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Five Assumptions Academics Make About Public Deliberation, And Why They Deserve Rethinking

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Abstract

Academic research on public dialogue and deliberation is abundant and sophisticated. This body of multi-disciplinary scholarship draws on the insights of political theory and case studies, such that much is known about the promise and practical nuances of designing engagement processes with authentically deliberative outcomes. The socio-historical and institutional contexts in which public deliberation is organized and practitioners make their living are less well-studied. This article uses a multi-method study of deliberation as a strategic action field (SAF) in order to reconsider common assumptions about deliberation practice. Based on practitioners' shared experiences and everyday struggles, I challenge researchers to develop deeper analyses of 1) change and power, 2) reproduction of inequality, 3) stability and settlement, 4) markets and politics, and 5) crises and opportunities in the field. Given expanding demand for deliberative remedies and converging strategies and discourses across related SAFs, this new research agenda is a timely addition to both deliberation scholarship and comparative historical sociology.

Keywords

public deliberation, strategic action fields, social movements, institutions, comparative historical sociology

Acknowledgements

FIVE ASSUMPTIONS ACADEMICS MAKE ABOUT PUBLIC DELIBERATION, AND WHY THEY DESERVE RETHINKING

The scholarly literature on deliberative democracy is overwhelmingly rich and nuanced. Ranging from the insights of foundational thinkers to cutting-edge political theory to empirical case studies, the multi-disciplinary field has developed a coherent shared language and a wide-ranging set of methodological tools for investigating the norms of deliberation and the ways in which they can be achieved productively in diverse settings. This is one area in which the ivory tower has cultivated real world relevance—with researchers developing intimate connections with actual projects and practitioners, and in many cases, becoming scholar-practitioners or "pracademics" themselves. This journal itself represents one such effort to bring together academics, professional facilitators, and field leaders in fruitful discussion.

Because of these synergies, we know a lot about the promise of deliberative democracy through ground-level case studies and "micro"-level analyses of the discourse within (Perrin 2006; Polletta and Lee 2006; Schneiderhan and Khan 2008). We also know much about the kinds of immediate and longer-term outcomes public deliberation can produce at the community level, including improved relationships, decision-making, and civic capacity (Briggs 2008; Carcasson 2009). Still other "macro"-level scholars have provided assessments of the character of informal deliberation in the larger society, and its relationship to political life and the health of the public sphere (Benhabib 1996; Dryzek 1990; Hendriks 2006). Additionally, numerous review articles, textbooks, handbooks, foundation-sponsored issue papers, and edited volumes evaluate the state of deliberative scholarship and practice.[1]

Nevertheless, as Koller argues, "the design of deliberation studies…tends to be quite ahistorical" (2010:277). The study of the actual socio-historical contexts[2] in which public deliberation itself is organized and public deliberation practitioners make their livings is not well-developed (Beierle and Cayford 2002; Glock-Grueneich and Ross 2008; Hendriks 2008). The field of professional public engagement facilitation developed in the 1980s and 1990s, building on

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[1] There are far too many to list here. In addition to Fung and Wright (2003) and Gastil and Levine (2005), Levine, Fung, and Gastil (2005) list five edited volumes on the subject. Gastil (2008) provides an overview of the state of scholarship.

[2] "Socio-historical contexts" refers to the location of the development of deliberation in particular places and during particular eras, as part of dynamic social, economic, and political processes. Research providing a precise accounting of such contexts in sociology is typically categorized as "comparative historical" research.

innovations in community mediation, urban planning, negotiated rulemaking, and environmental conflict resolution (Gastil 2009; Harrington 1988; Harrington and Merry 1988; Lukensmeyer 2011; McQuarrie 2007; Morrill and Owen-Smith 2002; Senger 2003). This "veritable revolution…in the formation of organizations and a 'profession' devoted to the participation of ordinary citizens" has produced an "organizational infrastructure for public deliberation" (Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini 2009:136). Major professional associations in the field today, the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2, founded in 1990) and the National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD, founded in 2002), together boast over 1,000 U.S. members.[3] With notable exceptions, few scholars have conducted sociological analyses of the strategic and political settings of dialogue and deliberation processes (Bingham, Nabatchi, and O'Leary 2005; Hendriks 2006; Ryfe 2007), or given much attention to the burgeoning deliberation consulting industry (Hendriks and Carson 2008; Leighninger 2006; Ryfe 2002). This is true despite the recognition that "good deliberation is not self-generating," and most deliberative processes require some form of top-down organization and facilitation (Carson and Lewanski 2008; Fischer 2004; Levine, Fung, and Gastil 2005:3).

That those concerned with the quality of deliberative discourse and democratic decision-making have overlooked the comparative historical context of field development is perfectly understandable, but neglecting the production and consumption dynamics of deliberation consulting comes at a cost. Building on the work of the scholars cited in the previous paragraph, and on the insights of sociological theory on organizations and social movements, this article argues that these oversights represent a missed opportunity for deliberative democratic scholars. By better understanding key dynamics in the field from the perspective of practitioners, we can investigate how assumptions about public deliberation in current scholarship might limit deeper study of micro-level deliberative practice, community-level deliberative outcomes, and the macro-level health of the public sphere.

Using the results of a four-year, multi-method field study of the public deliberation field, this article begins such a project by investigating five common assumptions about public deliberation. For each assumption, I provide empirical support for these beliefs, followed by data that suggests further investigation is

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[3] The IAP2 was recently reorganized as an international federation with Affiliates in the US, UK and Ireland, Southern Africa, France, Canada, and Australasia; the Australasia Affiliate has over 900 members and the US Affiliate has over 400 members. The NCDD has 1,500 members from the US and 40 other countries, and reaches another 22,000 through email newsletters. Membership figures were self-reported on organization websites as of July 2011 (http://blog.iap2usa.org/, http://www.iap2.org.au/ and http://ncdd.org/about). The Canadian Community for Dialogue and Deliberation was founded in 2006 and does not have a comparable paid membership category.

necessary. Then I describe the potential contributions contemporary sociological theory, particularly regarding "strategic action fields," can make to reconciling the assumptions with the contradictory data collected. I conclude by proposing a new agenda for comparative historical research on the complex and challenging environment the deliberation SAF faces in the twenty-first century.

STUDYING DELIBERATION AS A STRATEGIC ACTION FIELD

Fligstein and McAdam have defined a "strategic action field" (SAF) as "a meso-level social order where actors (who can be individual or collective) interact with knowledge of one another under a set of common understandings about the purposes of the field, the relationships in the field (including who has power and why), and the field's rules" (2011:3). The authors note that many scholars have increasingly focused on the nexus of social movements and organizations, but argue for an even more comprehensive synthesis that can reveal social life itself as "a complex web of strategic action fields" (2011:2). One advantage of Fligstein and McAdam's perspective is that it emphasizes the diverse relationships such fields have with each other, both in terms of hierarchical relationships between SAFs, nesting within SAFs, and mutual dependence and recurring ties with related SAFs.[4] Regarding the parameters of an SAF, the authors argue that "the boundaries of SAFs are not fixed, but shift depending on the definition of the situation and the issues at stake" (2011:2).

Such a description aptly summarizes the dialogue and deliberation field, which maintains recurring ties with distinct SAFs such as alternative dispute resolution, and is nested within larger SAFs like the democracy reform field, which includes SAFs devoted to electoral participation and other forms of participatory engagement. Individuals within the dialogue and deliberation field are themselves members of less closely-related fields, as when a facilitator for nuclear waste decision-making processes is clearly a strategic player in the SAF that includes the nuclear industry, environmental activists, regulators, and policymakers.

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[4] A community theater may belong, for instance, to the SAF of community organizations in a particular city, while it also belongs to the national non-profit theater SAF and the larger non-profit performing arts SAF in the United States (Lee and Long Lingo 2011). The situational orientation in the first instance might be around competition in funding cycles and collaboration on local festivals, in the second around shared management challenges and artistic innovations, and in the third around lobbying efforts for increased federal funding of arts education. The location for field interactions and communications might be a monthly Chamber of Commerce meeting, the annual conferences of Theater Communications Group, and quadrennial national non-profit performing arts conventions, respectively—in addition to electronic communications, listservs, and newsletters.

The theory of strategic action fields also allows us to understand the different kinds of roles actors in the field may take at different times depending on the situation, as when a given organization may serve, alternately, as a stakeholder, client, sponsor, or training institution. A university, for example, may provide an institutional home for researchers of deliberation and credential future practitioners, while it also sponsors deliberative dialogues on local planning as a community stakeholder, and is a client of practitioners using deliberative methodologies to conduct internal strategic planning. The theory of strategic action fields is robust enough to encompass the interactions and discourses centered on public deliberation by including strategic actors of different profit orientations, sectors, and organizational types.[5]

The theory of fields enables a definition of the terms of our study that is neither too vague, nor more precise than the fuzzy boundaries of the dialogue and deliberation field will allow. The field of actors involved in deliberative democracy is "complex, diffuse, and diverse" (Leighninger 2009:3), and given that we seek to understand the field as part of a "complex web," isolating it is not particularly desirable for understanding its connections to and struggles against other fields. Not least, the field has emerged rapidly and is undergoing constant change, and the theory of strategic action fields helps us to understand the particular incremental shifts and sudden shocks or ruptures that have shaped its historical development.

The professional consultant from California, the non-profit executive from Connecticut, the minister from Texas, the rural development expert from North Dakota, the academic from Colorado, the foundation executive from New York City, the think tank staffer from DC, the therapist from Virginia, the EEO officer from Nevada, the deliberation organization staffer from Ohio: what draws these diverse people together from other SAFs and what do they share? While NCDD, IAP2, and other associations play an important organizing role, field actors are not limited to those groups' memberships. Using Fligstein and McAdam's definition, I focus on the deliberation field as one in which different actors interact strategically with one another and share common understandings about those interactions and their meanings. As such, I define the dialogue and

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[5] As I argue below, researchers have often limited treatments of the field to particular categories of organization, such as non-profit-sector actors. Such distinctions often make sense, as when strategic actors define their field as excluding for-profit entities and interact solely with each other; see Lee and Long Lingo (2011) on similar distinctions in the non-profit performing arts field. In the dialogue and deliberation field, such a focus precludes an assessment of the extent to which for-profit and state actors engage with not-for-profit organizations and vice versa.

deliberation field in this study as primarily encompassing all actors who identify themselves as members of the dialogue and deliberation community.[6]

Such a definition is broad enough to encompass a wide range of actors, but also narrow enough to exclude actors like schoolteachers who could be understood as engaging in dialogue and deliberation facilitation, but do not by and large see themselves as part of the community. By focusing on those who identify themselves as dialogue and deliberation practitioners, we can investigate those sites and situations in which they are brought together to communicate and interact with each other, resulting in broad areas of shared agreement and common interpretive frames. But we can also understand the tensions and divergent interpretations in the field that reflect the "constant jockeying going on" (Fligstein and McAdam 2011:5). The meanings actors bring to these situations are multi-dimensional, and deserve extensive qualitative analysis to unpack embedded assumptions, mutual orientations, and topics of contention.

The analysis in this paper draws on a multi-method field study of dialogue and deliberation actors conducted by the author from 2006 through 2010 at field sites in major cities in the US and Canada, under a human subjects research protocol approved by Lafayette College. The project employed techniques appropriate for a "deterritorialized ethnography" (Merry 2000:130) of a multi-sited "portable community" (Chayko 2008) of mobile, dispersed professionals. Using grounded theory, a qualitative research method emphasizing triangulation of data sources and dialogue with subjects, the ethnographic investigation was designed to foster an iterative, comparative process of theory-building and analysis-testing in multiple research sites (McCann 2008; Scheppele 2004). By comparing data from a variety of settings, sources, and perspectives, this type of qualitative research across institutional domains and participant categories ensures theoretical saturation (Charmaz 2006) and "looks to the logics of particular contexts as a way of illuminating complex interrelationships among political,

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[6] While this definition may not be especially satisfying for those who would like to operationalize essential qualities that make a particular actor's practice deliberative or not, it accords with the strategy of Gross, Medvetz, and Russell, who focus in their research on the conservative movement on "a collective identity that evolves in the course of struggles and collaborations over meaning." According to the authors, researchers should focus on "the social relations through which particular meanings come to be defined…within a given sociohistorical milieu, as well as on the processes through which individuals, groups, and movements come to adopt these meanings as their own and mobilize around them…. It is the researcher's duty to determine empirically where the category's boundary lies in any given sociohistorical setting. Among the many social processes that help to determine the placement of this boundary are the group-making activities of those who identify themselves" with the label (2011:30). This emphasis on evolving processes of self-definition in comparative historical research precludes a priori definitions of deliberation practice; such a move would prevent an understanding of how the meaning and boundaries of deliberation may have changed over time as the field has developed, as suggested in the analysis of Assumption Five.

legal, historical, social, economic, and cultural elements" (Scheppele 2004:390). In accordance with the principles of grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 1967), I shared preliminary findings from the research with practitioners (at deliberation and public administration conferences, on an interactive public website, and in an international webinar) in order to confirm and clarify emerging themes. This process resulted in the production and sharing of new data analysis on the survey website in response to discussions on research that would be helpful to practitioners. Data employed in this analysis include feedback collected from practitioners during these presentations. While deliberation practitioners generously provided commentary on the project, I take full responsibility for all errors and limitations of the research.

Fieldwork

In order to get a closer perspective on practices in the public deliberation field, I conducted extensive participant observation in various training and certification venues and professional conferences: a weeklong public participation facilitation certification course, three more specialized training sessions, two national and two international professional association conferences, a deliberation methods conference, monthly webinars and teleconferences, and "in-world" meetings, trainings, and lectures in Second Life. These field experiences provide an ideal perspective on the shared concerns and conflicts of deliberation practitioners regarding professional development and field advancement.

In addition, I sought to understand stakeholder, volunteer, and client perspectives on professional deliberation facilitation through the lens of major national-scale public and non-profit sector deliberation projects. Having been trained in deliberation facilitation, I served as a volunteer table facilitator at a multi-site deliberative meeting on New Orleans redevelopment. As part of a larger research collaborative, I had full access to one five-day meeting with four separate deliberative events, allowing for observation of facilitator training, table dialogues, theming sessions, and backstage interactions between the deliberation consultants and their employers. The team also conducted pre- and post-surveys of a random sample of conference participants and intensive interviews with the clients and the chief process facilitator regarding process outcomes (for a detailed description of the participant survey and project study, see Lee and Long Lingo, 2011). When referencing data from observations, the specific fieldwork setting (a training course, conference, etc.) is described in the text and cited parenthetically as "field notes."

Informal Interviews

I conducted informal interviews and follow-up communications with over fifty individuals over the course of the fieldwork. These were conducted over the

phone and in person, and lasted from thirty minutes to multiple hours over the course of months and years. Interviewees were selected for their diversity and their ability to reveal reflections and backstage discussions on the activities observed, and represented all corners of the field and beyond. The sample included: founders and leaders of professional associations; directors, professional facilitators, and staff members of deliberation facilitation and funding organizations; themers (people who collect "gems" and digest the content of deliberative sessions into themes); process recorders and an internal process "journalist"; former practitioners; current independent practitioners within large and small deliberation consultancies in the US, EU, Canada, and Australia; practitioners within full-service consultancies such as engineering firms; public administrators and internal agency facilitators; stakeholder management and deliberation software developers and entrepreneurs; academics; pracademics; civic engagement institute founders; amateur table facilitators; facilitation trainers; facilitation trainees; and attendees of a facilitation certificate program. Because the currency of the field is non-hierarchical and reciprocal discussion, these conversations were intensive and open-ended, commonly occurring in offices and at deliberative events and conferences, but also in informal settings in airports, hotel common spaces, and cars, and over meals in bars and restaurants. I have also been interviewed by former interviewees.

In cases where interviews were not recorded and transcribed, questions and answers were reconstructed from field jottings as quickly as possible after the conversation took place and stored in electronic document files, with notation for exact phrasing or paraphrasing. Electronic communications were imported from email software to the interview file database. Subsequent to data collection, electronic files were coded inductively for emergent themes. Data from interviews is cited parenthetically as "interview transcript," which indicates exact phrasing, or "field notes." In order to protect confidentiality, some individuals and organizations are identified with pseudonyms, and some minor identifying details have been changed. The desire to protect confidentiality has been balanced with bibliographic citation and identification of publicly-promoted methods, public figures, and organizations with historical importance in the field in order to provide proper crediting of authorial sources, and where recognition of historic contributions and publicity are reasonable or expected.

Archival Research

Analysis of deliberation practitioners' listservs, organization and process websites, blogs, social networking sites, field handbooks, and unique data sources supplements the information gathered through participant observation. Listserv postings were collected, coded by source, and stored in a full-text, searchable database containing over 8,400 documents representing four years of electronic

conversations on the field. Other electronic documents, including formal publications, electronic slideshows, and webpages, in addition to digital images, datafiles, and screen captures of websites and online meetings, and digital photographs documenting conference activities, were categorized, coded and stored in full-text, searchable databases by organizational source using image library and indexing software. Additional files for brochures and other ephemera collected during fieldwork, including handbooks, CDs, and DVDs, were maintained for each organization. Content analyses using inductive coding of text files, major guidebooks in the field, and unique data sources were conducted by both me and student research assistants, and resulted in separate coding schemes for each document type. According to standard practices in content analysis (Roberts 1997; Weber 1990), we refined codes over the course of the coding process, and then continued to test codes by applying them independently on texts used in the analysis in order to confirm intercoder reliability, which was above 85% in all cases and typically above 90%. We reconciled all coding differences prior to analysis. Data from archival research are described in the text by source and cited parenthetically as "database files," rather than cited in the bibliography, in order to protect the identities of informants. Minor typing errors have been corrected for readability.

Practitioner Survey

As a supplement to the fieldwork, informal interviews, and archival research, a non-random online survey of dialogue and deliberation practitioners, distributed through over twenty online listservs and Web-based community networks in the field, was conducted in September and October 2009 in collaboration with Francesca Polletta of the University of California, Irvine, in order to solicit a broader perspective on the dominant tensions and shared beliefs surfacing in the qualitative research. The survey, whose target population was volunteer and professional deliberation practitioners in the United States, yielded 433 completed responses, 345 of which were from respondents based in the United States. For a variety of reasons, we chose to focus on surveying individual deliberation practitioners connected to the field through email listservs rather than conducting a random mail survey of deliberation organizations and consultancies (see Appendix for more detailed information on survey design objectives). While the survey sample was non-random and therefore cannot be generalized to deliberation practitioners in the US, we believe this is an important first step in understanding those areas of broad agreement and tension for a group of centrally-located and deeply-engaged actors within the field, and a valuable supplement to the extensive field research and archival analysis described above. These data are described in the text as survey results and not cited parenthetically; the N given reflects the total number of valid responses. Percentage distributions

of survey data given in the analysis are only intended to indicate percentage distributions in the particular group of survey respondents, a unique sample of U.S. practitioners. More information on the survey, including demographic information and full results, is available at the public survey results website (http://sites.lafayette.edu/ddps).

Limitations

The intent of the methodology described in this section is to explore the expanding field of deliberative facilitation. It is not an analysis of supply and demand for deliberation facilitation services over time (see Hendriks and Carson, 2008, for a chart of growth of privately-facilitated processes over time), nor a network analysis of the field (see Levine, 2010, for maps of the civic renewal field).[7] As a multi-method field study, analysis involved cross-referencing the many different forms of data collected in order to confirm that inductive findings from one source were also surfacing in other sources and among different kinds of actors. Ethnographic research of this sort is ideal for "identifying the mechanisms through which governance is accomplished and the strategies through which governance is attempted, experienced, resisted and revised, taken in historical depth and cultural context" (Scheppele 2004:391). According to Small, "The strengths of qualitative work come from understanding *how* and *why*, not understanding *how many*, and improving this work should mean improving the reliability of its answers to how and why questions" (2008:8, emphasis his). The agenda in the conclusion details possible opportunities for investigating the *how* and *why* questions raised, but by no means settled, in this article.

ANALYSIS: FIVE ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT DELIBERATION THAT DESERVE RETHINKING

It is critical to note from the start that the assumptions interrogated below are not myths or misinformation about public deliberation. The reason why I describe these claims as assumptions is because they are commonly assumed in strong and diverse research preoccupied with other, wholly valid research questions. *Assumptions* is not meant pejoratively here; all research must make assumptions about existing knowledge. Most importantly, these assumptions exist for a reason, and are substantiated by existing research and at least some of the data I collected—they are certainly true to a point.

But they don't go as far as we should wish if we are dedicated to understanding deliberation in all its forms and its evolving scope. There is readily

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[7] In the words of Fligstein and McAdam, "If a field is really an arena where individuals, groups, or organizations face off to capture some gain as our view suggests, then the underlying logic of fields is not a network of ties, but power and culture. Network analysis may be one way to model a field if used appropriately, but a network is not the same as an SAF" (2011:22).

available evidence, both in my own research and in existing scholarship, that challenges or complicates these assumptions as well. As such, I argue that new scholarship could be productively devoted to reconsidering the grounds for making these assumptions and to unpacking the complexity they might cause us to overlook. The clarifications and criticisms I launch here are intended to flesh out those aspects of public deliberation that may be missed by assuming that we already know, based on the existing body of deliberation research, what the actual practice of public deliberation looks like across the many contexts in which it is implemented (Hendriks 2006). I am claiming that minimal sustained attention has been paid to these issues thus far, and suggesting that compelling areas of disagreement between practitioners and academics are worthy of further study.

These assumptions are by no means made by every academic who studies deliberation, and have been interrogated by the deliberation scholars cited below. However, such questioning tends to occur at the margins of central debates in the scholarly literature, and this article argues for a more systematic investigation of academic consensus on deliberation based on the insights of frontline public deliberation practitioners themselves. Academics express desire for greater interaction with practitioners, but that discourse often occurs with respect to areas on which they already agree, a familiar problem for deliberation practitioners (DDC 2008).[8] When leading practitioners in the field describe their everyday practice in terms that conflict with scholars' routine assumptions, that disconnect deserves to be investigated in order to understand better the perspectives of both sets of strategic actors, not in order to get at some decisive "truth" about deliberation. Questioning the virtues of consensus is one of the key insights of deliberative theory (Drexler and Hames-Garcia 2004; Mansbridge 1980; Young 2000), and this investigation of complexity is made in that self-critical, reflexive spirit that characterizes deliberative practice.

Assumption One: The expansion of public deliberation processes is the result of a grassroots deliberation movement.

Most deliberative democracy scholars have labeled the promotion of public deliberation as an explicitly political "movement" (Ryfe 2005:43) and highlight its grassroots character (Sirianni and Friedland 2001). For example, the first aim of the *Journal of Public Deliberation* is described as "Synergizing a Movement":

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[8] While scholars like Kahane claim that "We have not dug deep enough to reach the areas in which we disagree," a study by Mansbridge, Hartz-Karp, Amengual, and Gastil also summarized in the "Where is Democracy Headed?" report notes that facilitators and theorists have very different ideas about what constitutes "good" deliberation (DDC 2008:37,12). Findings like this, and the disagreement on whether there is disagreement noted in the report, suggest underexplored tensions between facilitators and scholars in the field.

"The principal objective of *JPD* is to synthesize the research, opinion, projects, experiments and experiences of academics and practitioners in the emerging multi-disciplinary field and *political movement* called by some 'deliberative democracy'" (JPD 2010). Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini assert that deliberation is "a genuine grassroots phenomenon…local and rooted in communities" (2009:144).

Scholars who describe deliberation this way see the expanded use of dialogue and deliberation processes as the result of a progressive, bottom-up movement to reform politics, which draws on participatory democratic movements of the 1960s, and even earlier movements such as the Progressive-era forum movement (Button and Ryfe 2005:10). It is easy to understand why scholars make the assumption that deliberative democracy is a grassroots, progressive movement for political reform, because prominent members of the field explicitly root their contemporary practice in activist experiences in the 1960s; one methods innovator describes her own story at an NCDD conference: "I am a child of the sixties and I grew up as an adversarial activist" (Field notes). Ryfe notes that "anyone who circulates among deliberative practitioners knows that, ideologically, they tend to have a liberal progressive bent" (2010:1). Similarly, Sandy Heierbacher of NCDD acknowledges, "Our conferences no matter what we do are always going to be primarily progressive" (Interview transcript). In conference exercises describing their entry into the field, many practitioners cited formative experiences in the 1960s and 1970s. Thirteen out of 28 comments made in the discussion following a reflective panel at an NCDD conference were explicitly or implicitly sixties-themed, including:

> I was there in the 60's, Participatory Democracy & the War on Poverty… Viral Spread— It all started with me going to a dialogue group… The crystallization of the role of dialogue— The Path of the Social Progressives… In the 60's - Adversary based… Drive for connectedness in the 60s… My anger & dissatisfaction in the 60's over women's rights issue. (Blog transcript, database files)

Likewise, many survey respondents experienced their formative years in the 1960s, and an even greater number identified as liberal. The modal birth year of survey respondents was 1947—a cohort that turned 22 in 1969. Additionally, 218 U.S. survey respondents report political perspectives as liberal or very liberal, while 9 report conservative or very conservative perspectives. One hundred and fifty-five of the U.S. practitioners surveyed claimed backgrounds in community organizing and social activism.

Nevertheless, D&D practitioners do not embrace the language of movements to describe their current work. As Leighninger notes, even for those

who do claim "movement" status, *movement* has a different meaning now than in the past: "Though people in this field still like to use the term 'movement' to describe their work, civic engagement has lost much of its movement flavor" (2010:2). Despite their former organizing and activist backgrounds, Leighninger also describes philosophical and practical tensions between D&D practitioners and their more adversarial, justice-oriented community organizer and activist peers in the present day (2010; see also Fung, 2005, and Silver, Scott, and Kazepov, 2010). For example, at one 2009 conference, attendees tweeted questions and commentary such as, "Can we claim deliberative democracy as a movement?" and, "Is impartiality part of white privilege? Com org [community organizing] doesn't rest on impartiality but dd does" (Database files). Among US respondents in the survey, 55 preferred the term "movement" to describe "the people and organizations currently leading D&D efforts"; "movement" bested "profession" or "industry," but 184 practitioners preferred the more neutral terminology of "community of practice."

Similarly, associations with progressivism were fraught for many practitioners. On listservs and at conferences, practitioners regularly discuss the importance of downplaying perceived associations with progressive activism and liberalism within the field, lest processes be suspected of leftist bias or manipulation; another tweet from the 2009 conference notes: "There is a difference between progressive ideals that lead toward the true meaning of democracy and progressive causes" (Database files). Accusations from outside observers of bias toward liberalism (Gastil, Bacci, and Dollinger 2010; Kuran 1998) are recognized by practitioners, who police "conservative bashing" and left-leaning issue framing at practitioner conferences (Database files). Sample discourse in this vein on one conference comment wall included sticky notes reading, "Let's focus less on conservative bashing and more on positives and moving forward," "No alienation. We need conservatives!" and "It's conservative bashing if you are making simple assumptions about conservatives' motives + beliefs and placing blame unfairly" (Database files). At one NCDD panel of prominent conservative field leaders in 2008, the language of "organizing" was described as "off-putting." Graphic illustrations made of an NCDD 2008 conference panel on the "The Framing Challenge" displayed a red flag reading "SOCIAL JUSTICE" under the caption "'LIBERAL' sounding language that is troubling to CONSERVATIVE folks" (Database files). While 10 respondents wrote in "progressive" on the political perspective survey question, another 17 wrote in responses indicating resistance to "arbitrary" "labels"; such responses included "supportive of all views," "transpartisan," and "collaborative."

Is deliberation a progressive movement or not? When some practitioners reject movement language and affiliation with progressive causes, scholars should proceed with caution, but it does not mean they should abandon the language of

mobilization and collective action (Snow 2004; Staggenborg and Taylor 2005). The insights of movement scholarship on "awkward movements," social movement industries, and multi-institutional politics (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Polletta 2006; Zald and McCarthy 1980) can help us to clarify and refine our thinking about the ambiguous status of the deliberation movement and the virtues of understanding deliberation as a strategic action field.

The assumption that deliberation is "grassroots" does need further interrogation, because so much of the activity in the field is driven by elite actors—a fact that practitioners readily acknowledge. Some scholars who view the growth in deliberative democratic processes as a movement do note that the movement is led from the top; according to Button and Ryfe (2005:21), "It is fair to say that the deliberative movement around the globe is spearheaded by a relatively small cadre of experts." Levine argues of the larger civic renewal SAF, "We need more organizations with grassroots constituencies…. I would say there is a rough inverse proportion between centrality in this [civic renewal] network and size of grassroots base. With a few exceptions…the organizations that have the most citizen members are peripheral to civic renewal, and the pure civic renewal groups are grant-supported professional organizations or foundations" (2010).

Studying these tensions around movement status is especially timely because the Obama administration's Open Government Initiative prompted a sustained effort on the part of professional deliberation associations to take advantage of a new and unique window for integrating their services into government—typically called "grasstops" mobilization by scholars (Walker 2009). Field elites activated their own constituencies to game ranking technologies, dominating the online process to gain public input on the Open Government Directive, with AmericaSpeaks reporting having authored six of the top ten ideas in the public brainstorming phase (Lukensmeyer 2009). Deliberative experts won "invitation-only" roles as advisory experts to federal administrators and White House officials at meetings on the Open Government Partnership and at conferences such as "Champions of Participation" 1, 2, and 3, and "Strengthening Our Nation's Democracy II." This activity supports the observation of Kelleher and Yackee (2008) that the kind of contracting typical in deliberation facilitation outsourcing opens private pathways for lobbying public managers. As one practitioner writes on a listserv, "All across the Net we see expert online communities of practice essentially involving professionals, but not everyday citizens" (Database files).

The elite character of deliberative mobilization at the national level is by no means unusual for contemporary social movements, and reflects recent historical shifts in which institutional insiders play effective roles as movement actors (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008; Duffy, Binder, and Skrentny 2010). The

theory of strategic action fields can help us to understand this activity, since it allows for an understanding of competition among SAFs and "challenger" and "incumbent" status within SAFs (Fligstein and McAdam 2011:4). For example, using SAF theory, scholars could map the gains and losses the deliberation SAF has reaped in these processes relative to the transparency SAF (Wolz 2011), or investigate conflicts within the deliberation SAF over the proper relationship of particular actors and the field as a whole to the Obama administration.

What does assuming deliberation is a progressive movement prevent us from studying? Seeing public deliberation only as a political movement with progressive aims prevents a more nuanced examination of the multiple influences that shaped its development and the multiple institutional interests driving the market for deliberation services. Deliberation certainly has roots in the participatory democracy of the 1960s, but it is important for scholars to recognize, as practitioners do, that deliberation draws on many fields, including alternative dispute resolution in legal systems, workplace participation reforms in private companies, psychological counseling and therapy, personal recovery movements, and New Age and New Thought religious practices. Investigating the logics and tools practitioners bring to the field from these other contexts (Polletta 2002) will provide a far richer analysis of deliberative practices and a more nuanced picture of its social change discourses and de facto representatives than that of a spontaneous grassroots renaissance. As a start, leaping from formative biographical moments to current practice precludes analysis of what practitioners have been doing between the 1960s and their practice in the present (Armstrong 2002; McAdam 1988; Whalen and Flacks 1990). Not least, it is critical to investigate the reasons why the progressive political affiliations of the movement are so fraught with tension for deliberative actors seeking to engage a broad cross-section of the public. This investigation can also provide us with insights on the relationship between the deliberation movement, progressively-rooted causes like community organizing, and other SAFs that claim movement labels more easily, including the transparency movement and the open source movement.

Assumption Two: Equity and diversity are central concerns in public deliberation.

No one with experience observing deliberative conferences and deliberative events would argue that equity and diversity are not important concerns for actors in the field. Prominent theorists of deliberation have questioned whether the reasoned discourse and public speaking ability required in deliberation might subtly exclude marginalized peoples and women (Young 2000; Sanders 1997), but later researchers have investigated the "problem of power" and found that public deliberation can actually afford unique opportunities to people of color, the poor, and women (Fung 2004; Hendriks 2009; Kadlec and Friedman 2007).

Indeed, diversity is an imperative articulated on a regular basis by leading organizations. Principle #2 in the collaboratively-designed Public Engagement Principles Project is "Inclusion and Demographic Diversity: In high quality engagement: Conveners and participants reflect the range of stakeholder or demographic diversity within the community or on the issue at hand" (NCDD et al. 2009:7). One of the five priority challenge areas for the 2008 NCDD conference directly interrogated structures of power: "How can we address issues of oppression and bias both within the D&D community itself, and throughout society through the use of dialogue and deliberation?"

Avowed commitments to equity and diversity are omnipresent, as are efforts to make such commitments real through substantial investments of resources in recruiting participants and enabling their full participation. Processes routinely provide accommodations for persons with disabilities, childcare, simultaneous translators and materials in multiple languages, food, compensation and transportation. These efforts to subsidize the engagement of those typically excluded from other forms of political participation mean that participants in deliberative events are typically more diverse than the average pool of voters despite the much greater burdens in time and resources that deliberation imposes on participants in comparison to voting, email petitions, and other forms of political participation. Facilitation firms also routinely collect data on race, income, gender, age, and place of residence in order to gauge the representativeness of the group and draw attention to underrepresented perspectives.[9]

While critically important, the focus of existing scholarly research on some aspects of the representativeness of groups and on dynamics within processes (Ryfe 2005; Walsh 2007) does not afford a broader picture of the complex, fraught relationship of the field as a whole to equity and diversity concerns. Interest in the relationship between deliberative democracy and structural inequalities is deep, but mainly for a subset of practitioners, disproportionately women and people of color.[10] At a 2009 conference of deliberation practitioners, a session entitled "And Justice for All: Straight Talk about Social and Racial Justice and Deliberative Democracy" was the most popular conference session, but organizers noted that 80% of participants were women (as compared to 60% at the conference as a whole) and 40-50% were people of color, at a conference where 73% of attendees identified as white (Thomas and Leighninger 2010). The fact that the majority of practitioners surveyed do not view equity and diversity as the central concern of the field was

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[9] Demographic information that might be construed as polarizing or an invasion of privacy, such as sexual or political orientation, is collected less often.

[10] As compared to the demographics of deliberative practitioners as a whole. It is important to note that this subset of practitioners includes many prominent field leaders.

reflected in a question on priorities among the five NCDD "challenge areas." Addressing oppression and bias was ranked the most important challenge by 22 respondents out of 339. As compared to the overall sample demographics, respondents who did select addressing oppression and bias were more likely to be women, and more than twice as likely to be respondents of color.

As Leighninger notes in describing conflicts between deliberation practitioners and community organizers, "most of these deliberative democracy advocates, at least at the national level, are white, whereas the leaders of community organizing and racial equity are a racially diverse group" (2010:3). Levine argues, "We need more diverse leadership. I would roughly estimate that at least 90% of the top leaders of these 117 [civic renewal] organizations are white and have college degrees" (2010). Keypad polling exercises to solicit demographic data of conference attendees often elicited commentary from the session facilitator such as, "Well, the white folks showed up" or "The white folks are in the house" (Field notes). The demographics of our survey were similar to those noted at practitioner conferences. Seventy-one percent held advanced degrees (beyond baccalaureate; N=344) and 88% identified as white (N=340). Sixty-two percent of respondents were women (N=344), a disproportion not likely due to gendered differences in response rates, as the gender makeup of attendees at conferences is typically also 60/40 (Field notes).

In presentations of the survey demographic data to practitioners, the makeup of the facilitator corps was a matter of chagrin for some practitioners. One self-identified sociologist on the public discussion website critiqued our presentation of results as "glossing over the insularity of the dialogue and deliberation crew. This community is largely a white, left leaning, highly educated, and (I am guessing) has an income generally greater than the median…. D&D is a field of privilege." But this interest in exploring privilege within the facilitator corps was limited for the majority of practitioners who participated in discussions of survey results.

Given prior scholarship in the field on whether deliberation excludes or disempowers women, participants not surprisingly did not see the potential gendering of deliberation as a problem of potential exclusion of men, despite attempts by myself and Francesca Polletta to raise the issue in presentations with participants.[11] But neither was the predominantly white practitioner corps a topic many practitioners wanted to discuss, believing that doing so opened up the "identity politics" can of worms, which prevented a focus on common interests, mutuality, and problem-solving. The response from one practitioner challenged "old ways" of "focusing on identity," an approach that was deemed "too

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[11]Disproportionate participation in deliberative processes by women can be even higher than the disproportionate representation of women in the practitioner corps, with rates as high as 79% (Northwest Local Health Integration Network 2009).

disempowering":

> Topics like "race" and "gender" by themselves create an exclusive, divisive, and even demeaning frame. (Do people really want to be defined genetically rather than by their choices?) Issues like race and gender only matter because they get in the way of something else. That something else is what energizes a greater variety of people. For the record, I'm a white middle-aged woman with a masters degree, yet the dialogue culture seems a bit narrow even for me to fit in comfortably. Labels cause division. Focusing on common interests instead leads to cohesion.
>
> (Discussion page, survey website)

International pracademics and scholars have noted that "identity politics may have contra-deliberative effects," and rank-and-file US practitioners are certainly wary of this potential (DDC 2008:23). A useful guide to varying attitudes toward whether and how to go about addressing issues of racial justice, and to relative levels of enthusiasm for such a project within the field, is Heierbacher's summary of discussion and survey results related to a contentious listserv debate about race in 2010; the result of this work was a series of reflective and intensive small group phone discussions that involved less than twenty participants (2011). Hendriks and Carson warn that "in focusing too much on the 'process,'" practitioners may depoliticize public deliberation: "the risk here is that consultants underplay broader structural issues such as gender, class" (2008:308).

Some practitioners indeed sense that raising structural issues can torpedo productive discussions centered on personal perspectives, even among practitioners themselves. In answering a question about gender differences observed in deliberation styles, survey respondents expressed deep discomfort in making generalizations, asserting that "every individual has a unique style," or that other factors were more important or precluded their ability to generalize. Some avowed that such differences were a matter of "personality." Others specified that they did not "see" or talk about gender: "I don't tend to evaluate things on gender lines" or "I don't like to foster stereotypes," for example. For those in the field not focused on structural inequalities or "deliberation as a vehicle of political equality and social justice" (DDC 2008), diversity and justice challenges centered on ascriptive identity categories are by no means central, and are even seen as a threat to productive deliberation and forward momentum in the field.

A key advantage of a sociological approach is the way it can shed light on socially-constructed identity categories, different dimensions of exclusion on the basis of those constructions, and the often subtle social mechanisms through which discrimination and oppression occur. While Leighninger (2010) addresses

the racial and ethnic demographics of the public deliberation field and the ways these affect relationships with activists and organizers in some detail, researchers have not yet addressed multiple forms of stratification and occupational segregation in the practitioner corps, nor threats to the success of future deliberation efforts if deliberation gets coded as "female" or as conducted *for* marginalized groups.[12] Forthcoming scholarship on the gendering of deliberation by Polletta, and scholarship on the feminization of professions (Menkel-Meadow 2006; Reskin and Roos 1990; Wright and Jacobs 1994), might productively be combined with scholarship on other forms of exclusion, especially since achieving representative parity at deliberative events is still a major challenge with Latinos and other demographic groups, despite extensive recruitment efforts (Esterling, Fung, and Lee 2010).

Assumption Three: Public deliberation processes are characterized by heterogeneity, innovation, and improvisation.

Scholars of deliberation introducing case studies frequently emphasize the novelty of the projects they study and the diversity of deliberative methods available. Girard and Stark celebrate the "extraordinary heterogeneity" of the "socio-technologies of assembly" used in the participatory processes for post-9/11 redevelopment planning: "These public forums used very different technologies of deliberation: from ideas recorded on butcher block paper, to polling via personal touchtone keypads, to threaded online discussions, to websites and digital demonstrations" (2007:147). High-profile processes like the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly often emphasize in their own materials the novelty and innovation they represent: "We are here to invent a new way to engage citizens in the practice of democracy" (British Columbia 2004).

Indeed, an initial survey of the field reveals what seems to be a thriving proliferation of diverse methods. *The Change Handbook* (Holman, Devane, and Cady 2007), billed by its editors as "The Definitive Resource on Today's Best Methods for Engaging Whole Systems," lists 60 distinct methods from Ancient Wisdom Councils to the World Café method. Goldman and Torres (2004) inventory ten potential methods available to administrators interested in engaging

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[12] Gender dynamics vary according to the topic under discussion, with topics like engineering and planning, toxics and waste, and budgeting tending to attract male participants, and topics on social relations, youth, and creative visioning tending to attract women. One facilitator at a conference described an ambitious regional planning process in the southeast where organizers realized prior to the process that they had successfully recruited diverse participants, with the exception of white men (Field notes). In AmericaSpeaks' "Our Budget, Our Economy" deliberations, Esterling, Fung, and Lee find slight underrepresentation of whites, overrepresentation of African-Americans, and underrepresentation of Latinos compared to Census data on the larger population in the six cities studied (2010).

the public: "21st Century Town Meeting®, Deliberative Polling, Large-Scale Online Dialogue, Citizen Jury, Dynamic Planning Charrette, National Issues Forum, Constructive Conversations, Community-Wide Study Circles, ChoiceWork Dialogue, and online Small Group Dialogue."

To add to this palette of different methods, specific processes using particular deliberative methods are customized for their particular settings, leading to the development of a "localized democratic vernacular" (Mills 2007:1). AmericaSpeaks' trademarked "21st Century Town Meeting®" technology has been used for "Listening to the City" (Lower Manhattan redevelopment), "Voices and Choices" (Northeast Ohio economic redevelopment), "Community Congresses" (the Unified New Orleans Plan), "We the People" (Owensboro, KY, community planning), and "CaliforniaSpeaks" (California health care reform). For deliberation practitioners, branding each individual process with a unique name enhances stakeholder recognition; in the facilitation certification course, trainees were advised in the day-long module on Communications for Effective Participation that creating a unique identity for individual deliberative processes is critical to becoming recognized as a credible, honest "broker of information" (Field notes). This process diversification tied to place-based contexts is not simply a matter of branding, however.

A unique project name indicates the customization of the process or method for unique local communities, and "best practices" in deliberation are typically tied to individualized process design according to the unique contingencies involved in particular issues and for particular communities (Dietz and Stern 2008). High-quality processes are those that "get clear on their unique context, purpose and task, which then inform their process design," while "poorly designed programs…do not fit the specific needs and opportunities of the situation" (NCDD et al. 2009:6). Deliberation consultancies advertise this sophisticated level of customization or "designer democracy" (Mills 2007), which requires a considerable amount of innovation, ingenuity, and improvisation, as part of their added value. AmericaSpeaks' design of the Community Congress II and III processes in New Orleans, for example, included a second-line parade for recruitment and localized touches "such as including traditional New Orleans praline candy in participants' lunches and carefully selecting music and images that reflected local culture" (Lukensmeyer 2007:13).

Firms emphasize "event management that is customer focused, efficient, and flexible" (Database files). Mills describes "the dramatic spread of custom-made deliberative processes" using diverse methods responsive to local political cultures:

> On the local level, designer democracies have proliferated in the United States as the application of a variety of processes has produced unique

democratic products. In one sense, the US has become a "Baskin-Robbins Democracy", except that instead of just 33 flavors, we have thousands of boutique democracies each reflecting a unique civic culture and tradition. (2007:14)

Certainly, heterogeneity, innovation, and improvisation are part of the story of dialogue and deliberation practice in the United States, and responsiveness to local contexts and unique issues represents a critical aspect of the expertise sold by deliberative consultants.

Nevertheless, this is not the whole story of deliberation practice in the United States, which is subject to the isomorphism typical of institutional fields (Mizruchi and Fein 1999; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). Isomorphism as studied by sociologists describes the forms of practice diffusion, convergence, and standardization represented by principles, standards, field-wide training and certification, and formal rules (normative and coercive isomorphism), in addition to imitation of successful strategies and leading organizations within fields (mimetic isomorphism). Quite understandably and explicitly, deliberation organizations want to diffuse their practices and methods widely, such that successful methods are replicated in other communities. Sandy Heierbacher, the executive director of NCDD, described in a 2006 interview this future trajectory for the field: "Eventually it should follow the patterns of other fields where the more accepted methods of practice will stand out and others that aren't as embraced, people will start migrating away from them and those who are pushing them" (Interview transcript).

Examples of formalized diffusion of practices include field-wide guidelines for practice developed collaboratively in the Public Engagement Principles Project (NCDD et al. 2009). Governmental and non-governmental actors alike, including AccountAbility, Canadian International Development Agency, the Co-Intelligence Institute, the Community Development Society, the Harwood Institute, the Government of Canada, International Association for Impact Assessment, IAP2, International IDEA, Involve, the Organization of American States (OAS), Public Agenda, and the United Nations Development Programme, have also developed largely-similar guidelines, standards, and best practices for public deliberation and democratic engagement. Multilateral initiatives like the Open Government Partnership are explicitly devoted to formalizing commitments and sharing best practices (OGP 2011).

Formalized trainings are offered not only by professional organizations and methods organizations, but also by organizations like the Kettering Foundation's National Issues Forums Moderator Trainings, leading to the consolidation of facilitation principles and techniques. In the survey, 248 US respondents had participated in at least one training program. Of the trainings

selected, five had participation levels of more than 20% of all trained respondents. Conventions of deliberation facilitation conveyed across multiple different training settings include managing expectations based on what is up for debate in a particular decision-making process, encouraging discussion of values rather than positions, involving ordinary citizens to counterbalance the power of activist groups or interest group professionals, and organizing dialogue in small groups to encourage active listening and speaking among all participants. More informal sharing of logics and practices occurs in the many professional forums within the field, including conferences, webinars, networking activities, listservs, and journals. Hendriks and Carson describe this developing trajectory of the field:

> The growth in expertise in deliberative practice results in a thriving community of practice, with multiple networks and meeting places. A diverse deliberative profession emerges resulting in the development of international standards. Pressure to maintain quality standards rises, leading to a growth in training, accreditation and independent evaluations of deliberative processes. (2008:305)

In addition to their common logics, despite the apparent heterogeneity of methods, many methods involve routine combinations of a limited palette of practices. The heterogeneous engagement techniques described by Girard and Stark (2007) are in fact standard elements of deliberation practitioners' toolkits. While initially the deliberative methods marketplace looks crowded, and some aspects of design like participant selection vary substantially, the actual deliberations themselves look remarkably similar up close—not surprising given that deliberative theory foregrounds a number of key principles of reason-giving conversation. Just as standard public meetings have a readily recognizable format that is routinized across contexts (officials behind a dais, rows of chairs, an initial presentation, a microphone and sign-up sheet for individual comments), so public deliberative forums, while less formally structured in terms of room layout, have predictable routines and formats that are instantly recognizable for veterans (round tables, a movement, art, poetry or visioning exercise to get started, an initial discussion to decide core values and procedures, break-out sessions, a return to the large group, "popcorn-style" reports and process summaries, and a reflective finale).[13] Most public deliberative processes incorporate some combination of hands-on discussion aids such as table facilitators, talking sticks, sketching on butcher block paper, strategy games, or index card sorting in small

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[13] As described in the analysis of Assumption Five, due to extensive crossover with the fields of management consulting and organizational development, this familiarity may extend beyond veterans of other deliberative processes to veterans of any facilitated workshop for adults—team-building retreats, leadership development seminars, quarterly strategic planning meetings, etc.

group dialogues. For large groups, high- or low-tech tools such as keypad polling, "dot" voting with stickers, or online voting aggregate the results of small group dialogues.

Additionally, despite the frequent categorization of "Appreciative Inquiry" as a unique method, other deliberative methods generally employ its explicitly positive and opportunity-focused philosophy, in line with a belief that constructive processes must focus on strengths and future-oriented possibilities (Stavros and Hinrichs 2007). This accounts for the fact that many processes, even those that aren't explicitly described as "community visioning processes," include a visioning exercise at the start to challenge participants to adopt a positive mental orientation open to imagination and creative thinking. While a democratic vernacular may be developed in the visioning processes conducted across the country, the success of deliberative process diffusion means that attendees of Imagine Chicago may find recognizable touchstones in Envision Carlsbad, Imagine Austin, and other "Imagine" or "Envision" [Community] processes.[14] The same holds for attendees of local processes run by national consultancies.

This correspondence of process methods occurs independently of a different form of standardization, which occurs through the promotion of toolkits and deliberation guides. Given that process customization and facilitation consulting services are resource-intensive and time-consuming, many organizations offer "off the rack" or ready-made products that provide public deliberation process expertise at low or no cost in exchange for minimal "event management" services or flexibility. These can be products like the "Meeting in a Box Community Dialogues" offered by one consultant:

> Meeting in a Box Community Dialogues replace top-down models of public education (town hall meetings, expert panels) with two-way dialogues in which citizens become partners in solving problems. A Meeting in a Box is a specialized kit that includes video and print materials, a detailed process guide and feedback mechanisms. The kit enables leaders, their representatives, local organizations at all levels, and others to conduct two-to-three-hour community dialogues in which people work through the most compelling arguments quickly and get directly to the heart of a matter in a more constructive way. (Database files)

Everyday Democracy (formerly Study Circles Resource Center) and Public Conversations Project offer standardized informational materials and templates for conversation, providing a discussion guide for "Fostering Dialogue Across

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[14] See, for example, http://ncdd.org/rc/item/3252. Pacewicz describes the diffusion of Envision processes in his study of "River City" (2011).

Divides" of all kinds, such as abortion and interfaith relations, in addition to guides on typical community problems like "racial equity, education, student achievement, neighborhoods, youth issues, poverty, growth and sprawl, diversity, immigration, police-community relations, and criminal justice" (Database files). Because the need for deliberation capacity in marginalized communities is high,[15] the expansion of standardized, low-cost tools and resources to organizations and communities that could not otherwise afford consulting services is recognized within the field as a positive development. Eighty-seven percent of US respondents in the practitioner survey (N=327) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "expanded access to standardized deliberation tools (community dialogue kits, best practice guidelines, issues and training guides, e.g.) is enhancing dialogue and deliberation in America."

While academics generally emphasize the extent to which deliberation processes look significantly different from the standard "three minutes at a microphone" public meeting, this emphasis on the novel and improvisational character of deliberative events prevents analysis of the ways in which deliberation processes also exhibit the isomorphic characteristics typical of developing and professionalizing fields. As Hendriks and Carson argue, this in turn precludes assessment of both the opportunities and the risks represented by standardization: "While attempts to professionalize deliberative practice can help promote 'best practice', it does carry some dangers… Standardizing and modularizing deliberative procedures carries the risk that public deliberation becomes homogenized" (2008:308).

Promoting deliberation more widely may in some cases lead to inadvertent stratification and reproduction of inequalities that have thus far gone unnoticed by researchers. Scholarly emphasis on heterogeneity disguises the extent to which heterogeneity and standardization are patterned in a two-tier system, with communities and organizations that can afford customization typically receiving far more flexible, "boutique" processes associated with the characteristics of high-quality deliberation than those that cannot (Davenport Institute 2011). Given that deliberative researchers have foregrounded the importance of different contexts for the quality of the deliberations within (Hendriks 2006; Perrin 2006), new questions about the implications of "designer democracy" also present an opportunity for investigating how micro-level interactional contexts are affected by deliberation standardization.

Sociologists have insights to share on diffusion and professionalization

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[15] Deliberation practitioners are generally familiar with this "Kaufman paradox": "Although participation in democracies helps people increase their capacities, those who have not yet had the experience of participation will sometimes not have sufficient capacity to bring off a successful democracy. What they need is precisely what, because of their need, they cannot get" (Mansbridge 2003:177).

processes, which can lead to new research questions for deliberation scholars. These include questions regarding the potential of deliberative standards to induce reactivity, gaming, or professionalization of participants given the increased predictability they offer (Espeland and Sauder 2007; Espeland and Stevens 1998; Lee 2007). A large field of scholarship on methods for balancing flexibility and standardization, reducing opportunities for gaming, and managing reactivity does exist, with attention to the special challenges of democratic accountability involved in public engagement performance measures (Behn 2001; Boyne 2006; Frederickson and Frederickson 2006; Meyer 2002; Radin 2006). In order to develop accounts of how isomorphism, standardization, and accountability trends may be affecting the actual practice of deliberation across contexts, scholars drawing on this research will also have to switch focus from an emphasis on the contrast between deliberative events, especially high-profile, well-resourced events, and ordinary politics. This shift in perspective to contexts, tools, strategies, and practices shared in common across the strategic action field will entail questioning other assumptions as well, as described below.

Assumption Four: Public deliberation is typically conducted by and for community-based non-profits.

Despite the national and international scale of many organizations and associations engaged in deliberation, scholars often associate public deliberation processes with community-based non-profits, with the exception of high-profile events conducted on behalf of government and foundations at the state and national level (e.g., "CaliforniaSpeaks"). Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini argue that deliberation is "run largely by nonprofit organizations," "largely a local activity," and hardly a top-down phenomenon "'imposed' on communities" (2009:144). The data in the survey provide further evidence that much deliberation practice is carried out with non-profits at the local level. Professionals in the survey reported that local governments and agencies and local non-profits were regular sponsors of the deliberative events on which they had worked over the last two years. Local nonprofit groups, and local and regional governments and community development corporations, were selected as two of the top three sponsors for processes, at 22% and 25% of all selections, respectively (N=660). The limitations of the survey preclude making any conclusions about the relative distribution of sponsor categories, but local organizations and government actors combined account for a substantial proportion of demand for deliberation services in this sample of U.S. practitioners, supporting Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini's argument.

Nevertheless, understanding demand for deliberation services in other sectors and at other scales is important to getting the full picture of the expansion

of deliberative practice in the United States. Public deliberation consultants advertise their services to a wide variety of clients, including private-sector clients, and nearly all deliberation consultants, even ones specializing in the non-profit sector, describe work on their websites for private organizations. The for-profit world is by no means anathema to deliberation practitioners. Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini (2009) themselves find that deliberative events are sponsored by businesses in 20% of cases. An internal IAP2 survey finds that "private sector" actors are *primary* "customers, clients, and partners" for 16.2% of respondents (N=167; Database files); this figure does not include those who selected clients of multiple sectors. In my own survey, businesses, chambers, and industry trade groups accounted for 17% of all client types selected.

Why is paying attention to privately-sponsored deliberation important to understanding the full scope of deliberation practice? Private clients represent a small, but important—and unusually remunerative—part of practitioners' client base. At conferences, many practitioners report that work with private clients is typically easier than dealing with the thicket of agencies involved in public sector processes, and can expose deliberative principles to greater numbers of stakeholders. One large international corporate client can represent opportunities to promote deliberation at a dramatic scale, as an independent practitioner reports: "Inside the 200,000 employee [Fortune 500 Manufacturing Corporation] there are 450 trained facilitators assisting teams world-wide as they explore how to improve processes and ways of doing business. Those facilitators are trained in the facilitation of D&D. Their plan is to train and deploy 5000 facilitators before they are done… There are companies all over just like [F500MC]" (Database files, email communication with author). For-profit companies are even said to embrace the principles of deliberation more easily and more deeply. The same practitioner reports that she spends 85% of her time working with private clients rather than public agencies because the mentality in Washington is: "they had extra money in last year's budget that needed to be spent.… Implementation does not seem to have the same urgency you find in the private sector" (Database files). High-profile method leaders regularly advertise that their methods are used in Fortune 500 companies, for tribal councils, and for every type of organization in between. Harrison Owen, the developer of the Open Space Technology method, hopes that his method becomes as pervasive as accounting, "something we all must do because it works, and because it is useful" (1997). A near unanimous 97% of the U.S. practitioners surveyed believe "the expanded use of deliberative methods in the corporate sector (with employees or customers)" is "good for the field" (N=329). This was by far the highest level of consensus on any of the attitudinal questions in the survey. Deliberation practitioners' vision is not limited to the world of local community organizations.

The emphasis within the deliberation literature on community-based processes run by non-profit organizations may also reflect a lack of attention to the structure of deliberation contracting, in which "clients" with whom practitioners work directly to design processes may actually be separate from the "sponsors" who are underwriting deliberation. In describing non-public sponsors, Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini assert that deliberation is funded "by third parties (government entities, foundations, and individuals) committed to the public-interest contributions of these forums and to reducing the costs to individuals of engaging in public talking" (2009:147). My own research has discovered a broader range of organizations that subsidize public deliberation, and these groups typically fit the profile of urban growth machine actors (Molotch 1976), although they also include corporations like DaimlerChrysler. Foundations, community development corporations, and individual civic boosters play major roles, but newspapers, television networks, banks and mortgage lenders, utilities, health systems, universities, and residential and commercial developers also sponsor or underwrite public deliberation efforts on a regular basis. The involvement of community actors heavily involved in growth may result from the fact that growth management is often the subject of public deliberation. Forty-four percent of U.S. practitioners in the survey (N=334) had facilitated on the specific topic of comprehensive community planning over the last two years. At larger scales, multi-national corporations such as Allianz, a division of the insurer and financial services firm with over €970 billion in assets under management, have underwritten deliberative initiatives such as the "Tomorrow's Europe" deliberative poll, where international trade policy and other topics of clear interest to the company were on the table (Database files).

Thus far, if the deliberation literature has addressed the private sector at all, it is usually in terms of either conflicts between market values and deliberative values, or private sector cooptation (Hendriks and Carson 2008). There is a substantial literature starting with Habermas (1989) documenting general trends in incursions of private enterprise into the public sphere and their negative consequences on democratic politics and deliberative possibilities (Crenson and Ginsberg 2002; Vogel 1989; Wolin 2008). I argue that, rather than presuming sinister motives or cooptation by private sponsors, scholars need to investigate the increasing trend in private investment in producing and subsidizing opportunities for public deliberation. Assumptions about corruption or appropriation preclude empirical investigation of the ways that market and deliberative values are being blended in practice.

As Walker (2009:100) argues, there is far less literature on the topic of private sponsorship of engagement opportunities, perhaps due to researchers' sense that such processes are not "authentic" public deliberation. But an exclusive focus on private cooptation of the public sphere would limit our understanding of

how public, non-profit, and private sector clients collaborate to produce public events. In fact, publicly-oriented action may itself influence practices in the private sphere in a complex, recursive fashion. Such questions may be critical to the future direction of the SAF. Given that practitioners generally welcome private clients but critics' skepticism of deliberative manipulation is becoming a common problem for high-profile processes, researchers need to explore the improved quality of deliberative events produced with funding from private sponsors, the increased suspicions of inauthenticity that such sponsorship might bring, and the ways in which deliberation practitioners manage these tensions.

Assumption Five: Public deliberation uses unique methods and technologies, which produce unique forms of participant empowerment and community capacity-building.

Finally, while closely linked to Assumption Three, Assumption Five addresses the extent to which deliberative methods and technologies are developed within and subsequently confined to the field of dialogue and deliberation. This belief relates to both the singularity of deliberation and its relative level of penetration in the larger society. Ryfe asserts that "ordinary people have little experience with deliberation" (2005:64). Similarly, Polletta argues, "Few people have had much experience with [deliberative forums]" (2008:4).

To be sure, academics are correct that "methods pioneers" and deliberation organizations have developed proprietary knowledge and trademarked it to prevent its exploitation (Hendriks and Carson 2008). Academics also recognize the influences of alternative dispute resolution on the conflict resolution stream of practice, and 26% of survey respondents did report prior experience in conflict resolution (N=339). But other influences on the field are comparatively less recognized, and the adoption of new technologies from other fields, particularly in the use of online technologies and stakeholder engagement software, has accelerated crossover with a number of parallel engagement trends over the last forty years. In fact, Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini (2009) find that a remarkable one in four citizens in their survey had participated in organizationally-sponsored, face-to-face deliberation with diverse others on a public issue.

As the prior sections of the analysis have suggested, deliberation has been influenced by a number of fields, and deliberation practitioners have actively worked to diffuse deliberative methods and technologies across sectors and in new settings. Practitioners reporting relevant deliberation training in the survey cited management, leadership, and organization development trainings that were not run by deliberation organizations, including "Stanford T-group training," "IBM Jam," "Plowshares," "Encounter Programs," "federal mediation training,"

"Transactional Analysis training," "AT&T University," "Quality Circle," "Community Dispute Resolution Training," "activist trainings," "advanced facilitation for Covey 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," "Gestalt Intervener Certificate," "Environmental Stakeholder dialogue," and "extensive in-house government and corporate facilitator training." While 46% of US respondents did cite prior experience in community organizing or social activism, another 32% reported experience in "adult education"—group process and individual self-help methods from adult learning and organizational psychology. Seventeen percent cited prior experience in social work or therapy-related fields, and 27% reported prior practice in public relations or communications (N=339). Again, given the limitations of the survey, assessing the relative distribution of these experiences within the deliberation SAF is impossible, but more diverse sources of experience than organizing and activism are clearly present in this particular group of 345 US practitioners.

My own research has found that other fields such as grassroots lobbying, digital campaign consulting, and corporate social responsibility operate under very different, often non-deliberative principles, but adopt the same technologies and collect participant data in similar ways. Grassroots lobbying, pilloried in some circles as "astroturfing," uses deliberative and participatory engagement techniques to mobilize targeted groups of citizens (smokers or HMO members, for example), rather than the broad cross-section of stakeholders sought in public deliberation (Walker 2009). The techniques used, particularly in resource-intensive grassroots lobbying initiatives, look very much like those in deliberative settings—the recruitment of participants is different, but the kinds of engagement subsidized are similar. Some deliberation organizations have even borrowed techniques from grassroots lobbying. In order to promote political activation following deliberative process participation, AmericaSpeaks distributed postcards pre-addressed to participants' lawmakers at the end of health care town meetings, for example (Fung and Lee 2009)—a standard technique for subsidizing and measuring activation in grassroots lobbying (Walker 2009).

Similar crossover is evident with the digital campaign consulting field. In digital campaign applications such as the Obama campaign's MyBO.com, interactive software harvests participants' personal information and that of their friends, and combines it with other databases, making citizens "digitally visible" and allowing campaign organizations to "leverage social networks, intimate details, and psychological processes for institutionalized ends" in ways that are invisible to participants (Kreiss 2009:3). Not only are such initiatives and techniques described as holding exciting potential for public deliberation on listservs and at deliberation conferences, as in a plenary on "Social Media, Social Movements and Democratic Participation" at a 2009 practitioners' conference

(Field notes), but many technological applications of social media apply across deliberative and non-deliberative engagement settings.

Online deliberative technologies are commonly used by 79 US practitioners surveyed. When participants engage in deliberative workbook, budgeting, and dialogue processes online, they often contribute their contact information, even when such information is not required, in order to receive project reports and to be entered in raffles for consumer goods such as Wii Fit™. They are also enticed to submit others' contact information; one project that won the inaugural "Special Innovation Award" from the IAP2 entered participants in an iPod® raffle if they shared the email addresses of ten friends (Database files). Participants also may share and distribute information regarding friends and social networks with sponsors through online deliberation applications connected to existing social media platforms like Facebook. The personal contact information gathered from public deliberation participants may be logged in central databases and tracked over the course of projects, retained following projects, and shared across agency or company departments such that future and concurrent project managers may track the engagement of frequent participants and facilitate the participation of prior participants (Teleconference field notes).

Beyond personal contact information, demographic information is also valuable to deliberative projects. Because online and offline deliberative dialogue projects often require registration and collection of demographic information to ensure representativeness, participants reveal their demographic profile when participating. Such information can be used to facilitate the engagement and participation of targeted groups under-represented in project registrations as the day of the event nears. At networked meetings, anonymous demographic information is often collected again through keypad polling, and can be linked to participant preferences expressed in deliberative sessions, providing sponsors and clients with critical data on preference differences across stakeholder groups and demographic categories.

Stakeholder engagement software guides project administrators in collecting, commensurating, mapping, and using this rich information about stakeholders, tasks that resemble political strategies of opposition research. Stakeholder profiling is advertised by software developers as minimizing risk by rating stakeholder threat levels, allowing organizations to anticipate and manage potential resistance (Database files). For data security and privacy reasons, such information is typically not shared with participants, but this also means that participants in deliberative projects have little control over how their data is used and how long it is retained. While national-scale information management of deliberative participants by government agencies and large firms is still in its developing stages, discussions related to maintaining the privacy of stakeholder information and engaging stakeholders who prefer to remain anonymous are

already taking place on listservs and in webinar presentations in the field (Database files).

Corporate social responsibility has become an increasingly multi-faceted organizational strategy with substantial areas of overlap with deliberation, given its evolution in response to increasing corporate targeting by social movement actors (Soule 2009). Stakeholder and customer engagement initiatives link products and services to political issues and then provide deliberative forums for discussing these issues online and offline. Dove's marketing strategy for its Pro-Age® brand of products for menopausal women was explicitly built around Web comment forums about a banned[16] advertisement showing older nude women in discrete poses. Under the invitation "Does beauty have an age limit? Watch the commercial and share your views," Dove displayed thousands of comments both for and against the commercial. If scholars concerned with deliberative content applied their textual analysis methods to these comments, they would find elements of deliberative dialogue, including turn-taking, reason-giving, and critical thinking regarding advertising strategies and corporate interests, all of which are typically understood as positive signs of enhanced public dialogue (Mutz 2008). Dove is by no means an anomaly in pursuing this strategy. Grace Hill Media, a "full-service PR and marketing firm," has been engaged by mainstream media corporations like Sony and Disney for its specific expertise facilitating independent dialogues about potentially controversial movies like "The Da Vinci Code" among members of the religious right (Goodstein 2006). Financial services firms now sponsor dialogues on fiscal responsibility and the American dream; oil companies convene community meetings about climate change.

Public deliberation professionals discuss emulating these privately-administered public discussions, such as Oprah Winfrey's self-described "global conversation about consciousness," a live "interactive webinar" series sponsored by Skype, Post-It, and Chevrolet on New Age self-help writer Eckhart Tolle's book *A New Earth* (McCamish 2008).[17] No doubt, a series of lengthy discussions taking place over ten weeks and bringing together millions of people from over 125 countries is quite a feat in the world of public deliberation, where bringing a thousand people together is a major achievement. Given the private sector's superior resources, it is not surprising that high-tech innovations relevant to deliberation may be pioneered in the private sector and cross over to the public sphere. Clearly, public deliberation consultants face competition from other

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[16] Some have speculated that the ban controversy was fabricated by the advertising agency.

[17] Three out of three facilitators in an online conference call on enhancing participation through technology had participated in the Tolle webinar series. Facilitators on the call proposed the "Oprah" model as one of a variety they were considering for "scaling up" their public engagement method (Field notes).

communications and political consulting SAFs seeking to harness "Public Engagement in the Conversation Age" (Edelman 2010) for their own purposes (see Figure 1). However, simply because these companies have reputational interests in these initiatives does not mean that the deliberations within are manipulated, or that they might not impact participants' perceptions of "political efficacy" (Nabatchi 2010). More research is needed on the relationship between institutional interests and deliberation sponsorship.

Screenshots of three banner ads by author

Figure 1: Proliferating Invitations to Join Public Dialogues from Companies Seeking to Capitalize on "The Conversation Age"

To what extent do deliberative methods provided by independent public deliberation practitioners stand apart? Polletta claims in her study of the content of "Listening to the City" deliberations that because experience in public deliberative forums is limited, "we should see participants adapting expectations from other, more familiar, conversational settings" (2008:4). The examples Polletta gives of alternative conversational settings are those of a "bowling together" America familiar in earlier decades: PTA meetings, coffee-klatches, mini-UNs, and even consciousness-raising groups. Given that the current (1980s to the present) "organizational culture" phase of corporate management (Barley and Kunda 1992) is based on enhancing employee productivity through normative cultures of teamwork and participation, it is just as likely that both blue- and white-collar employees are experienced with facilitated conversational settings from workshops, off-sites, and training days at the workplace—and indeed, that

these are not especially unfamiliar (Ezzamel and Willmott 1998).[18] For generations that came of age after the 1960s, exercises such as the "Journey Wall," online interactive forum, or even keypad poll (now used in elementary, secondary, and collegiate education) are likely less exotic than a coffee-klatch or consciousness-raising group.

Drawing on Polletta's insights (2002; 2008) that cultural expectations from more familiar settings get imported from a variety of fields to fresh contexts, publics familiar with deliberation as an employee management technique at work or as an interactive public relations strategy may bring such expectations to less well-resourced, non-profit or government-run deliberative events. Just as scholars should not write off the involvement of private clients in sponsoring public deliberations, scholars should not write off private efforts to activate engagement in politics or corporate settings as wholly unrelated to the practices used in public deliberation; technologies and software cross the boundaries of these fields swiftly and easily, and at a minimum, participants in public deliberative events have received proliferating invitations to "Get involved!", "Have your say!", and "Join the discussion!" Practitioners on listservs frequently discuss concerns about threatening, confusing, or selective appropriation of deliberative terminology and practices, such as "America Speaking Out" (an interactive conservative website not affiliated with AmericaSpeaks) and the Coffee Party, ostensibly non-partisan and interested in deliberation but explicitly political (and questionably left-leaning) in orientation. Scholars and practitioners have critiqued "fake" participation and collaboration (Snider 2010; Levine 2009), but the line between deliberation and deliberation look-alikes may be increasingly hard to discern (Bonnemann 2010).

A NEW AGENDA FOR PUBLIC DELIBERATION SCHOLARSHIP

The challenges for the deliberation SAF raised in this analysis of scholarly assumptions about deliberation are not unfamiliar to experienced public deliberation practitioners in the United States, and that is exactly the point. While deliberation scholars have frequently emphasized deliberative virtues over the challenges of deliberation implementation,[19] practitioners are routinely self-

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[18] See Haydu and Lee (2004) for the diffusion of workplace participation methods in the 1980-1999 period. A poignant qualitative account of a retreat that used a wall exercise, sticker voting, and other facilitated engagement techniques for blue-collar employees facing restructuring is in Hochschild (2001).

[19] Esterling, Fung, and Lee, for instance, "take it as a sad comment on society" that the "Our Budget, Our Economy" process met with criticism "from left to right bloggers to esteemed political scientists" (2010:47). The reverse is also true. Those critiquing deliberation often indict deliberative practice overall or point to a case study of deliberative "failure," without comparing to non-deliberative alternatives or deliberative "successes" (Lee 2007).

critical regarding the difficulties of their job, the inherent tensions their status as experts in democratization affords, and the continuing work they must do internally and externally to align their values and practices as they work within "enemy" institutions (Lee 2009).

Researchers initially focused on refining institutional design are now increasingly noting the difficulties of producing and sustaining deliberation— even if they are conflicted about where to go next and what to make of deliberative disappointments (Barnes, Newman, and Sullivan, 2007; Besson and Martí 2006; Briggs 2008; Gaventa and Barrett 2010; Layzer 2008; Papadopoulos and Warin 2007; Ryfe 2005). Ryfe argues that the shortcomings of public deliberation should lead researchers to delve deeper into cognitive science and social and cultural psychology (2005). While Beierle and Cayford propose that future research address "the context of decision-making" in more breadth (2002:77), Barnes, Newman, and Sullivan assert that "institutional, policy and cultural context" are essential for understanding specific deliberative projects, leading them to be "relatively pessimistic about the potential of new initiatives to overcome entrenched institutional or political forms of power" (2007:184).

This article argues that we can use readily available comparative historical research in sociology to understand how the institutional and political contexts of deliberation may affect deliberative possibilities. Social movement scholarship provides valuable traction on competition within and between strategic action fields, on changing patterns of contention, and on strategies for overcoming entrenched power in an era of neoliberal governance. Sociological research on structural inequality, policy implementation, and accountability yields insights into the complex interplay of power and interests in contemporary organizations and professions. Work in political and economic sociology can shed light on parallel engagement trends and technology transfer in corporate social responsibility, grassroots lobbying, and other emerging fields. The good news is that drawing on these research streams does not require delving deeper into participants' psyches or cognitive functioning, but investigating the hitherto underexplored experiences of deliberation practitioners themselves. By synthesizing these accounts and comparing them with those of peers in related movements and fields, we can gain a much better picture of what common challenges and new opportunities practitioners face in implementing deliberation across a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes (see Lee, McQuarrie, and Walker, 2009, for one such effort).

Based on the assumptions explored in greater detail in this article, I propose an agenda for future research on the deliberation strategic action field in the following five areas:

1. CHANGE AND POWER: Deeper investigation of collective strategic action undertaken in the deliberation SAF, with particular attention to a) contention among incumbents and challengers over "progressive" and "movement" discourses within the SAF, and b) collaboration against and with other SAFs in the broader field environment to advance shared interests. *How and why are some deliberation practitioners resisting "movement" and "progressive" labels? What are the consequences of elite actors' mobilization to institutionalize deliberation in governance? What collective interests of sponsors, practitioners, and participants are advanced through deliberative processes?*

2. REPRODUCTION OF INEQUALITY: Deeper investigation of the causes and consequences of stratification in the practitioner corps and among participants, with particular attention to discourses and strategies employed within the SAF with respect to differences in deliberative participation by political affiliation, regional location, language, gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual identification. *What are the causes and consequences of demographic trends in deliberation, such as feminization of the practitioner corps or difficulties recruiting white male deliberators? Which dimensions of exclusion and inclusion are discussed, and which are avoided?*

3. STABILITY AND SETTLEMENT: Deeper investigation of isomorphism, standardization, and professionalization processes within the SAF, with particular attention to potential unintended effects of practice diffusion, process routinization, and performance measurement systems. *How do the outcomes of less-studied, routinized processes compare to the resource-intensive "designer" processes that receive the lion's share of attention in scholarship? How have hard-to-measure deliberative outcomes been commensurated, and who is leading these efforts? What are the consequences of the increasing predictability of deliberative interventions?*

4. MARKETS AND POLITICS: Deeper investigation of market-oriented activity (both by, for, and against business actors) in the SAF, with particular attention to the relationship between private, public, and non-profit actors and shared or contested discourses and strategies. *How and why do particular kinds of private actors subsidize or produce deliberative opportunities? How has public deliberation influenced practices in the private sector, and vice versa? How do practitioners negotiate their own and others' business interests and political interests? In what ways are these interests blended or distinguished from each other?*

5. CRISES AND OPPORTUNITIES: Deeper investigation of deliberative practice expansion as both an opportunity and a threat for the field, with particular attention to the consequences of diffusion of strategies and discourses from other SAFs and by other SAFs for public and sponsor perceptions of deliberation. *What strategies, practices, and technologies are deliberation actors borrowing from other fields, and why? How and why are SAFs like public relations, grassroots lobbying, corporate social responsibility, and digital campaigning borrowing discourses and practices from the deliberation SAF? How has the field responded to opportunities to ally with transparency and other SAFs? How have field governance organizations responded to demands to police the implementation of deliberation "lite"?*

Such a research agenda could not be more timely. Indeed, the deliberation field faces a number of new problems as practitioners advance their work, in part caused by an unprecedented opportunity (Buckley 2010; Leighninger 2010). While the Open Government projects initiated by the Obama administration may afford deeper integration of deliberative processes into the federal government, they also raise the specter of politicization and bureaucratization (Konieczka 2010). Regarding the former, avowedly non-partisan national deliberative events like the "AmericaSpeaks: Our Budget, Our Economy" process have received criticism from those on both the right and left, prompting soul-searching on deliberation listservs about whether deliberative democracy will be tarred as public manipulation. The blogosphere reaction to federal budget and health care deliberations also prompted dialogue on practitioner listservs about the nature of social change, incrementalism, and mutual support (Database files). While practitioners are already having these dialogues, scholars may be able to contribute unique perspectives on recurring anxieties and frustrations of organization and collective action.

The new research areas described above, then, are offered in the spirit of continuing and extending those dialogues, and motivating comparative historical sociologists to "Join the conversation!" Investigating the tensions between assumptions and complex realities through the lens of sociological research should provide socio-historical context on movements that have thrived in the face of similar challenges (Chen 2009; Turner 2006). Fligstein and McAdam call for empirical research that applies their SAF perspective and distinguishes modes of collective action in markets and politics (2011). Given that deliberative democracy is an emerging field with political and market relevance at multiple scales, scholarship on public deliberation should have much to contribute to sociological research and theory in return.

APPENDIX: SURVEY DESIGN

A number of concerns based on findings in the ethnographic research conducted from 2006 through 2009 drove the non-random sampling design used in the 2009 survey. In line with Small's caution that "random is not necessarily better…which [sampling] method to employ depends only on the objectives of the project" (2008:4), the following appendix details the rationale for non-random sampling given the objectives in this particular project, which used multiple methods of data collection (Small 2011), but followed case study logic appropriate in small-N studies concerned in asking "how and why questions" rather than "how many" questions (Small 2008:6).

A simple random sample of membership rolls of the NCDD or IAP2 would not yield a sample that represented the population of deliberation practitioners. My awareness that many self-identified practitioners were not members of either organization, and that many deliberation practitioners belong to professional associations as "organizational members" while some members are neither volunteer nor professional practitioners, led to an expanded approach that attempted to sample a broader range of practitioners at the expense of generalizability to a smaller subset of that population, with which I was already very familiar. The survey focused on all self-identified deliberation practitioners, including those running independent, privately-owned deliberation consultancies and those working within full-service consultancies and public agencies not exclusively dedicated to deliberation. There is, given their diversity (engineering firms, public relations firms, and urban planning firms, to name a few, in addition to natural resource agencies, planning agencies, redevelopment corporations, etc.), no comprehensive listing of such organizations comparable to those used by Kreiss (2009) and Walker (2009), nor any reporting requirements for subsidizing public deliberation that would allow for random sampling. Even consultants who specialize in facilitation projects for public agencies are typically not pre-approved in contracting databases.

Although non-random sampling is not appropriate for a developed field in which organizations or practitioners are readily identified in available sampling frames, this method is appropriate in a case where the population of organizations remains undefined and where individuals typically conduct their work through more than one organization. Despite the developing professional associations described here, there is still no common qualification that would make identification of deliberation practitioners possible. It is in part this amorphous character that makes elaboration of influences on the field worth studying, inasmuch as it is "interstitial" (Medvetz 2008) and draws legitimacy from a variety of related fields. Given that I had reached saturation already in qualitative research on listserv, conference, and training settings, I was curious to see

whether the higher level of abstraction in a survey of a broader sample of self-identified deliberation practitioners connected through electronic networks to the field would complement findings in the fine-grained qualitative data already collected among those deeply engaged in field-building activities and discussions (see Small, 2011, on complementary versus confirmatory aims in multi-method research).

For these reasons, I concluded that the potential for including those less connected to the field was preferable to designing my own non-random sampling frame, as in the case of the Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini survey of sponsoring organizations (2009). I took a number of measures to assess the extent of respondents' engagement in the field and to account for problems of sampling bias through self-selection in the survey. I included questions on survey recruitment, level of survey engagement, organizational affiliation and demographics in order to gauge the participation of particular subgroups and the response rates for particular listservs. Comparison of the demographics of the survey respondents to data on subsamples of the target population collected in my research (such as existing surveys of association members or attendees at professional conferences) typically revealed differences of a few percentage points on average on both demographic questions and substantive questions. See discussion of gender on pp. 15-16 and of client types on pp. 24-25, for example.

Regarding response rates, the Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini study used a purposive sampling frame of organizations involved in sponsoring deliberation, and had an overall response rate of 23% (2009:143). Based on our analysis of individual listserv response rates, we had much lower response rates than the Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini survey, which used mail surveys and telephone follow-ups by a professional survey research firm (2009:143). Listserv invitations in our survey had comparable click-through rates of, for example, 24%, but a completion rate for the same list of 14.4%. Because many individuals belonged to multiple lists and thus received the survey solicitation multiple times, the response rate for any particular list is likely slightly lower than the actual response rate. Given the length of the survey (45 questions), overlapping list memberships, and the fact that some individuals on the lists were not in the target population (not from the United States, for example), these response rates are in line with typical response rates for Internet surveying, which vary quite a bit but are on average about 10% less than typical mail response rates (Shih and Fan 2008).

As it turned out, the data collected in the survey confirmed the areas of agreement and disagreement already identified in the qualitative research, indicating that, despite the wide net, sampling bias through self-selection most likely favored those centrally-located in the field. It is critical to observe the cautions of Small (2008) regarding the inappropriate application of statistical language to research conducted using case study logic. The foregoing discussion

is not intended to establish the significance or generalizability of survey findings, but only to indicate that extensive efforts were made to understand the profile of the non-random group who took the survey, based on previously-collected empirical knowledge of the field. Please see the public survey website (http://sites.lafayette.edu/ddps) for a more extensive discussion of survey design, sampling, and limitations.

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