school degree there should be citizens who have some sort of a basic concept on how government is run.

Horace Mann is a political theorist who emphasizes the role education plays in a healthy democracy. In his selection from “The Necessity of Education in a Republican Government”, he writes: “It is a truism, that free institutions multiply human energies. A chained body cannot do much harm; a chained mind can do as little.” (Mann, pg. 79 in Terchek and Conte) In a growing community, like Royersford it becomes increasingly hard to educate all of its citizens the way that it should according to Mann. Therefore it is the local government’s duty to ensure that its citizens are educated in the ways of the world. Mann writes “that since the thirst for gold there have come frauds of the marketplace and even more frauds of the church, where the uneducated have been taken advantage of…Ignorance is blankness; or, at most, a lifeless, inert mass, which can,
indeed, be moved and placed where you please, but will stay where it is placed.” (Mann, pg. 81 in Terchek and Conte) Therefore if many of the people in Royersford must take some sort of class to educate them in high school on the way typical towns in America are ran, and some of these classes even study the specific town they live in then the average citizen should have a basic concept of where you should go to discuss issues of the community, right? Well then how come there were no people, other than students that had to be there for school, at the Royersford town meeting? Automatically, I figured this town to be performance democratic. Since the police chief brought it to my attention that people will typically only show up to town meeting when they have a gripe with something that the town is attempting to do, whether it be put in a new sidewalk along a road or attempting to build a new housing development. This automatically sounds exactly like what performance theorist democracy, since Schumpeter states: “It is true that the management of some of these affairs requires special aptitudes and techniques and will therefore have to be entrustesd to specialists who have them. This does not affect the principle, however, because these specialists simply act in order to carry out the will of the people exactly as a doctor acts in order to carry out the will of the patient to get well. It is also true that in a community of any size, especially if it displays the phenomenon of division of labor, it would be highly inconvenient for every individual citizen to have to get into contact with all the othercitizens on every issue in order to do his part in ruling or governing. It would be more convenient to reserve only the most important decisions for the individual citizens to pronounce upon-say by referendum-and to deal with the rest through a committee appointed by them…” (Schumpeter, pg 143-144 in Terchek and Conte) That it takes effort to become informed.
We are shown the issues that matter and persuaded by the interest of a few to tell us what is important. What I did not know was that most of the issues were discussed with people of the community behind the scenes. It is true I’m sure that most of the issues do not matter to the average person because it will typically not affect them in any way good or bad. Although after talking to the Mayor of town he explained that the way he receives the common citizen’s opinion and suggestions are during community events. Him and I talked for a good 15 minutes and he explained to me that he attends all the community events he is able too. (Mann, pg. 78-81, Terchek and Conte)

The weekend after I met him he was going to attend the “Royersford Annual Easter Egg Hunt”, where children and their parents come to hunt for Easter eggs. This provides many of the involved people in society, the 20-40 somethings and even a few grandparents of the children to come and discuss personally or on matters of the community. The mayor, Dave Erner, along with a few of the council members make it appoint to attend this event to talk to the people of the town. Here, he told me, is where he hears people’s actual opinions on matters. They tell him if they are happy or not with the way the town is doing. After hearing his express his concern for the people of the town and his insistence on attending these events it became clear that this was a participatory democracy in theory. Participatory theorists “want to move beyond voting and other conventional ways of formal democratic expression to make room for additional modes of political activity that can help to retrieve the substantive promise of democratic life. In this way, many proponents of participatory democracy want to bring the lessons of an expanded idea of political activity to what has conventionally been nonpolitical areas of social life, such as the workplace, bureaucracies, the home, and
schools. (Terchek and Conte, pg. 165) Since the town is not so big, the mayor can make himself accessible to pretty much anyone who wants to talk to him. There are numerous community events such as the Christmas and Halloween parade, the Christmas tree lighting, the Easter Egg hunt, 4th of July fireworks, amongst numerous other community events where people come together. My grandmother has been a citizen of Royersord all her life. She has said that the current mayor is an exceptional man who gives to his community in any way that he can. She also has known every mayor since she can remember, and that most of the time she has known them before they became mayor. Usually they are very well liked people in the community, who keep in touch with their fellow man. This is the sign of a healthy democracy according to participatory theorists, who feel that democracy is bad when the people separate from the interests only a few elites. (Dave Erner, currently elected Mayor of Royersford)

During the town meetings many issues were covered with little or no argument from the council members. I attended two meetings one meeting involved came after letter was written to resident’s who’s lawns would be used partially for building a sidewalk along side of Lewis Rd. in town. In this town meeting there were many members of the community present. They were there to argue the construction of a sidewalk. According to Robert Bellah, this would be a healthy sign of democracy. In his excerpt from “Community Properly Understood: A Defense of Democratic Communitarianism” he writes. “A good community is one in which there is argument, even conflict, about the meaning of the shared values and goals, and certainly about how they will be actualized in everyday life. Community is not about silent consensus; it is a form of intelligent, reflective life, in which there is indeed consensus, but where the
consensus can be challenged and changed…” In this case, the fact that people showed up and argued would be a sign of a good form of democracy. The fact that there was a letter that went out to the peoples lawns this would directly effect if it were to be constructed goes along with participatory theorists beliefs that you should create informed citizens and listen to their needs because they are smart. (Bellah, pg. 83-84, Terchek and Conte)

At the other town meeting, on March 8th, there was no one at the town meeting besides the Fire Chief, the Chief-of-Police, students, a few teachers and I. This town meeting was very dull and boring. No one had issues with anything being discussed. Although there was a new proposal for the erecting of the “Riverfront at Royersford”, which is a new group of townhouses. When this issue came up the council members discussed matters in greater detail. Their main focus was the safety of its tenants. There was a lawyer present who sat on the behalf of the "Riverfront" corporation and discussed legal matters. There were nine condition that had to be met before the "Riverfront at Royersford" could be built. They mainly discussed the safety "hazard" law. The council members put a big emphasis on this. They seemed very concerned for the safety of those who would reside in the "Riverfront". They tried to forsee any natural disaster and how the "Riverfront" would be able to deal with it. Of their main concern was in the case of a flood. In 1972, a disastrous flood due to "Hurricane Agnes" devastated the community. Since the "Riverfront" was to be built near the river's front, this was a real danger. The fact that the council would make sure that these nine conditions would be met, especially the hazard safety law, before "Riverfront" be built showed a democracy that looked out for the well-being of its people. Before the council allowed the construction of residential land which would lead to immediate growth of the community, which in turn would be
good for everyone, it made sure its people would be safe; an indicator of good
democracy.

This is a picture of the "Riverfront" townhouses. Royersford has land along its
Schuylkill riverfront that would be perfect for housing. But the land is being occupied by
large rusted old machinery from closed factories and foundries that once employed just
about everyone in town. The empty land is not doing Royersford any good, but the 300
units of housing will. The supposed goal of these new buildings is boost Royersford's tax
base while limiting the impact on services, including those of the Spring-Ford School
District. (The Royersford Centennial).

The building of these townhouses on the riverfront will force the local police
station to re-up its staff in order to accommodate for the security and surveillance of the
riverfront housing. The Police-Cheif will hire one new officer. This is just a
precautionary measure which the municipality must adhere too, since these new taxes
will be paying for the money to do this. Crime is not prevalent in the community. As
you can see on the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>4,331</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Crimes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Number of homicides | 0  
Number of rapes     | 0  
Number of robberies | 0  
Number of aggravated assaults | 4  
Number of simple assaults (hands, etc.) | 13  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violent Crimes</th>
<th>Per 1,000 Residents</th>
<th>0.9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Property Crimes |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Number of burglaries | 16  
Number of robberies     | 0  
Number of thefts        | 79  
Number of auto thefts    | 3  

| Property Crimes | Per 1,000 Residents | 23  

These are the numbers of crimes committed in 2004. There does not seem to be overwhelming violence in the area, nor does there seem to be any gang violence occurring. The low crime rate is a sign of a healthy democracy. In a town with overwhelming crime, true democracy is harder to attain. Violent crimes per 1,000 residents in Royersford is 0.9, the national average in the U.S. is a little over 20 per year.
Here are the figures from the Bureau of Justice Statistics for the national average of crimes committed per 1,000 people age 12 and over.

Below are the Property crimes committed. As you can see, Royersford is statistically lower than that of the national average. Royersford has 23 property crimes per 1,000 residents, the national average is 200.

(Charts courtesy of the Bureau of Justice, http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/)

A democracy stands on the principles that everyone is equal and shall be heard; the people have the say. If there is a high crime rate, the tendency of the head people in the town are too discriminate against a certain group or general citizen that fits the profile of the type who’s been committing some of the crime. In Royersford’s case there has not been a high crime rate in the city ever. Most of the people residing the in the city like the peaceful atmosphere and intend to keep it that way. Citizens actively participate in the community to assure the safety of everyone. There is even a “night watch” team in the more urban part of the community near Main St. and the first few avenues who watch out
on their block for any activity they feel needs to be kept an eye out for. They report this to the policemen who will patrol the area. There typically is not activity which they need to report. (Royersford Borough Police Department, Report for the Year)

Most of the drug trafficking and simple assaults occur at one of the towns bars. Banker’s Bar is located at 200 Main St. in Royersford. It is where the most illegal action happens. It is a known place to many residents as being a “bad” section of town. Numerous reports of fights and drug arrests have been made known to the residents of Royersford. Royersford Police dept. has recently been sending cops undercover to this bar in order to get in the middle of some of the illegal action. The LCE, Liquor Control Enforcement, had finally made the decision to intervene. There were cases against the employees for buying and selling of drugs. The LCE gave the owner a choice. He could sell his liquor license and shutdown his bar, or take the case to court. The license went to a Ruby Tuesday’s in Landsdale and the bar was shutdown, without public knowledge.

Bobbio would say that this is a indicator of a threat to democracy; that it is bad when the public is cut out of the decision making process. He says: democracy is about struggle, not only among competing groups in society but also between citizens and organized power, whether public or private. For this reason, he wants democrats to challenge secretive and exclusionary practices that diminish the role of the public in public affairs, without being seduced by utopian visions of ultimate political solutions to human problems. (pg. 182, Tercheck and Conte) Hayek would also feel that in order for a healthy democracy you should have the least amount of government intervention, and that shutting down this bar unbeknownst to the public is not a healthy sign.
Another major criminal in the area was brought to justice after the cops received a confidential tip that a man on the 400th block of Main St. was facilitating a methamphetamine lab in his basement. Several 5-gallon drums were taken from the man’s home. Fifty people were evacuated from their homes because of this dangerous chemical. The man was sentenced to 11 ½ to 23 months in Montgomery County Correctional Facility after he pleaded guilty with intent to manufacture. This man was brought to justice after public participation of a confidential informant phoned the police.

Most of the citizens in the town are 30-40 something’s who have young children 5-14 years of age.

They should be informed of what is happening in their community so that they can best what is good for them and their young ones. In Royersford there is not many outlets of information as to what is happening in the city. The one and only source of local news media in the town is the “Reporter”, Royersford’s own newspaper that comes out once every week. The building is located directly across from the police station. The writers are constantly nagging the police chief of stories which are happening or arrest that have been made. The policemen are happy to divulge any information to the
newspaper as long as deemed not dangerous to make it public knowledge. The fact that the town of Royersford only has one media outlet does not concern me as much as it first did. Considering the size of the town, a newspaper is practically all you need to reach everyone in the town. The sign of democracy which hints at a healthy factor is that the media outlet that Royersford does have makes a point to educate the citizens on issues that are important to them.

The fate of Royersford will be determined by new leaders. The new mayor, Dave Erner, was just elected in February. When I talked to him had just been elected as mayor for two weeks prior. He informed me that his goal is to pick up where the previous mayor, Tom Quigley, who now works for the State Department left off. The mayors of Royersford have traditionally been down to earth people who are attentive to the needs and suggestions of the people in their community.

Royersford is hanging onto the traditional values that it has been founded on. Although, the small community that it once was is now expanding quicker than ever. Commercial land is being bought up and all over the community. New land is being made ready for shops and corporate centers of business. With the number of people growing in the town by record numbers, bureaucracy will most likely be growing in the coming years. Realist and Neorealist critiques, such as Weber, hint that this is an indicator of weaker democracy. He goes on to say that the success of the bureaucracy has become “indispensable to delivering the public policies demanded in mass democracy. At the same time, this very success has depleted the elected government of its capacity for popular accountability.” However, the town’s leaders still have a traditional sense of how they would like their community to function, but they know that
in order to live in today’s society in America you must keep up with the world in which you live in. (Weber, pg. 182 in Terchek and Conte).
Erner, Dave. Currently Elected Mayor of Royersford. (phone number available if needed)

Quigley, Tom. Previous Mayor of Royersford. Previously employed at the U.S. State Department. (phone number available if needed)


Schurr, Kevin. Royersford Police Chief. (phone number available if needed)


The Bureau of Justice. www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/

www.encyclopedia.com