The Policy Studies
connexionist model is especially robust. The basic components of our argument are:

In this paper, we first review the field's basic social and organizational characteristics. But also by the nature of DD's internal and external connections and the political system will be affected not only by the norms, practices of DD, and the "micropolitics" of deliberation, which remain a central focus of researchers and practitioners, but also by the field's basic social and organizational structure.

With uncertainty looming, researchers and practitioners of democratic deliberation (DD) have given some attention to the structure and nature of power in their understanding, but have varied considerably. Five conceptions of the field have been identified: analysis, information, and the constellation of individuals and institutions interested in advancing the values and practices of DD, community of practice, social movement, strategic action field, and a network or connections. These conceptions simultaneously describe past developments and suggest future possibilities for the field. We see activity trending in ways that are best explained by the connexionist model, and think that this trend has promising implications for accelerating the impact of DD. Such acceleration is critical if global problems such as climate change are to be effectively addressed: reaction happens too late.

Our analysis builds on the notion that prospects of broadly realizing deliberative ideals in the American political system will be affected not only by the structural features of "micropolitics" of deliberation, which remain a central focus of researchers and practitioners, but also by the field's basic social and organizational structure.

In this paper, we first review the field's basic social and organizational characteristics and these five models in order to assess their contributions to understanding the evolution of the field and substantiate our claim that the connexionist model is especially robust. The basic components of our argument are:

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The network model is uniquely flexible and adaptable: while each of the five concepts points to activity that would advance the field in some way, the network concept incorporates those ideas and others along with a framework for understanding how activities come together.

Only the network concept demands identification of problems—a term we use to include challenges, issues, and opportunities—while neither narrowing the focus to a certain category of issues nor preventing a refined focus.

Only the network and strategic action fields models emphasize connections both inside and outside the DD arena.

Networks stand alone in identifying projects as the basic unit of social and economic organization, which enables the specification and evaluation of wide-ranging activity.

The connexionist framework also has clear practical implications, which are the primary concern of this paper. For example, the hypermobility of people, institutions and things in a world organized on network principles favors those who are versatile, adaptive and risk-tolerant, and creates largely invisible social relations through which mobile people exploit less mobile people who lack these qualities. Mitigating such imbalances thus means equalizing opportunities and outcomes and rewarding efforts to establish connections and the mobility that goes with them, and high-quality mechanisms for holding the mobile managers of deliberative systems accountable.

Practical steps for accomplishing these goals in the deliberative system might be the inclusion of citizen participants in deliberative events in the system’s governance, and enhancing ways of recognizing participation (e.g., by permitting deliberative participation to satisfy jury duty requirements). The larger purpose of such initiatives is to nurture the network of deliberative democracy, which we argue is a critical need if the deliberative system is to flourish rather than recede, and contribute to anticipatory governance of compounding environmental challenges from local through global levels.

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Interview with Steve Brigham, AmericaSpeaks, January 10, 2013 and AmericaSpeaks website.


Information regarding participation available on the White House’s own website (http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/participation) is sparse. Furthermore, in a memorandum concerning guidance for 2014 agency open government plans, five of five new or enhanced initiatives are transparency-oriented, and only two of ten ongoing initiatives address participation (http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/open_gov_plan_guidance_memo_final.pdf).

Biography

Charles Balter – Pomona College

Charles Balter is a student and researcher of democratic deliberation in the U.S. working under the guidance of Dr. Richard Worthington. He holds a B.A. in public policy analysis from Pomona College (Claremont, CA), where he studied environmental and natural resource economics, the ethics of climate change, and participatory methods in research and policy decision-making. He started his career working in a U.S. Senate office, where interactions with staff and constituents made him question whether citizens could and should have more input on decisions that affect their lives. He currently works for McKinstry, an engineering, construction, and facility management firm dedicated to making buildings efficient, comfortable, and safe.