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Deliberative Democracy and Political Decision Making

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Summary and Keywords

Defined expansively as the exchange of politically relevant justifications, political deliberation occurs at many sites in the democratic system. It is also performed by several different types of actors. Here, we review political deliberation based on *who* is deliberating and what *role* these deliberations play in making binding decisions. First, ordinary citizens frequently deliberate in informal settings. While these discussions often fail to live up to the standards outlined by deliberative theorists, they typically correlate with other democratic goods, such as increased political participation. Second, there have been several attempts in recent years to construct the conditions necessary for quality deliberation among citizens by organizing small-group discussions in semi-formal settings. Proponents of such discussions argue that they promote a variety of democratic goods, such as political knowledge and better-justified political decisions, and as such should be incorporated into the formal policymaking process. However, critics of these procedural innovations hold that a more deliberative society is unrealistic or, alternatively, that deliberation is not without drawbacks on its own terms. Third, in a limited number of cases, citizens' deliberations are formally embedded in democratic institutions, serving to advise voters and politicians or directly leading to binding decisions. Finally, political elites deliberate frequently. Opinion leaders attempt to and often succeed in shaping the discourse around issues, while elected officials, bureaucrats, and judges formally deliberate before making almost every binding decision. Surprisingly, though these deliberations happen frequently and likely have substantial effects on policy, they are probably the least studied in the political system, though recent breakthroughs in text analysis offer a path forward to analyzing deliberation among elites more systematically.

Keywords: deliberative democracy, deliberation, group decision making, legitimacy, political decision-making

The Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman summarizes the dual-process theory of judgment and decision-making as a distinction between "thinking fast and thinking slow." The former is implicit and intuitive whereas the latter is explicit and deliberative. Both occur within a single individual. The notion of deliberative democratic decision-making might

be aptly characterized as transposing the latter into a social key—"thinking slow together."

Most people discuss politics from time to time. Such discussion is crucial for fostering interpersonal trust and cultivating social capital (Putnam, 2001), often considered a key component of political participation (Mutz, 2006), and correlates with political knowledge (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). Interpersonal discussion is thus valued as a democratic good by many scholars and is generally encouraged in the broader public.

Despite the near-consensus that people should discuss politics to stay informed and strengthen civic ties, there is also a near-consensus among political scientists that political discussion among ordinary people should not be consequential in political decision-making. Deliberative democratic theory emerged as a challenge to this skepticism by (a) showing how political conversations within the citizenry already do carry weight in the lawmaking process of constitutional democracies; (b) arguing that citizens' ability to use their public voice to influence policy and hold policymakers accountable provides a sound procedural basis for democratic government; and (c) claiming that when citizens engage in giving and asking for reasons with both each other and their government, the government will make better collective decisions (Habermas, 1992).

Though Habermas's (1992) project was primarily about justifying the legitimacy of deliberative democracy as it was already being practiced, many scholars argue that citizens' deliberations should play a more direct role in government decision-making. And indeed, a range of more direct deliberative decision-making practices have begun to emerge throughout the world. Before delving into how deliberation can influence political decision-making, this article first sketches a brief overview of deliberation within the larger political system.

The What, Who, and Why of Deliberation

A conversation is deliberative to the extent that it meets certain standards, such as inclusivity and perspective-taking (Goold et al., 2012). While no instance of deliberation takes place under fully ideal conditions, these standards can serve as a valuable benchmark against which actual deliberation can be evaluated. This article considers any and all exchanges of politically relevant justifications to fall within the scope of deliberation. This sets a broad scope for deliberation, which occurs in many forms at various sites across the political system.

When approaching and evaluating deliberation, it is important to be cognizant of both who is involved and why deliberation is taking place. These occupy different dimensions of deliberative practice. At the most private level of the deliberative system, deliberation can occur within our people's own heads as they attempt to clarify their own judgment on an issue (Goodin, 2000; Goodin & Niemeyer, 2003). At the most public level, deliberation can occur in a public forum in which members of a community must make a political deci-

sion. In both cases, there is a distinct who (one, a few, or many persons) associated with the deliberative practice.

Much political deliberation occurs outside of organized or formal settings, in the form of internal reflection and casual discussions with friends, family, and other acquaintances. Though not institutionalized, these practices underpin a democratic society that relies on citizens' reasoning capacities to guide them through the task of self-government. Understood in this manner, deliberation is much more commonplace and routine than is often assumed, even if many of these informal discussions do not meet all the ideals of deliberative democratic theory. Democratic citizens, as they go about their daily lives, occasionally find themselves in political discussions with friends, family, coworkers, or even strangers. Conversations among peers in civic associations (Putnam, 2001), or even on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook (Sunstein, 2017), can be understood as taking place within these informal spaces.

As the sites of deliberation become more formal and institutionalized—citizens organize themselves into civic organizations and interest groups, seeking to influence the behavior of those with tangible decision-making power—the weak public sphere gives way to the strong public sphere, where political leaders with legitimate authority make binding decisions. The weak public sphere and the strong public sphere each inform one another, and deliberation within and between the two has different effects on political outcomes. Moreover, recent institutional advances have blurred the lines between the strong and the weak public spheres by providing ordinary citizens more opportunities to make binding decisions.

It is also important to account for the reasons why deliberation is taking place and what purpose deliberation serves in the broader deliberative system. Democratic deliberation has been theorized as performing two interrelated tasks (Neblo, 2015). First, it provides an opportunity for citizens to voice their opinions up the ladder of power and to demand that lawmakers be held accountable for their decisions, contributing to the procedural legitimacy of government authority prima facie. Whatever decisions are actually made, that they were made in consultation with the public is important. Second, deliberation may be instrumental in achieving better outcomes at various sites in the democratic system. Sometimes, deliberation may lead to individual reflection and clarification, helping people render their own belief systems more coherent. Other times, people seek to persuade others to adopt their position, or at the very least convince others that the reasons they hold those positions are legitimate. Such an exchange of reasons may produce greater knowledge and mutual understanding. Alternatively, by demanding that politicians account for their decisions, more representative policy may be enacted.

The rest of this article introduces the various ways in which deliberation between ordinary people influences political decision-making. It is organized based on the directness with which deliberation shapes binding decisions such as laws, statutes, executive orders, or referenda. It first examines deliberation in the weak public sphere, which Fraser (1990) describes as the sectors of civil society in which citizens reason together about

public matters but have no formal decision-making power. Though in current political practice such discussions may not influence policy decisions as much as they should, in theory discussion between ordinary people should "filter up" into formal decisions made by government officials. Next, the article examines contexts in which deliberation serves an advisory role—either for voters who can use others' discussions as a heuristic for voting decisions or for elites who are interested in getting beyond surveys to gain deeper understandings of constituency opinion. In these situations, deliberation between ordinary citizens influences political decisions by providing information either to voters or those making policy directly. Finally, it examines directly empowered deliberative institutions. These are cases in which discussions among ordinary citizens have been officially incorporated into some aspect of the political decision-making process and, sometimes, vested with authority to make binding policies. In these contexts, ordinary citizens' deliberations coincide with formal governmental power. By way of comparison, the article briefly considers public deliberation among elites.

Deliberation in Civil Society: Indirect Influence on Political Decisions

Informal political conversation in the weak public sphere has a wide range of effects on politics. Through repeated discussion of public matters, citizens continuously update their own policy positions and their justifications for those positions, as well as their understanding of other people's preferences. Public opinion can be thought of as emerging, in part, from this continuous, informal, interactive process (Habermas, 1962).

A large literature in political science has looked at this aspect of public opinion formation, analyzing informal political conversation and its effects on political engagement using observational data. Though necessarily incomplete, a brief overview of this research provides several key takeaways. First, people tend to talk about politics with like-minded peers who share their views (Bakshy, Messing, & Adamic, 2015; Huckfeldt & Sprague, 1987; Tam Cho, Gimpel, & Hui, 2013), though most do have at least one person who disagrees with them in their discussion network (Huckfeldt, Johnson, & Sprague, 2002; Huckfeldt, Mendez, & Osborn, 2004). This tendency toward homogeneous discussion networks is caused both by a general tendency toward homophily (Klofstad, McClurg, & Rolfe, 2009) and by conscious attempts to avoid uncomfortable disagreement (Lodge & Taber, 2013). Second, heterogeneous and homogeneous discussion networks predict different engagement patterns: heterogeneous discussion networks predict increased tolerance for the other side but lower political participation, while homogeneous networks predict political participation at the cost of less tolerance for the other side (Mutz, 2006). Finally, Cramer's (2016; see also Cramer Walsh, 2004) work argues that the central motivations behind political discussion are frequently to create and maintain a sense of shared identity, rather than participate in policy debates. This, along with work by Conover and Searing (2005) and Conover, Searing, and Crewe (2002), demonstrates that political conversation as practiced in the day-to-day lives of ordinary people may carry

different goals than the consensual public judgment articulated in traditional deliberative democratic theory.

In short, while informal political discussions are an important part of the deliberative system (Mansbridge, 1999), they tend to take place with like-minded peers and often fail to meet essential deliberative standards. Informal discussion is also difficult to aggregate via surveys, which policymakers already tend to dismiss when crafting public policy (Herbst, 1998): if this component of public opinion formation is riddled with ignorance and bias, then why should it contribute anything to actual political decision-making? One simple answer is that it should not (Achen & Bartels, 2016). As public opinion is not generally informed, considered, or stable, the argument goes, the lack of influence ordinary people have on politics is unproblematic, since people would not be able to send a useful signal to their political leaders even if they wanted to.

Deliberative democrats are less pessimistic, arguing for an alternative approach that calls for establishing conditions that would render public opinion more useful for political decision-making. These conditions have come in the form of more formal and institutionalized deliberative practices. This section examines two such practices: deliberative opinion polling (DOP) and the National Issues Forums.

DOP, developed by political scientist James Fishkin and colleagues, is designed to provide a more useful signal of public opinion than what policymakers would otherwise receive via traditional survey instruments. When conducting a DOP, researchers recruit a representative sample of the population and, typically, provide them with transportation and housing to convene in one location for the duration of the session. They then present participants with the proposal to be discussed and take a survey gauging their initial attitudes, knowledge, and preferences. Participants then spend some predetermined amount of time hearing from and questioning experts, interest groups, and other relevant parties regarding the proposal. Once they have been provided with this additional information, they discuss the merits of the proposal among themselves in multiple different discussion groups. At the end of the session, the participants take an exit survey, which measures how attitudes, knowledge, and preferences regarding the proposal have shifted over the course of the session (Fishkin, 2018).

In short, DOP seeks to provide a measure of deliberative public opinion, which is an estimate of what the broader public *would* think if everyone invested the time and resources necessary both to gain knowledge on a given proposal and have a chance to hear a full range of justifications for and against it via a deliberative process. These procedures can serve an important educative role for those who participate. In addition, DOP's representativeness means that the results are, in theory, generalizable. If so, these results can be useful to lawmakers who are interested in obtaining a forward-looking sense of how their constituents would respond to particular public policy proposals in a manner far more systematic than traditional focus groups. At least in theory, then, DOPs can inform decision-makers of something akin to latent public opinion (Key, 1961), which should influence their policymaking behavior if they care about staying in office. However, the advan-

tages of DOP's structure for arriving at adequately deliberative, informed public opinion can potentially be seen as disadvantages for their external validity. By design, DOPs do not recreate the context in which issues are commonly made salient—namely, partisan political conflict—which could undermine their claim to represent what public opinion *would* look like in the real world if an issue was subjected to sustained public debate.

While DOPs are useful for measuring deliberative public opinion, accommodating participants for an extended period of time—as well as soliciting input from experts and interest groups—is resource intensive, making it difficult to conduct on a large scale. The National Issues Forums, developed by the Kettering Foundation, represent an alternative, more cost-effective way to develop and measure deliberative public opinion. While DOPs can require between a day and two weeks of participants' time and often require participants to travel to be a part of a nationally representative sample, National Issues Forums typically take no more than two hours and are increasingly being conducted online using the Kettering Foundation's Common Ground for Action platform. In these forums, small groups of participants are provided with an issue guide that they can review before participating in a structured, moderated deliberation on a predetermined policy issue with their peers. Participants are encouraged by the moderator to incorporate their personal experiences and values into the discussion and to consider tradeoffs associated with specific policy actions, while exchanging reasons for and against said actions with their interlocutors. At the conclusion of the forum, participants are prompted to identify policy areas in which their group has reached common ground and to reflect on how the discussion has changed their thinking about both the issue they discussed and the views of those with whom they typically disagree.

Deliberation in the weak public sphere is a critical component in the construction of public opinion more broadly. While informal discussions among peers play a large role in the process by which individuals come to hold their political judgments, because of its informal nature, these sorts of discussions are not often cleanly translated into political decisions. Additionally, measuring how these processes are translated into public policy is difficult, as determining how political conversations affect individual attitudes and then how these individual attitudes influence policy are intervening steps in the process. Institutionalized deliberative procedures within the weak public sphere are beginning to provide scholars and practitioners of democracy with the tools both to foster and to measure good deliberation in the weak public sphere, allowing them to more directly link the day-to-day processes of interpersonal reasoning about public matters to democratic self-governance.

Thus far, these sorts of deliberative innovations have been shown to increase participants' knowledge about the issues they discuss (Barabas, 2004; Luskin & Fishkin, 1999; Neblo, Esterling, & Lazer, 2018) and their sense of political efficacy (Esterling, Neblo, & Lazer, 2011), neutralize slanted framing effects (Druckman & Nelson, 2003), and reduce attitudinal uncertainty (Gastil & Dillard, 1999). Moreover, the most likely people to change their policy preferences after deliberating are those who gained the most knowledge on the issue, suggesting that opinion change is a result of being more informed

(Luskin, Fishkin, & Iyengar, 2004; Luskin, Fishkin, & Jowell, 2002). These effects seem to be particularly strong when deliberation concerns less salient issues (Farrar et al., 2010), suggesting that deliberative forums can help develop citizens' judgments about issues that might otherwise remain unfamiliar to them.

Additionally, experimental evidence suggests that the mechanism for these deliberative effects lies in part with the shift in goals that deliberation implies. When participants who were deliberating about nuclear power were split into two groups, one in which decisions following deliberation were decided via secret ballot and another that would craft a common statement, participants assigned to the common statement condition saw larger increases in knowledge about the issue and political trust than those in the secret ballot condition (Grönlund, Setälä, & Herne, 2010). This finding provides evidence in favor of deliberative democrats' argument that one of the reasons why deliberation should be expected to produce more mutually justifiable outcomes is that it changes the question posed to the democratic citizen—from "What do I want?" to "What should we do?"—in ways that encourage perspective-taking and compromise (Neblo et al., 2017).

Deliberative practices in these sorts of synthetic settings are not without their critics. As previously stated, one critique of deliberative practices is that ordinary people are simply too ignorant, misinformed, and apathetic to participate in politics in such a deeply involved manner in the first place, so creating these synthetic environments is useless. A more forceful critique has been that deliberation has its own set of drawbacks on its own terms, even in such carefully constructed contexts. Namely, interpersonal deliberation may reinforce existing inequalities along the lines of race (Sanders, 1997) or gender (Karpowitz & Mendelberg, 2014). Furthermore, in any given deliberating group, the particular structure and composition of the group will likely affect the justifications raised and the degree to which they are accepted (Myers, 2017). In particular, politically homogeneous groups have been found to have reinforcing, polarizing effects on their participants (Schkade, Sunstein, & Hastie, 2007). Finally, deliberation has been challenged on more fundamental grounds, with critics charging that deliberative goals are difficult to achieve due to both structural and psychological limitations (Ryfe, 2005) and that the concept has not been adequately defined (Mutz, 2008).

As suggested by Myers and Mendelberg (2013), many of these critiques stem from a relative focus on outcomes in empirical deliberation research without as much attention to the contexts and processes that are central to deliberative democratic theory. As they argue, more research into these latter two components of deliberative practice are particularly important, given that its proponents typically advocate it as a *method* of justification as well as a means to particular ends. If deliberative processes do not meet normative criteria, it can render deliberative outcomes problematic, and social dynamics within deliberative sessions can influence the degree to which these normative criteria are met (Mendelberg, 2002). And if the process of deliberation itself is not what produces civically desirable outcomes (Karpowitz & Mendelberg, 2011), it would call into question whether deliberation per se is normatively desirable.

To be clear, empirical research on deliberative context and processes is far from nonexistent (see Gastil, 2018, for a review). Scholars have examined how deliberation changes when it is online as opposed to in-person (Min, 2007) and when it is synchronous as opposed to asynchronous (McClain, 2009), as well as in relation to the duration of deliberation and whether there are experts present (Carman et al., 2015), among other context- or process-based factors that could affect the extent to which deliberative sessions are likely to satisfy particular normative criteria. Nevertheless, more work is needed to identify the conditions under which mini-publics and other deliberative innovations can more closely approach the standards laid out by the normative theorists who see promise in deliberation as a way to more fully realize democratic self-government.

Deliberation as an Advisory for Voters

When democratic societies set up electoral institutions, they make an implicit assumption that the votes members of the public cast reflect their genuine preferences. When someone votes for a candidate to represent him or her, that vote reflects an endorsement of what that candidate plans to do if elected. When someone votes in favor of a ballot initiative, that vote reflects an endorsement of enacting that initiative into law. However, political scientists have consistently found that the public is often woefully uninformed about the issues on which they regularly cast votes (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996). This does not pose quite as big of a problem for representative democratic institutions—where there are a wide array of information shortcuts, such as partisan cues, available for voters such that they are more likely to cast votes that reflect their preferences (Lau & Redlawsk, 1997, 2001; Lupia, 2015)—as it does for direct democratic institutions such as ballot initiatives and referenda, where fewer such cues are available. Furthermore, the information environment for a particular ballot initiative can become dominated by a well-funded interest group with a stake in the outcome, leading voters to cast votes that, had they spent more time learning about and discussing the issue, they would not have cast. In short, citizens sometimes make decisions via referenda that informed policymakers (and even their more enlightened selves) would regard as detrimental to the public good (Achen & Bartels, 2016).

This does not necessarily mean that referenda are completely unworkable as a mechanism for direct democratic governance. As is the case with partisan representative elections, uninformed voters can use small amounts of information as shortcuts that allow their votes on ballot initiatives to closely resemble those of their more informed peers (Lupia, 1994). In the spirit of providing this information, some states, such as Massachusetts, require all campaigns for or against particular ballot initiatives to disclose their top sources of funding, and this disclosure is included as part of an informational packet sent to all registered voters before such elections are held. In Switzerland, a small number of electoral districts still engage in the annual practice of *Landsgemeinde*, in which referenda are decided by a show of hands after citizens have had an opportunity to publicly articulate reasons for and against them in a public forum. Though this article cannot cover all

the examples when deliberative bodies serves an advisory role for voters, it reviews some of the more notable examples.

Oregon has begun incorporating deliberative forums into its direct democratic institutions. First authorized in 2009 and institutionalized by legislation in 2011, the state's Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) has panels of ordinary citizens meet for five days to discuss a particular ballot measure on which citizens will vote later that year. According to the state's website, "The panel hears directly from campaigns for and against the measure and calls upon policy experts during the multi-day public review. For each measure reviewed, a new panel is convened." At the conclusion of their hearings and discussions, each panel works together to write a Citizens' Statement that includes the panelists' key findings and perspectives on the measure, which is featured prominently in the informational packet the state sends to registered voters before the election. Recent work in political science has found that CIR panels meet reasonable deliberative standards (Knobloch, Gastil, Reedy, & Cramer Walsh, 2013). Furthermore, Citizens' Statements increase Oregon voters' knowledge about the issues surrounding their associated referenda, and some voters use the statements to inform their voting choices (Gastil, Knobloch, Reedy, Henkels, & Cramer, 2018).

In 2004, the Canadian province of British Columbia convened a body of 160 residents to meet roughly every other week over the course of the year to investigate and recommend changes to the province's "first-past-the-post" electoral system (Warren & Pearse, 2008). The public then had a chance to accept or reject the Assembly's recommendation via referendum. Members of the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly were allocated a significant budget to cover members' time, daycare, transportation, and housing accommodations associated with their involvement. Meetings were divided into several phases: in the "learning phase," members heard lectures from experts on various types of electoral models and discussed the pros and cons of those models in small groups. Next, participants entered into a "public hearing phase," in which the members hosted sessions across the province to solicit feedback from their peers on electoral reform, including arguments from interest groups and political parties. During the final three months of the assembly, members deliberated among themselves to first identify the core values that should be used as criteria by which to judge an electoral system—the members settled on proportionality, local representation, and vote choice—and then used those criteria to recommend an electoral system for adoption.[1]

Though the participants in the Citizens' Assembly were not perfectly representative of the population—skewing more White, older, and further educated—many other aspects of the deliberations within the Assembly met normative criteria (Warren & Pearse, 2008). Blais, Carty, and Fournier (2008) found that members of the Assembly connected their agreed-upon core values to the voting institution that aligned with those values. They also found no evidence that the most informed members in the Assembly led the decision-making process, implying that deliberations within the Assembly met standards of equality, even if recruitment did not result in a perfectly representative sample. Ratner (2008) surveyed members of the Assembly asking them about deliberations in the Assembly versus delib-

erations in their normal day-to-day lives and found that members marked deliberations in the Assembly as meeting many more normative criteria than their regular day-to-day discussions.

The CIR and Citizens' Assembly are two of the more prominent and well-researched examples of deliberative institutions serving an advisory role for citizens, but they are hardly the only cases. A similar effort to the British Columbia case took place in Australia, where 150 citizens—one from each electoral district—met to deliberate about and recommend changes to Australia's electoral system over the course of one day (Dryzek, 2009). Ireland has also used the Citizen Assembly process to help draft the language for recent national referenda on enacting marriage equality and allowing abortion to be regulated by its legislature as opposed to banned in its constitution (Palese, 2018).

As a whole, these examples show wide variation in the scope and resource intensiveness of these types of deliberative institutions. And while institutional context and the specific contours of the participatory process can affect the degree to which such citizen-led initiatives are in fact empowered (Lang, 2007), all of these examples represent an important step in addressing problems of *scale* in linking deliberation with political decision-making: while it would be unreasonable to expect all citizens to become well informed about the issues at stake for a particular ballot initiative, these deliberative institutions have been able to come closer to approximating this level of sophistication by giving all of its voters the opportunity to use statements from a subset of citizens as an informational shortcut.

Deliberation as Advisory for Elites

Deliberative democrats hold that political decisions are more legitimate if they are made in consultation with all who will be affected by them. Whether the decision-makers are elected officials or bureaucrats, there are multiple avenues for democratic elites to reciprocally consult with the people who will be affected by their decisions. Not only can input from citizens serve an important advisory role, aiding in the crafting and implementation of public policy, citizens who have been given an opportunity to serve in this advisory capacity will likely regard the eventual decisions made as more legitimate. Next the article outlines several cases of deliberation serving this advisory role for elites. Importantly, these cases can be interpreted as lawmakers' formalized attempts at gauging deliberative public opinion, which was discussed earlier.

For readers in the United States, perhaps the most familiar case of deliberation as advisory for elites is the town hall, where elected representatives take questions from constituents in a public forum. In practice, the degree to which town halls meet reasonable standards of deliberation is highly variable (Lazer, Neblo, & Esterling, 2009). If those in attendance are for the most part committed partisans with no interest in being persuaded, or if the leader willfully misrepresents his or her record or position, then it is unlikely that the meeting will prove to be consequential or in any way productive. However, there are instances in which town halls can do a better job of serving as an advisory role for

leaders and instances in which leaders can use these deliberative moments to persuade genuinely interested citizens to endorse their position and serve as proxies in the larger political system (Lazer, Sokhey, Neblo, & Esterling, 2015). In an instructive example, Minozzi et al. (2015) found that inviting a representative sample of the members' constituents, as opposed to leaving attendance open to the public, changed how members answered participants' questions and how persuasive those answers were. When town halls are open to the general public, the people who attend are generally committed partisans, and representatives adjust their answers accordingly: they throw red meat to their core supporters and deflect the questions—often phrased simply as criticism—from their diehard opponents. When this context changes, and the audience is a representative sample of their constituents—many of whom are not committed partisans—members have more of an incentive to directly address questions and articulate their positions with nuance. Minozzi et al. found that, in this context, participants in this setting were more likely to agree with their representative's positions on issues, as well as expressed higher levels of trust, approval, and willingness to vote for them.

Importantly, rather than reinforcing existing disparities in participation along dimensions of race, age, and socioeconomic status, the citizens who indicated a willingness to attend these deliberative town halls and did in fact attend them were disproportionately likely to be in a demographic group that traditionally votes at lower rates (Neblo et al., 2010). This suggests that these deliberative procedures can provide an alternate form of representation for those who are currently less likely to participate in traditional liberal democratic processes such as elections. Furthermore, follow-up conversations with the members and their staffers revealed that this sort of event provided a far clearer signal to the representative as to what deliberative public opinion looked like among the constituents than either public opinion polling or traditional town halls. In short, deliberative procedures that serve an advisory role for elites can expand both politicians' representational capacities and citizens' abilities to participate in the democratic process, suggesting benefits on both sides of the constituent–representative relationship (Neblo, Esterling, & Lazer, 2018).

Innovations in representatives' "homestyles" (Fenno, 1978) are far from the only case in which deliberation can play an advisory role for elites. Looking again at Oregon, which sought to reform how it allocated health services in the early 1990s, shows how bureaucratic institutions can use deliberative procedures to inform public policy decisions. Faced with the difficult decision of which medical procedures to cover in public health plans within their associated cost constraints, the state established the Health Services Commission, an 11-member panel of policy experts, and charged it with determining which conditions would be covered for treatment and which would not (Jacobs, Marmor, & Oberlander, 1998). The Commission was required by legislation to make its decisions in consultation with the state's residents, and in this spirit it convened a series of town halls across the state to get a sense of how citizens prioritized different values and considered their associated tradeoffs. Attendance was open to the public, which in this case presented a slightly different problem than that encountered in representatives' town halls: rather than being dominated by diehard partisans, attendance for these meetings was

"predictably skewed . . . toward a narrow band of professionals and citizens of high socioeconomic status" (Fung, 2003, p. 357), with the uninsured being disproportionately underrepresented.

However, among the nonrepresentative sample of Oregonians who were able to participate, the discussions were reflective, informed, and substantively useful in guiding the experts' decisions going forward. The eventual list of treatments for specific conditions that the Commission recommended be covered by the state's public health insurance plan emphasized prevention and quality of life, the two values that participants ranked particularly highly after having discussed the benefits and tradeoffs associated with them and other competing values. Cost-effectiveness and equity were also ranked highly, with other values such as personal choice and responsibility, length of life, and chemical dependency receiving less priority from participating citizens (Nagel, 1992). Importantly, as Fung (2003) observes, the health plan resulting from this consultative process was substantively successful. In the years immediately following the implementation of the Commission's recommendations, at a time when other states were cutting back on public health services, Oregon was able to expand Medicaid coverage to everyone below the poverty line, the uninsured rate fell by roughly a third, and the state was able to cover *more* medical treatments than it had been able to under its previous Medicaid package, allaying fears that the process would result in rationing. To this day, the Oregon Health Plan remains highly popular in the state, with a referendum raising new taxes to offset a decrease in the federal government's contribution to the plan passing by a 20-point margin in early 2018 (Radnovich, 2018).

There are a variety of ways in which decision-makers at various points in the democratic system can both legitimate and substantively improve their decisions by consulting with those who have a stake in their outcome. Structured the right way, deliberation can serve a productive advisory role for elite decision-makers. As is the case with many other forms of formal deliberative practice, it is important that policymakers interested in using deliberative procedures to solicit input from citizens pay attention to how they publicize and recruit for the sessions they hold. Opening all events to any and all members of the public who are interested, with no effort to construct a representative sample of the stakeholding population for some deliberative sessions, runs the risk of attracting a disproportionately advantaged set of participants, which in turn surely affects the content of the advice leaders receive.

Directly Empowered Deliberative Institutions

Juries represent the most common case in which a deliberative body comprised of ordinary citizens is empowered to make decisions with binding legal authority. To that end, there is a rich literature on the substance and consequences of jury deliberation. In line with the broader claims deliberative democrats make regarding deliberation's civic potential, citizens who participate on a jury that reaches a verdict have been shown to become more likely to vote in subsequent elections—while citizens whose juries did not

reach a verdict or who reported for jury duty but were not selected did not see analogous increases in turnout (Gastil, Deess, & Weiser, 2002). In experimental settings, participants who deliberate together regarding the evidence presented in a trial reach different judgments than those who evaluate the trial on their own, though deliberation did not reduce the propensity to misremember details from the trial (Ruva, McEvoy, & Bryant, 2007). To be clear, "different" in this case does not necessarily mean "better." Experimental work on mock jury deliberations has found that deliberation can reduce jurors' propensity to be more punitive toward unattractive defendants (Patry, 2008) but has also found that it can exacerbate racial biases (Lynch & Haney, 2009). Crucially, racial diversity in the composition of juries has been shown to mitigate these effects, both by encouraging a broader range of perspectives to be communicated during deliberation and by simply making racial inequality more salient for jurors as they approach discussion (Sommers, 2006). Finally, moving out of the lab and into the real world, observational work in the context of actual jurors' experiences has found that the discussions that take place in these settings meets important deliberative standards (Gastil, Burkhalter, & Black, 2007).

In rare instances, deliberative institutions are granted policymaking power of their own. Participatory budgeting, an institution first enacted in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in the late 1980s (Wampler, 2010) that has spread in various forms to cities around the world—including the United States (Gilman, 2016)—remains the most prominent example of such an institution. Its general framework is outlined next, though its procedures are adaptable to different municipalities' institutional structures.

The basic structure is as follows: the city is subdivided into communities (wards, precincts, or some other unit small enough to be manageable), which then hold a series of meetings to review the implementation of the previous year's budget, establish priorities for the current year's budget, and, finally, decide among themselves which projects their constituency would like to fund for the upcoming year. The communities usually then elect delegates to represent them in subsequent, city-wide meetings where each subunit's proposals are discussed and subjected to similar prioritization. Representatives from the city government and policy experts are often present to advise on how much certain projects will cost and how feasible they may be, and cities can vary widely in the scope of projects they allow to be funded through the participatory process. In Porto Alegre, the participatory budget funds infrastructure projects such as housing, schools, or sewage lines, while the participatory budgeting processes that have been implemented thus far in the United States have often been more limited, concerning less costly projects such as neighborhood beautification or limited road maintenance.

The degree to which the participatory budgeting process is directly empowered depends on what happens after the community makes its decision as to which projects it wants to fund. In Porto Alegre, the mayor has the formal authority to veto the proposal, but this authority has never been used, and, even in the event that it is used, the decision can be overridden. In other cities, the proposal is nonbinding and only serves as a recommendation to elected officials.

Certain important dimensions of the participatory budgeting process are likely to affect its success in a particular city. The first dimension, as alluded to earlier, is empowerment. If the recommendations made by the deliberative institution can simply be ignored by elected officials, then citizens are unlikely to perceive a strong incentive to participate. Second, also alluded to previously, is scope: the larger a share of the city's budget that is allocated to the deliberative institution, the greater incentive there is for mobilization around the institution and the greater the share of citizens who will participate. Third, as is the case with the success of deliberative institutions more generally, is representation. While broadening the size and scope of the participatory budget will incentivize participation among low-income or otherwise marginalized groups, formal rules can (and should) be incorporated to ensure their representation—especially during the later stages of the process. Different directly empowered deliberative institutions will also set different boundaries around who is allowed to participate. While voting within these deliberative assemblies is generally limited to those who reside within the given jurisdiction, age and citizenship requirements can vary wildly. A recent participatory budgeting process in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for example, allowed participation from any city resident above the age of 12, regardless of citizenship.

Cases of participatory budgeting processes that are highly empowered and broad in scope are rare, but evidence suggests that they are the most successful. In Porto Alegre, the participatory budgeting process was instrumental in reducing corruption; increasing access to health services, education, and basic urban infrastructure such as public sanitation; and building social capital through a proliferation of civic associations that organized around the budgeting process (Fung, 2003). Cases with narrower scopes, however, are still suggestive of the promise that deliberative institutions hold—particularly for citizens who do not feel adequately represented by the electoral process. As Gilman (2016) observed, a participatory budget in one city council district in New York City saw more citizens participate than had voted in the last municipal election. As was the case with the experiment in deliberative town halls, directly empowered deliberative institutions offer an opportunity for those who typically opt out of traditional democratic institutions—or are formally barred from them—to have a say in their communities' collective allocation of resources.

Deliberation Among Elites

While deliberative democrats have focused most of their attention on the capacities of ordinary citizens, a great deal of deliberation takes place among political elites. Particularly in the media, elite actors—or "opinion leaders"—function as a go-between for civil society and elected officials, organizing political information and disseminating arguments as to how it should be understood. Though deliberations among those who are unaffectionately referred to as "pundits" may often fall short on a variety of normative criteria, they nevertheless entail an exchange of politically relevant justifications.

Noel's (2012) work has provided an important advance in quantitative research linking elite deliberation in the media and binding decisions among elected officials. Using a data set of opinion articles written at decade intervals over the previous century, Noel modeled whether a given piece was likely to take a position on particular issues, conditional on the ideological nature of the outlet in which it appeared. He found that issue polarization in elite discourse preceded similar polarization on analogous issues in Congress. Noel argues that the time sequence involved—polarization in elite discourse comes first, with polarization in Congress coming second—suggests a causal process. Rather than simply following votes, the patterns identified by Noel can be taken as evidence of persuasion on the merits, leading ideological coalitions to become more coherent over time, putting pressure on their elected officials to follow suit. While Noel does not identify the specific mechanisms of persuasion itself, his work is evidence of deliberative processes having effects on eventual political decisions.

This is not to say that deliberation ends when one enters the "strong public sphere," or the sites of deliberation with tangible decision-making power. Much like members of the public, elected officials may seek to influence each other's beliefs and behavior through deliberation—often articulated in speeches given before lawmaking bodies—though it is also possible that such deliberations may just be cheap talk among representatives whose primary goal is to win reelection (Mayhew, 1974). Game theoretic models of legislative decision-making doubt that deliberation in this context has any effects on voting behavior within legislative chambers (Krehbiel, 1998) or on attitudes in general (Landa & Meirowitz, 2009). However, in the Supreme Court, the quality of deliberation has been shown to have substantive effects on outcomes. For instance, Johnson, Wahlbeck, and Spriggs (2006) found that Supreme Court justices were in some cases persuaded by higher quality oral arguments. Other work on the Supreme Court has found that Supreme Court opinions borrow language from lower court opinions (Corley, Collins, & Calvin, 2011), indicating a transmission of argumentation between elite actors from related but different institutions. Recent scholarship has also found evidence of deliberation having persuasive effects in the federal bureaucracy, with members of the Federal Open Markets Commission updating their beliefs based on the sequential exchange of information during their board meetings (López-Moctezuma, 2016).

Scholars have come up with a variety of ways to measure deliberation among policymakers. The most prominent operationalization is the Discourse Quality Index (DQI), which was developed to evaluate the extent to which speech acts in parliamentary discourse meet various deliberative standards and was first applied to the British House of Commons (Steenbergen, Bächtinger, Spörndli, & Steiner, 2003). Subsequent work using the DQI to analyze several parliaments in Europe and the United States (Steiner, Bächtinger, Spörndli, & Steenbergen, 2005), as well the European Parliament (Lord & Tamvaki, 2013), has provided leverage on which institutional arrangements are more likely to produce parliamentary debate that more closely approaches deliberative ideals. That discourse quality has generally not been associated with substantive changes in the deci-

sions legislatures make (Bächtiger, Spörndli, Steenbergen, &Steiner, 2005) is suggestive evidence in favor of the contention that politicians' deliberations are just cheap talk.

Going forward, more work is needed to identify the mechanisms by which discourse amongst elites influences political decision-making. Noel (2012) has established the important empirical pattern that pundits precede politicians but does not establish how those effects are generated. Additionally, more research is needed into what substantive effects higher quality parliamentary discourse could have apart from altering members' voting behavior. Do countries whose legislatures' debates exhibit higher deliberative quality see lower levels of partisan polarization? Are they likely to produce a more deliberative mass public? While legislative discourse that more closely approximates deliberative ideals is certainly desirable for its own sake, further establishing what effects higher discourse quality among elites may have in the broader deliberative system will be a crucial component of the deliberative project going forward.

Conclusion

This article has summarized the various roles deliberation plays in the political system. It began by highlighting how interpersonal deliberation among ordinary citizens can lead to differing patterns of tolerance and participation and substantive changes in individuals' opinions about specific issues, as well as producing more trust in government and political knowledge. These deliberations can be thought of as changing individual psychologies, but they also have consequences in the binding decisions government officials make, even if the deliberations themselves are vested with no formal authority. Next, the article discussed several instances in which deliberation among ordinary citizens has functioned to orient voters and elites in their decision-making by providing them with information. In these contexts, a limited number of ordinary citizens deliberating among themselves plays a vital role in the decision-making processes of both voters and policymakers. Finally, the article reviewed several cases in which citizens' deliberations were vested with formal power, concluding with a review of the research on elite deliberation.

As hopefully became clear throughout these sections, the question of how deliberation affects decision-making has been answered by a wide variety of scholars from different disciplines, across several countries, at different sites within the deliberative system. It has been a rich source of discussion between theorists and empirical social scientists and has occasionally crossed over the bounds of research into the realm of an applied science. As more applications emerge, this will allow for more research opportunities in the future, which should in turn reinforce knowledge of best practices. However, though this has been such a rich cross-disciplinary endeavor, many more questions are left to be answered: What conditions are necessary and sufficient for deliberation to lead to its potential benefits while preserving equality? In what other contexts might citizen advisory boards like the Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review and the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly be effective? To what extent do citizen advisory boards actually change the behavior of policymakers? Do they do so to a greater extent than public opinion as it is normal-

ly measured on a representative survey? And finally, what is the role that deliberation plays in legislative and executive bodies? In short, though research on various components of the deliberative system has proliferated of late, there is much work left to be done.

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Notes:

(1.) At the conclusion of their deliberations, an overwhelming majority of the Assembly recommended that British Columbia's first-past-the-post electoral system should be replaced with a single transferable vote (also known as ranked-choice voting) system. This recommendation was then submitted to the public in a referendum in May 2005. Despite only attracting the endorsement of one major political party, the Greens, the Yes vote won majority support in 77 of the province's 79 districts. However, it only received 57% of the popular vote, falling just short of adoption. A subsequent referendum held in May 2009 saw diminished support, with the single transferable vote proposal only receiving 39% of the popular vote.

Deliberative Democracy and Political Decision Making

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