Abstract: Though deliberative democracy has received ever increasing theoretical and research attention in recent years, theorists have not agreed on what deliberation is. Also, standardized survey measures of deliberative participation and attitudes conducive to deliberation have not been constructed. Such measures would help social scientists determine the degree to which citizens already engage in deliberative discussions and their potential for such discourse. These measures would also help identify what political events and interventions improve the prospects for deliberation. Drawing on several theorists, this paper seeks to clarify what deliberation is, operationalizes deliberation, and proposes a measure of deliberative participation and attitudes conducive to deliberation.


Please send correspondence to:

Peter Muhlberger
Hamburg Hall 2105A
Heinz School of Public Policy
4800 Forbes Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
peterm@andrew.cmu.edu
Deliberative democracy has been the subject of an increasing number of books and conference panels in recent years. Much of this interest has been in the form of political theory, but increasingly deliberation is being subjected to empirical research. This research includes work being done at organizations dedicated to deliberative democracy projects, including the Walt Whitman Center, the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, the National Issues Forums, and the National Issues Convention. Despite the accelerating interest in deliberative democracy, little agreement exists regarding what deliberation is and how it might be measured. As will become evident below, many different definitions of deliberation have been given. Few treatments, however, have attempted to isolate the core elements of these definitions and synthesize them.

Few or no standard survey instruments have been devised to measure the level and quality of existing deliberative participation or the potential for such participation. Researchers interested in other forms of political participation generally have multiple measures from which to choose (Brady, 1999). Though a few standard survey questions ask whether respondents discuss politics or attempt to persuade others, these questions are woefully incomplete relative to prevailing notions of deliberative discourse. For example, while many people say they discuss politics, such discussion may not involve either listening to the other person or giving one's own view. Questions that tap listening and giving views are rare, but the Dutch Election Study of 1970-1973 found that 68% of respondents reported never or rarely giving their own opinions or listening during political discussions (Brady, 1999, p. 772).

A survey measure of deliberative participation would give some indication of the degree to which political talk already involves elements of deliberation. This would clarify how prepared citizens are for this more active variety of participation, as well as what their specific shortcomings are. Preparedness would also be captured by a measure of deliberative potential—attitudes towards political talk that are essential to deliberative discourse. Tracking changes in deliberative participation and potential over time would also clarify which political events or interventions promote such participation and which undermine it.

This paper will attempt to operationalize deliberation in the form of a survey measure of deliberative participation and attitudes toward deliberation. The paper's strategy will be to move between more and less abstract definitions of deliberation in an effort to use insights in these definitions to synthesize a definition that accommodates many specific views regarding what deliberation is. It begins by asking in the broadest terms what the functions of deliberation are.
Two functions are identified—conflict resolution and development of persons and communities. In analyzing these functions, I will clarify the fundamental differences between liberal and deliberative democratic theory, hopefully clarifying how much is at stake in these differences. The paper then considers a series of more specific definitions of what actions and intentions constitute a deliberative discussion. In an effort to unify these definitions despite the varying theoretical language of the authors, I will abstract four features of these actions and intentions that appear to encapsulate all the more specific definitions—the presence of inadequately coordinated action ("conflict"), sincerity in seeking greater coordination through reason, universality of the reasons offered, and the equal standing of all parties in the deliberation. Using these features of deliberative action and the general functions of deliberation, the paper will construct a new definition of deliberation and operationalize that definition in the form of survey items meant to measure deliberation.

The measure is currently being pre-tested in a small survey of Pittsburgh residents called the Political Views Study. Data was not available in time for this version of this paper. The Political Views Study also includes several other scales and questions, including questions asking respondents whether they wish to be contacted regarding a deliberative web site and whether they wish to be called regarding an all-day community deliberation in which they can participate. These questions will serve as useful quasi-behavioral measures to clarify what aspects of the proposed measure of deliberative participation and potential best predict action.

DEFINING DELIBERATION

"Deliberation" does not refer to a natural category such as mass or temperature, nor does it map readily on to specific sensory impressions. Deliberation requires speech or some kind of communication, but any particular set of utterances need not be a deliberation. Thus, we cannot readily turn to nature or relatively uninterpreted sensory impressions to define what deliberation "really" is. The notion of deliberation rests heavily on social understandings. A logical positivist may therefore say the term is arbitrary and any operational definition will do. A social constructionist would, however, point out that an arbitrary operational definition will not do because people have socially-based understandings of what "deliberation" means. For example, no operationalization of deliberation in Western cultures could include mutual threats. While an improvement, the social constructionist perspective implies that notions such as deliberation have arbitrary
content across culture. Supposing it is possible to translate across cultures at all in a constructionist world, theorists would have to be content that the notion of deliberation is meaningless in cultures with no word for it and that notions of deliberation could include threats in yet other cultures.

I prefer, however, to take a constructivist perspective (Chapman, 1988). From that perspective, the world and social life have a complex structure that people discover under the right conditions, leading to similar cross-culturally held conceptions such as logic, scientific understandings, and perhaps certain broad moral and social understandings as well. Put another way, because of the commonalities in human existence, people can arrive at similar concepts, at least of sufficiently general matters, regardless of culture.

From a constructivist perspective, the task of defining what deliberation really is requires clarifying the commonalities of human experience that give rise to notions of deliberation. The notion of deliberation stems from two common human experiences: first, the need to coordinate action among people and, second, the need to coordinate action within an individual—that is, the construction of a coherent identity within the individual. The following examines each of these.

**Deliberation as Conflict Resolution**

One common perspective understands deliberation as a means of coordinating action among people—the non-coercive, reason-based coordination of action, especially in situations of conflict. Gutman and Thompson (1996) define deliberative democracy as democracy in which the discursive resolution of moral disagreements plays a central role. Moral disagreement involves conflicts over fundamental values. Deliberation seeks to resolve such conflict through a process in which participants reason with each other until they "...reach mutually acceptable decisions." (p. 1) Bohman views deliberation in largely pragmatic terms—an attempt to achieve cooperation in a problematic situation. In particular, he discusses how deliberation can help mend "deep conflicts"—conflicts that challenge the "...basic framework of moral assumptions and political procedure...." (p. 73) A successful deliberation either resolves the instigating conflict or convinces participants to continue to deliberate, itself a solution for conflict.

Habermas (1984) points out that deliberation to resolve disagreement is so deeply engrained in human experience that it constitutes a basic mode of language use. He distinguishes communicative action, use of language meant to coordinate activity between persons via reasons, from strategic action. Communicative action seeks to build understanding, whereas strategic action has its effects through
causal material conditions. For Habermas, then, deliberation involves the communicative use of language to build understandings that enable cooperation.

**The Incompleteness of Deliberation as Conflict Resolution**

The view of deliberation as a conflict resolution device remains quite close to liberal democratic theory, a theory in which deliberation plays a minimal role. As Barber (1984) puts it, "The entire tradition of liberal thought from Hobbes to Laswell supports the idea that politics is conflict resolution." (p.128) To simplify somewhat, liberal democratic theory views politics as an arena in which interests constituted pre-politically are pursued through barter, coercion, and power (Warren, 1992). Such theory assumes interests and preferences are formed largely outside the political arena and cannot be reshaped within that arena. Therefore, political deliberation can do little to resolve conflicts of interest, because it cannot reshape interests. Only barter, threat, and power—strategic action—can resolve conflict in the liberal democratic political arena.

Conflict resolution also becomes the key issue of liberal democratic theory because it typically assumes a model of human needs that implies the inevitability of conflict. The classics of liberal democratic theory (Hobbes & Tuck, 1991; Locke & Laslett, 1988) start with the assumption of a society-less state of nature in which individuals pursue their needs in isolation. These needs are typically needs of the body—impulses, drives, and desires that constitute what these authors view as self-interest. The vision of isolated individuals in a state of nature does not, of course, correspond to any known feature of human history (Polanyi & Dalton, 1971), except to an extent the breakdown of society under the most extreme pressures (Turnbull, 1972). Locke and Hobbes may not have meant the state of nature to correspond to historical reality, but their image of society-less creatures does serve the purpose of supporting a particular theory of human needs—one in which society plays no role in shaping needs and, therefore, one in which bodily desires dominate. These needs do not necessarily make people evil, but they do make them asocial and, under many conditions, anti-social. In the face of resource constraints in which competing material needs of different persons cannot all be met, people are apt to find themselves in severe conflict. According to liberal democratic theory, people devise societies and politics to ameliorate the consequences of such conflict.

A key issue, then, in liberal democratic theory is how to resolve conflicts over interests. Deliberative theorists have added something by suggesting that many interests can be reshaped through deliberation—that conflicts can be resolved by communicative, not merely by strategic, means. But, a view of deliberative theory
that focuses on how it addresses the key issue of liberal democratic theory does not do justice to deliberative theory. The key issue of deliberative theory differs from that of liberal democratic theory. Deliberative theorists have suggested that deliberation is justified not merely by its ability to address conflict, but by its ability to build community and make people public-spirited, self-reflective, and autonomous (Bowles & Gintis, 1986; Pateman, 1970). Contrary to Elster and several of his co-authors (1998), the capacity of deliberation to improve the deliberators is not merely a peripheral and irrelevant benefit, but a central purpose of deliberation. Construed another way, the focus of deliberative theory on self and community development is a recognition of the need for democratic theory to address types of conflict not addressed by liberal theory—conflicts within the individual and conflict over non-material goods such as identity and values.

**Deliberation as Self and Community Development**

The key issue of deliberative theory is the non-coercive coordination of action between and within individuals—or, what amounts to the same thing, the development of personal and group identity and agency. From within the assumptions implicit in liberal democracy, the claim that political deliberation can enhance both group and personal identity makes no sense. In that perspective, the person and the group are either at odds or the group forms when individuals with similar interests and passions aggregate in the pursuit of strategic advantage (Madison, 1987). There is no mutual accommodation of group and personal identity because there is no shaping of interests in the political arena. Liberal democracy also implicitly rests on methodological individualism—the assumption that only individuals are causally efficacious and groups are simply collections of individuals. This militates against the view that communities can or should have any role in shaping individuals or that individuals should want to identify with a community.

The underpinnings of deliberative theory run against commonly held yet implicit understandings of American culture. To fully clarify the rationale for deliberative theory would, therefore, be an extensive project beyond the scope of this paper. A few explanatory comments are, however, warranted. This explanation focuses on several key claims of deliberative theory: people need to build and maintain their identities, the development of individual identity and agency necessarily involves society, and discussion in the political arena is a necessary condition for the full development of personal and community identity.
Identities Are Essential and Must Be Built And Maintained

Liberal democratic theory postulates material needs as the fundamental needs that motivate human behavior. In contrast, deliberative theory explicitly or implicitly adds another type of need—the need to build and maintain identity. Such a need clearly manifests itself in the extensive psychological literature showing the lengths to which people go to maintain a consistent self-concept (Cantor, 1986; Gollwitzer & Wicklund, 1985; Steele, 1988).

Identity plays a crucial role in human activity, one that lies behind most behavior. Identity consists of mental representations and processes that clarify what makes people the same over time despite changes in the environment and activity. By giving people a sense of continuity with their future states, identity is one of the chief reasons why people care about their future selves. Without this care, people's actions would be guided exclusively by fulfillment of immediate impulses, and they would do nothing to address foreseeable future needs. Most human behavior clearly involves considerable concern for future selves. As a consequence, identity holds people and societies together.

Maintaining a sense of identity is no simple task because identity is not an object, but the process of maintaining a sense of continuity over time. That sense of continuity must be maintained despite ever changing activities, objectives, and experiences. Continuity depends on the construction and maintenance of mental representations that explain how ever-changing daily activity contribute to the core objectives that define the self (Markus & Wurf, 1987). These representations must themselves be constantly reinterpreted and replaced (Markus & Wurf, 1987) to maintain the perception of consistency despite change.

People have difficulty achieving a coherent sense of identity in part because they have largely indirect access to self-knowledge. Carver and Scheier (1981) observe that people have difficulty focusing attention on both the external world and themselves simultaneously. As a result, self-contemplation generally involves interpretive reflection on past actions, making self-knowledge a difficult achievement. Carver and Scheier (1981) also observe that self-schema have the same psychological properties as the schema people have about others. Knowing oneself does not fundamentally differ from knowing others. Not surprisingly, psychologists have found that people often do not know their reasons for action and incorrectly reconstruct their reasons after the fact (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Bem's (1967) self-perception theory even suggests that people usually reconstruct their reasons on the basis of the same external cues people use to infer other's
reasons for action. This perhaps goes too far (White, 1980), but it does underline the difficulty of acquiring self-knowledge.

**Individual Identity Necessarily Involves Society**

Plausibly, then, people have a need to build and maintain identity and this need is not readily met. This point in itself does not contradict liberal democratic theory, because identity needs might be addressed outside the political arena—say in the private domain of the family. Deliberative theorists must clarify the role of society in addressing individual identity needs. In the literature, a role for society in personal identity appears supported by at least two arguments: the need for external perspective to define the self and the social constitution of the self.

Mead's (1962) analysis of the genesis self-awareness suggests that personal identity depends on viewing the self from the perspective of others. Mead believes self-awareness arises simultaneously with the origins of symbolic communication. In order to communicate with others, people must understand what the communication could mean to the other person. To do this, they must take the perspective of the other person and imagine how the other will react to the communication. By taking the perspective of the other with respect to something produced by themselves, people for the first time have an opportunity to develop representations of their own actions and motives. These representations constitute a self-concept and the process of building these representations constitutes self-awareness. Like many current-day psychologists, Mead does not believe people have direct access to their motives and self-concepts. Consistent with Mead, much psychological research also confirms that the mere awareness of others watching or passing judgment has dramatic effects on human behavior and that viewing oneself from an external perspective also has dramatic attitudinal and behavioral consequences (Berkowitz, 1987; Carver & Scheier, 1981; Gibbons, 1983; Gibbons & Wicklund, 1982; Greenberg, 1983; Hutton & Baumeister, 1992; Kernis & Reis, 1984; Lerner et al., 1998; Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Plant & Ryan, 1985; Tetlock, 1992).

By taking the perspective of others, people build personal identity. This does not, however, imply for Mead that selves are purely socially constituted. Instead, Mead takes a constructivist turn. He maintained that people develop more abstract external perspectives on themselves. Without greater abstraction, people could not develop a coherent self-identity because they would be whatever a number of specific and often contradictory individual perspectives would make them. Instead, people develop an increasingly coherent abstract perspective Mead called the generalized other. At sufficient levels of abstraction, the generalized
other constitutes the moral viewpoint—a viewpoint from the perspective of all society or even all conceivable societies. Thus, people can come to critique their society from a moral perspective and build their identity in accord with that critique.

Society may also play a role in the construction of personal identity to the extent that such identity necessarily requires a social component. The vast majority of people are concerned about integrating a social component into their personal identities, whether in the form of family, peer groups, everyday interactions at work and play, or a wide variety of organizations. Most people do not do well in solitary confinement. Thus, empirically it does appear most people are not content without a social component of life. This may be so for a variety of reasons, including perhaps Mead's analysis of the genesis of self.

The Role of the Political Arena In Personal and Community Development

Just because the self may have a social genesis or people appear to need social interaction does not, however, imply people must be active in the political arena. A critic can point to today’s extremely low political participation levels as evidence that people have no real need for political involvement. In response, deliberative theorists and others have attempted to show that existing levels of public involvement pale by comparison to involvement in other times and places (Habermas, 1989; Putnam, 1995; Putnam et al., 1993; Sennett, 1977). These accounts seek to explain current low levels of public engagement on the basis of structural and cultural factors that inhibit political involvement. Moreover, these accounts contend that people in times and places in which a substantial portion of the public were intensely engaged were able to develop richer and deeper personal identities and relationships with the community than characterize people today.

Mead's analysis of the social genesis of the self can also be shaped into an argument on behalf of political involvement. People develop more adequate understandings of the generalized other to the extent they reflect on the nature of social relationships and of individual identity. Such abstract reflection generally turn into reflection on political and social issues, as Habermas (1989) has attempted to show. Reflection benefits greatly from discussion, so discussions of political issues are important for personal development. Habermas (1991) also suggests that Mead's theory implies the necessity of a discussion community for problematic moral issues. He observes that individuals cannot anticipate the perspective of the generalized other without input from the community affected by the issue. This also implies that the construction of an adequate generalized other requires discussion of political and social affairs.
Deliberative theorists suggest political discussion is critical for promoting autonomy. When individuals articulate the reasons for their moral choices, values, and preferences in the course of political discussion, they can become aware that their positions are inconsistent, poorly grounded, or the result of social influences (Warren, 1992). This serves as an opportunity for the individual to form a more coherent self-identity based on conscious choices rather than social influences or personal impulses.

The discussion of political issues may help people develop autonomy in another way. In such discussion, they come to understand factors that greatly impact their lives. Modern economies create vast webs of interdependence that exercise great influence on individuals, whether they are aware of these influences or not. Deliberative theorists imply that only by understanding these influences and choosing how to relate to them can a modern person be fully autonomous. Giddens (1991), for example, suggests that autonomy best finds its expression in our interdependent world in the form of a politics focusing on life choices. Moreover, only in the context of high-level discussion of economic and social issues can individuals work out their conception of the community and their proper role within the community. Thus, the development of a positive and strong community depends on political deliberation.

From the perspective of deliberative theorists, then, political deliberation promotes personal and community development. While liberal democratic theory focuses on conflict resolution, deliberative theory introduces a second key issue—development. Deliberative theory starts with the assumption that the self is discursively and socially constituted, and consequently preferences and needs can be modified in the course of political discussion. As Warren (1992) observes, deliberative theory may be insufficiently sensitive to the potentially anti-social impulses associated with the body. On the other hand, liberal democratic theory may too exclusively focus on these impulses.

**Defining Deliberation—Some Initial Specifications**

I have defined two general issues of concern to deliberative theory—conflict resolution through communicative action and personal and community development. These issues and the rationale behind them motivate various theorists in identifying the more specific features of deliberation. This section will present several more specific definitions of deliberation out of which I will synthesize a more inclusive definition. I hope to show that deliberation consists of
an attempt to address conflict or build cooperation by participants sincere in their
desire to find the most universally defensible mutual accommodation.

Bohman

Bohman (1996) focuses on deliberation as conflict resolution through
communication. An examination of his discussion of what deliberation is yields
the following list of observations:

1. Deliberation addresses a problematic situation in which opposing
parties cannot coordinate their activities.

2. Deliberators must be willing to give reasons for their positions,
specifically reasons that might be understood and accepted by
anyone.

3. They must be willing to listen to reasons given by others.

4. They must be accountable—willing to respond to the objections of
others, and willing to shift to new positions including that of
opposing parties when they cannot respond to these objections.

5. Deliberators must be willing to give all parties equal standing and
voice.

6. They must be willing to continue to deliberate, regardless of
disagreement, till action can be coordinated again, unless their
deliberation partners are not sincere (as defined by 1-5).

These points help define what deliberation is. They emerge from a particular
pragmatic context—the need to address, through communication, issues that
impede cooperation in a wide public. The points identify several key features of
deliberation. Deliberation involves a need to address a wide conflict. It requires
participants to approach communicative action sincerely, with a willingness to seek
a mutual solution through listening, accountability, willingness to shift to better
positions, and willingness to continue to deliberate. It involves an implicit drive
toward universality in reasons, because participants should give reasons that could
be accepted by anyone. And, it requires equality of participants to influence the
deliberation (equal standing and voice). Such equality includes equal access to
the skills, confidence, and knowledge necessary to make a person an effective
discussant. These features appear to be key to Bohman's notion of deliberation:
conflict, sincerity, universality, and equal standing.
Gutman and Thompson

Gutman and Thompson (1996), like Bohman, see deliberation as conflict resolution. Specifically, they define deliberation as a method of resolving moral disagreements—that is, conflicts over fundamental values. They take a more political science approach to defining deliberation by specifying a set of key principles, three of which are principles of deliberative process and three principles of deliberative content. The principles of deliberative process are:

1. Reciprocity—This principle consists of multiple facets. Reciprocity involves seeking "fair terms of cooperation" for their own sake. It involves reasoning with others to find mutually justifiable resolutions to moral conflicts. To do this, participants must appeal to reasons that are shared or could come to be shared with opposing parties. Reciprocity involves mutual respect, respect for the others' position even if it seems wrong and respect for the opponents themselves as moral agents. When resolution of a conflict proves impossible, participants should continue to maintain mutual respect.

2. Publicity—Deliberation should be open to the wide public. This helps insure participants are reciprocal and promotes openness in government.

3. Accountability—Everyone is required to give justifications to everyone else. They must give reasons and respond to criticisms. Accountability includes accountability to others not present, including future generations and people in other geographical areas.

Gutman and Thompson also identify three principles whose precise content must be deliberated and which are also prerequisites for deliberation. These are basic liberty (protection from violations of the physical or mental integrity of persons), basic opportunity (guarantees of access to the basic goods needed to live a decent life), and fair opportunity (fair distribution, as by merit, of highly valued goods for which the society has a legitimate interest in fair distribution).

Gutman and Thompson's definition again raises the key features of conflict, sincerity, universality, and equal standing. Moral disagreement serves as the source of conflict that necessitates deliberation. Reciprocity clarifies in what ways participants should be sincere. Gutman and Thompson would not agree with Habermas (see below) that there is in principle a universally correct solution to particular conflicts. Nevertheless, in stipulating appeals to shared reasons and in
stipulating publicity and accountability to non-present persons, Gutman and Thompson impose a type of universality as well as equal standing. This type of universality eschews the possibility of a universally correct choice, but requires wide acceptance of the reasons for any solution. Finally, basic liberty, basic opportunity, and fair opportunity serve as structural prerequisites for equal standing of participants in deliberation.

Habermas

Cooke (1994) nicely summarizes Habermas's notion of discourse. It consists of the following idealizations, idealizations in the sense of stipulations that only apply approximately in real world discourse.

- Participants understand the same things by the same linguistic expressions. This may need to be established in the course of discussion.
- No pertinent argument is excluded or suppressed by the participants.
- No force other than that of the better argument will be used to persuade participants.
- Participants "are motivated only by concern for the better argument." (p. 31)
- Everyone able to speak and act may participate.
- Anyone can question any assertion, introduce new topics, and express any relevant thought.
- On issues of normative rightness or propositional truth, participants must suppose it possible in principle to develop a rational, universally-acceptable consensus.

These points do not dwell on the reason for discourse, but Habermas is concerned with making agreement and cooperation possible through communicative action. He does not emphasize conflict, at least not directly, perhaps because he emphasizes the transformative potential of discourse. Participants must be sincere if they are motivated only by concern for the better argument. By not excluding anyone, allowing everyone to express whatever they like, and positing participants concerned only with the better argument, discourse clearly promotes the universality of the reasons discussed. The seventh point also stipulates that
participants must recognize the possibility of such universality for politically important types of issues. Most of the points promote equal standing.

Barber

Barber (1984) views deliberative democracy not only as a means to conflict resolution, but in terms of its power to develop persons and communities. Barber suggests that strong (deliberative) democracy has unique advantages in addressing political issues. He defines political issues as ones which take the form implied by this question: "What shall we do when something has to be done that affects us all, we wish to be reasonable, yet we disagree on means and ends and are without independent grounds for making the choice (such as scientific grounds)?" (p. 120-121, parentheses mine) Like other authors mentioned here, Barber believes deliberation occurs to address difficult public conflicts. In addition, he embraces a weak form of universalism: Deliberation seeks a reasonable choice, one that is "nonimpulsive, thoughtful, and fair." (p. 127) To arrive at reasonable positions, people must rethink their positions to encompass the community's interests, not merely their own. To accomplish this, people must extend their perspectives to incorporate the interests of others, potentially shifting their positions. These features are indicative of sincerity in communicative action. They also develop persons and communities in Barber's view because they fashion persons with private interests into citizens genuinely concerned with the needs of the community. By "identifying and empathizing with the values of others," citizens reconstruct their values into public norms.

Barber defines strong democracy itself as, "...politics in the participatory mode where conflict is resolved in the absence of an independent ground through a participatory process of ongoing, proximate self-legislation and the creation of a political community capable of transforming dependent, private individuals into free citizens and partial and private interests into public goods." (p. 132) While Barber believes the creation of such politics involves much more than getting people to deliberate, deliberation itself can contribute to these tasks. As indicated above, the perspective taking involved in deliberation serves to promote citizenship and the sense of common community. Elsewhere, he suggests the choice and careful thought involved in deliberation promote autonomy.

A Definition of Deliberation

The above definitions of deliberation have in common the following elements: deliberation addresses conflict or at least seeks to build more coordinated and
cooperative action, participants must be sincere in wanting to achieve accommodation by reason, they must want the reasons offered to be universally acceptable, and conditions must permit equal standing for anyone to contribute to discussion. Equal standing reflects both social-structural considerations and the participants' attitudes with respect to who can say what. Equal standing in the latter sense derives from sincerity—participants sincere in desiring a rational and universally defensible accommodation would necessarily want equal standing for all participants. Such sincere participants would also pursue social-structural equality because it is a precondition for reasoned resolution of conflict and building of community. In summary, then, deliberation consists of an attempt to address conflict or build cooperation by participants sincere in their desire to find the most universally defensible accommodation. Such a situation approximates deliberation only to the degree that social-structural conditions permit equal standing.

This definition, at first glance, seems to stress conflict resolution. Much of the prior discussion, however, emphasizes a second aspect of deliberation—the development of persons and community. Does the definition encompass this second aspect? Authors such as Barber and Habermas, who focus on the role of discourse in development, do not stress the role of discourse in resolving conflicts, but they do indicate that discourse serves to address difficult issues over which people disagree. They therefore emphasize the development of cooperation on such issues, perhaps even in the absence of overt conflict. Thus, in the view of these theorists, deliberation promotes development in the face of concrete problems; it does not somehow seek directly to promote development without regard to problems.

This view of development fits that of developmental psychology, in which people develop in response to the lack of fit between their conceptions or between their conceptions and what they observe in reality (Loevinger, 1987). Development perhaps necessarily implies some such difficulty because development itself is nothing other than increasing coherence in conception and action. Development takes place in response to real problems people face, including problems of cooperation with others. The definition offered implies a role for deliberation in development by mentioning the need to build cooperation and to develop a defensible accommodation.

Deliberation as defined here taps two aspects of common human experience, aspects that give deliberation special meaning in the context of human experience. First, it incorporates the need to coordinate activity with other people either in response to conflict or to achieve a richer cooperation—the development of
community. Specifically, it taps into the shared human experience of entering into discussions with others in the sincere hope of finding an accommodation through reason. Second, deliberation incorporates people's innate desire to improve themselves (Deci & Ryan, 1985) by forming richer, more coherent self-concepts and achieving autonomy in Warren's sense. Such personal development follows from the problems people face in the course of deliberation.

A More Concrete Specification of Deliberative Participation

The general definition offered above needs to be supplemented by more concrete specifications in order to operationalize deliberative participation and deliberative potential. We can first eschew the direct social-structural component of the definition because respondents to a survey have no control of economic, educational, and social conditions that influence equal standing in their everyday political discussion.

1) An operationalization must incorporate some mention of discussion to address conflict or build agreement over difficult issues. Because so many conflictual and therefore difficult issues already exist in politics, some of these might be invoked.

2) Sincerity requires the following, with respect to all people who do not agree with self on the issues:

   a) Willingness to spend time discussing the issues.

   b) Willingness to listen to any reasons offered by those who disagree.

   c) No reasons are considered outside the realm of discussion.

   d) Willingness to give reasons for self's position and to respond to all critiques of others. This willingness must be accompanied by a desire to offer reasons that can be understood and accepted by the others.

   e) A desire to shift self's position to stronger grounds, including adopting positions of contenders.

   f) A desire to find a good accommodation through the best available reasons

   g) Unwillingness to use power or authority to achieve accommodation.

   h) Willingness to continue to deliberate so long as others are sincere.
Sincerity results in a notion of deliberation different than that of a debate. In a debate, participants seek to win their arguments. In a deliberation, participants seek to find the best grounds for accommodation, even if that means revealing to their opponents good arguments for the opponents' positions. This introduces an element of cooperation in deliberation, but it need not eliminate conflict, even intense conflict. Though Gutman and Thompson imply that sincerity requires contenders to respect each other as persons, this need not be the case. Some people may have sufficient respect for the truth that, no matter how despicable their opponents appear to be, they can sincerely wish to deliberate. Unlike Barber, I do not stipulate that deliberation necessarily involves replacing self-interest with concern for the community. As Warren (1992) has argued, reasonable people may well defend certain self-interests against the community. Deliberation, therefore, could result in the assertion of certain individual rights and interests.

3) Universality requires a desire to find grounds of accommodation to which anyone could agree.

4) Equal standing requires:

   a) Willingness to discuss the issues with anyone minimally competent to do so.

   b) Recognition that competence levels may vary, so the deliberator must be willing to discuss issues in a way suitable to the competence of other discussants. For example, Sanders (1997) proposes that less capable individuals can have an effect through testimonials describing personal experiences that bear on a public policy issue.

Finally, should a more concrete specification of deliberative participation contain points specific to the developmental aspect of deliberation? As noted earlier, many authors seem to believe personal and community development will proceed naturally from political discourse over difficult issues. In this view, development appears as a dependent variable influenced by deliberation. Practically, however, survey researchers may want to incorporate issues of development into their measures of deliberative participation to help determine the quality of people's discourse. For example, people who extensively discuss their values in the course of discussing political issues are having higher quality discussions and, indeed, discussions that more closely approximate the theoretical ideal of deliberation. I therefore propose the following development-related points:
5) Development requires:

a) Explicit discussion of self's wants, needs, desires, interests, and capacities, particularly those that are central to personal identity. The discussion of values may fit this description best.

b) Explicit discussion of the relationship between self and others. This especially includes discussion of commitments and responsibilities to groups of others, such as the community. And, it includes discussion of what distinguishes and relates self to others.

Deliberative Participation and Potential: An Operationalization

Deliberative participation as defined above consists of both concrete actions—such as discussing politics—and attitudes—such as wanting to find the most defensible form of accommodation. Thus, any measure of deliberative participation necessarily must also incorporate attitudinal measures. These attitudinal measures can be spoken of separately as measures of deliberative potential because they indicate people have the right attitudes to allow them to deliberate if opportunities arose. In addition, a distinction needs to be made between actual levels of involvement in political discussion and willingness to engage in such discussion. The latter would, again, be an example of deliberative potential.

No doubt, responses to such questions will be influenced by social desirability bias. Nevertheless, the possibility of such bias has not prevented political scientists from developing measures of other forms of political participation, measures that have been rarely checked against actual behavior (Brady, 1999). Political scientists have generally assumed that such measures at least provide some general sense of people's participatory activities. Even if the following deliberative participation measure only measure people's normative positions, it remains valuable. People who possess these norms and are reminded of them should be inclined to deliberate. Naturally, it will be important to test the following measure against behavior. The political views study will obtain a couple measures of behavior, specifically people's willingness to be contacted by email when a deliberative democracy web site is operational and their willingness to be contacted by phone regarding an all-day community deliberation project.

The operationalization below uses two approaches for measuring attitudes relevant to deliberation. One approach asks respondents how strongly they agree or disagree with attitudinal statements. The other asks respondents to indicate what
percent of the time during actual political conversation they would want to engage in activities consistent with these attitudes—such as listening to others.

Other questions ask respondents what percent of the time in real conversations they engage in various activities. This type of question will likely be quite cognitively demanding—as would any question that seeks to obtain an absolute figure for the amount of time people engage in particular activities. The measure below seeks to reduce the cognitive load by encouraging people to remember specific topics they have discussed and recent discussions. In addition, the response scale bears some similarity to a feeling thermometer—with labels of 100% at the right end, 50% in the middle, and 0% at the left. No other labels are presented. In the end, the percent questions may not prove to measure anything other than people's norms. This will, however, be to a degree testable—confirmatory factor analysis can be used to see whether the absolute measures load on the same or different factors than do the normative measures.

---

**Proposed Measure of Deliberative Participation and Potential**

**INTRODUCTION:**

In the 1960s, America was divided by issues such as civil rights for minorities and women's liberation. Today, conflicts continue on such issues as abortion, the environment, who should be president, and whether the country should be run by liberals or conservatives.

Below, please list one or more political issues that are important to you. Mention issues over which you know people disagree. Where possible, mention issues that you've talked about with people—either informally or in a more formal setting like a group meeting. Be sure to list any issues over which you have had a disagreement with someone you know or have come across. Please take your time.

Think back on discussions you have had about the issues you just mentioned. Try to remember both discussions in which you talked with people you agreed with and with people you disagreed with. On average, how many hours a month do you talk with people about these issues? (You can use fractions. Put a zero down if you never talk with anyone. Put a fraction like .5 or .1 down if you rarely talk with anyone.)
Think about all the time you spend in your discussions about the issues you mentioned. What percent of this time do you actually want to be in the discussion?

When you discuss politics with others, what percent of the time do you and they discuss your values?

When you discuss politics with others, what percent of the time do you and they discuss your responsibilities to the community?

Think about all the time you spend in your discussions about the issues you mentioned. What percent of the time do you do the speaking (as opposed to other people speaking)?

Think about all the time you spend in discussions about the issues you mentioned. What percent of all the time you spend in these discussions do you speak with people who agree with you?

When you talk with people who disagree with you about these issues, what percent of the time do you do the talking (as opposed to the other person talking)?

Sometimes people do not talk much about political issues because they do not have good opportunities to do so. In other cases, people simply do not want to talk about political issues. Suppose you had many good opportunities to talk about the issues you mentioned. On average, how many hours a month would you want to talk with people about these issues? You can use fractions.

Imagine you had to talk with someone about the issues you mentioned, but you could decide how much to talk. What percent of the time would you want to do the speaking (as opposed to the other person speaking)?

Now imagine you had to talk with a number of people about the issues you mentioned, but you could decide which people you talk with. What percent of your total discussion time would you want to spend talking with people who agreed with you?

Next, imagine you had to talk with someone you disagree with about the issues you mentioned. What percent of the time would you want to do the speaking?
Finally, think about the time during which you do not talk during a political discussion. When you are talking with people who disagree with you about these issues, what percent of this time would you actually listen to what they are saying?

Whether or not you talk with people about the political issues you mentioned, you no doubt have views about such discussions. The next few questions are about these views. (Agree / Disagree questions)

**Exclusion:**

There is no point in talking about politics because no one who matters would listen to someone like me.

**Talking and Presenting Reasons:**

I want to talk with people who disagree with me about political issues.

I would rather not reveal my political beliefs to someone who would disagree with me.

I would rather not justify my political beliefs to someone who disagrees with me.

**Insuring Communication:**

It is up to the person I am talking with to understand my reasons for my political beliefs.

I want to do my best to help other people understand my reasons for my political views.

It is not my job to figure out what reasons would convince someone my political views are right.

**Listening:**

I do not want to listen to someone defend political beliefs I disagree with.

I want to do my best to understand other people's reasons for taking political views different than mine.

**Change Position:**
I do not want to change my political positions, regardless of the reasons I hear for the other side.

I am motivated to find common ground with people who disagree with me about political issues.

When I hear good arguments for an opposing political view, I should either come up with a good response or change my views.

**Personal Development:**

It is important to bring up my values when I discuss politics.

I would rather not bring up my values when I discuss politics.

**Community Development:**

It's important for me to bring up my community responsibilities when I discuss politics.

I would rather not bring up my community responsibilities when I discuss politics.

**Conclusion**

All the definitions of deliberation considered contained four elements: deliberation addresses conflict or at least seeks to build cooperation, participants must be sincere in wanting to achieve accommodation by reason, they must want the reasons offered to be universally acceptable, and conditions must permit equal standing for anyone to contribute to discussion. I therefore proposed that deliberation consists of an attempt to address conflict or build cooperation by participants sincere in their desire to find the most universally defensible accommodation. This definition must also be seen as implying a key role for deliberation in the development of persons and communities.

Based on this definition, I proposed a number of more specific components for the four elements of deliberation. Many of these components were then tapped by a series of specific questions that compose the deliberative participation and potential measure proposed here. Once data becomes available from the Political Views survey, this measure can be tested for internal coherence—do questions load in expected ways on latent factors, do they have adequate variance, and so forth. The measure can also be used to predict whether respondents were willing
to be contacted to participate on a deliberative web site and in an all-day community deliberation. In addition, the measure can be correlated with a number of other measures present on the Political Views survey—including measures of beliefs opposed to political talk, political knowledge, and consistency of political preferences. The deliberative participation measure should be positively correlated with political knowledge and consistency of preferences.

An important challenge facing this research will be how to combine the various questions on the deliberative participation and potential measure into an overall indicator of deliberative involvement or potential. The notion of deliberation is quite multifaceted. The measure therefore contains questions tapping a wide variety of these facets. Ideally, these questions would be combined in some multiplicative fashion in acknowledgement that political discussion omitting any of the facets of deliberation simply does not constitute deliberation. Doing this, however, would multiply up all the error present in each question, most likely leading to a useless summary statistic. An additive measure would not blow up error, but would also not capture the contingent quality of deliberation. Another possibility would be to identify the nearness of each respondent to a point in a linear space defined by an ideal combination of the question responses.

---

**Bibliography**


Habermas, J. (1991). The Paradigm Shift in Mead. In M. Aboulafia (Eds.), *Philosophy, Social Theory, and the Thought of George Herbert Mead* (pp. 139-168).


