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Deliberative Democracy and Inequality: Two Cheers for Enclave Deliberation among the Disempowered

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Keywords: deliberation; equality; power; group polarization; civic engagement

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Abstract

Deliberative democracy grounds its legitimacy largely in the ability of speakers to participate on equal terms. Yet theorists and practitioners have struggled with how to establish deliberative equality in the face of stark differences of power in liberal democracies. Designers of innovative civic forums for deliberation often aim to neutralize inequities among participants through proportional inclusion of disempowered speakers and discourses. In contrast, others argue that democratic equality is best achieved when disempowered groups deliberate in their own enclaves (interest groups, parties, and movements) before entering the broader public sphere. Borrowing from each perspective, we argue that there are strong reasons to incorporate enclave deliberation among the disempowered within civic forums. We support this claim by presenting case study evidence showing that participants in such forums can gain some of the same benefits of deliberation found in more heterogeneous groups (such as political knowledge, efficacy and trust), can consider a diversity of viewpoints rather than falling into groupthink and polarization, and can persuade external stakeholders of the legitimacy of the group's deliberations.

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Introduction

The struggle to balance the voices of lay citizens with the voices of experts and elites has always been a feature of deliberative democracy. In classical Athens, professional rhetors with greater education and knowledge of politics took the most active role in addressing the citizen Assembly.[1] In the New England town meetings of the 1700s, achieving consensus often depended upon discounting the interests of those with the least status and trusting the judgment of "the kinds of men who had always held power in the town."[2] And, of course, most community members were denied standing as citizens and excluded from these deliberative bodies entirely.

Over the past two decades, revived interest in the theory and practice of deliberation has been driven in part by a concern for achieving discursive equality in diverse and stratified societies. Deliberation fulfills its special claims to democratic legitimacy when it focuses participants on decision-making based on how well they justify their views to one another rather than on participants' "authority, status, numbers, money, or muscle": "Decisions resulting from deliberation may be more *fair* and *legitimate* because they result from reasons rather than arbitrary advantages. They may be *wiser* because they allow a broad range of perspectives and information to be pooled together."[3] Despite their differences, some of the initial and most influential theories of deliberation have argued that deliberation among equals can occur if we privilege rational discourse over other forms of communication, require participants to orient arguments toward the common good rather than private or group interests, and prioritize arriving at some form of consensus rather than majority rule.[4]

However, this initial phase of the "deliberative turn" in political theory has been widely criticized for perpetuating rather than resolving the problem of inequality. Critics contend that "the demands for reason, consensus, and the common good may marginalize or exclude members of disadvantaged groups."[5] A vision of rational discourse in which speakers must give logical reasons and evidence for their positions favors "the talk of an identifiable and privileged sector" trained to engage in this kind of discourse.[6] Considerable evidence from experimental psychology and traditional deliberative settings (such as juries and public hearings) suggests that those with more education and higher status speak more frequently and that "the vast gap between elite and citizen expertise is likely to make elites far more influential than citizens" in such contexts.[7] In addition, insistence on consensus can suppress discussion of difficult differences in ways that "narrow the possible agenda for deliberation and thereby effectively silence some points of view," especially the values and interests of the marginalized.[8] Exclusive consideration of the common good can also be a subtle means of domination because "definitions of the common good are likely to express the interests and perspectives of the dominant groups in generalized terms."[9]

In response to these criticisms, many deliberative scholars have incorporated concerns about inequality into the theory of deliberative democracy. Following Young and Sanders, some have adopted a broader notion of rationality that includes greater appreciation of the role of emotion, storytelling, and rhetoric as valuable elements of civic reasoning.[10] Others have leavened the desire for consensus with an appreciation for productive disagreement that encourages participants to explore their differences and allows room for negotiating them or putting them to a majority vote.[11] Some empirical evidence finds that contestation and disagreement can improve the quality of deliberation, for example by increasing the number of reasons citizens are able to generate for different positions, especially reasons why others might

have differing opinions.[12] Others have rethought whether deliberation must always be oriented toward the common good, accepting that the "articulation of self-interest [has] a legitimate role in democratic deliberation, particularly in discussions of fair distribution."[13] Chambers offers a revised definition of deliberation that reflects many of these changes in thinking:

> We can say that deliberation is debate and discussion aimed at producing reasonable, well-informed opinions in which participants are willing to revise preferences in light of discussion, new information, and claims made by fellow participants. Although consensus need not be the ultimate aim of deliberation, and participants are expected to pursue their interests, an overarching interest in the legitimacy of outcomes (understood as justification to all affected) ideally characterizes deliberation.[14]

A host of new civic forums that are increasingly informing and influencing public policy offer promising places for this kind of deliberation. These forums include deliberative polls, consensus conferences, planning cells, citizens juries, 21st century town meetings, citizens assemblies, and participatory budgeting.[15] Despite their different designs, these civic forums all create "minipublics"[16] – structured deliberations among microcosms of the public that generate recommendations, monitor government, and sometimes contribute directly to enacting policy. In the past decade, these forums have helped shape many policy processes, including the state of Oregon's healthcare reforms, the annual budgets of several Latin American cities, a proposal for electoral reform in British Columbia, Chicago's community policing and school boards, the redevelopment plans for the former World Trade Center site in lower Manhattan, and Danish regulations on genetically modified foods. To address potential inequalities, organizers of such forums have paid much attention to putting control over the selection of participants, framing of issues, structure of agendas, and definition of the goals of deliberation in the hands of intermediaries with no stake in the outcome, or multi-partisan groups that provide checks and balances on competing interests, or a mixture of both kinds of entities. These forums also employ a wide array of procedural safeguards for ensuring that all can participate freely and equally in deliberation, including rules for discussion and moderators trained in eliciting participation from all and in minimizing domination by particular participants or ways of speaking.[17] Several studies suggest that well-designed forums can succeed at diminishing patterns of inequality in participation and influence over public deliberation.[18]

Still, some theorists have argued that boosting equality depends not simply on including disempowered groups in cross-cutting discussion with more privileged citizens and powerful institutions, but also on the ability of the marginalized to confer among themselves in their own social movement organizations, interest groups, or parties. In this view, the disempowered need to be able to "oscillate between protected enclaves, in which they can explore their ideas in an environment of mutual encouragement, and more hostile but also broader surroundings in which they can test those ideas against the reigning reality."[19] Yet most of the innovative civic forums we have mentioned follow a process of inclusion of the marginalized within a random sample or quasi-representative microcosm of the public as a whole.[20]

In this article we propose the incorporation of spaces for enclave deliberation for the disempowered within civic forums. We argue why such a move could enhance the overall quality and equality of deliberative democracy in ways that deliberative theory and practice has not yet fully examined. We are also aware of the potential pitfalls for democracy and the disempowered when people talk only amongst their "own kind," and so we offer the proverbial two cheers rather than three for this kind of talk. But we see the dangers as surmountable when structured group discussion among the least powerful is sandwiched between prior and

subsequent exposure to actors in the broader policy sphere. We support our claims with evidence from a civic forum that was modified to foster deliberation among the disempowered – a consensus conference on the issue of municipal broadband Internet service. We conclude by considering how novel forms of deliberation among the least powerful might be built into different kinds of civic forums and how researchers might assess their value. In doing so, we respond to deliberative scholars' and practitioners' calls for research on pressing questions about how the design and structure of deliberation affects its quality and outcomes, as well as the relationship between deliberation and advocacy or public involvement.[21]

Enclave Deliberation and the Disempowered

Before proceeding, we should note what we mean by disempowered groups. Although power is multifaceted and can be historically fluid,[22] at any given time and place there are identifiable groups that are "more difficult to organize, articulate, mobilize, and integrate into policy discussions."[23] They may be formally excluded from aspects of the political system (e.g., because they are denied voting rights or legal standing in administrative arenas) or may lack resources for effective organization and action. Such groups typically exert demonstrably less influence on institutional and public policy making through organized lobbying, campaign contributions, legal advocacy, voting, and other major methods of affecting policy.[24] As a result, policy makers serve these groups' interests less well when they conflict with the interests of better organized groups possessed of greater resources to press their case. Historical examples of the disempowered in the United States include African-Americans and women, especially prior to each group gaining effective ability to vote. Perhaps the clearest examples in the contemporary U.S. are low-income people and undocumented immigrants.[25] We stress, though, that our definition of disempowered is not limited to questions of identity. The groups we have in mind may fall into identifiable demographic categories, as in the case of the gender or ethnic groups, but they may also be disempowered in relation to particular issues, regardless of other socio-demographic attributes or privileges they may enjoy.

The Challenges

At best, most deliberative democrats tend to tolerate with ambivalence the idea of deliberation among homogeneous groups. Because there are good reasons to be cautious about enclave deliberation, we pause to review them before introducing the potential benefits.

First, homogeneity can undermine the legitimacy of deliberation. As Gastil suggests, many adherents to a "common good" vision of deliberative democracy are implicitly driven by the attempt to discover Rousseau's general will – that expression of the public based on the common interest, rather than on the claims of factions (interest groups or stakeholders) or the aggregation of private individual views.[26] A randomly selected or representative group is seen as more likely to transcend narrow interests and consider the common interest.[27] A somewhat different normative rationale is that "outcomes are legitimate to the extent they receive reflective assent through participation in authentic deliberation by all those subject to the decision in question," or where those affected have at least an equal right to participate.[28] In addition, even if we accept the legitimacy of some self-interested advocacy in deliberation, as we must realistically, a group that fails to include a broad cross-section of those who are most affected by

their decision will likely draw protest or indifference from those who feel that their interests were excluded.[29]

Second, more homogeneous groups can limit the diversity of views considered and therefore the quality of deliberation. At the extreme, enclave deliberation may breed groupthink, in which maintaining the unity of the group comes to outweigh all other aims.[30] Such groups tend to make poor decisions based on incomplete and biased information and fail to weigh alternatives fully. The classic signs of groupthink include overestimating the group's power and moral justness, sharing an illusion of unanimous opinion among members (often based on self-censorship and quashing dissent), and ignoring evidence that contradicts the group's views.[31] Experimental research in social psychology often finds that homogeneous groups are also more vulnerable to group polarization, in which "members of a deliberating group predictably move toward a more extreme point in the direction indicated by the members' predeliberation tendencies."[32] In this theory, the group fails to change or moderate its initial views because of social comparison, as members fear loss of reputation by being in the minority,[33] or because the majority can supply more arguments for their position and thereby strengthen their confidence in their views, win over the undecided, and silence opponents.[34] In either case, group members do not decide based on the strongest arguments. Groups are most likely to polarize if they see themselves as sharing an identity that is made salient to them during deliberation (such as party affiliation, race, gender, or profession) and if they meet regularly over time while insulating themselves from competing views.[35] Democratic theorists, most notably Cass Sunstein, therefore warn that greater homogeneity, especially among the disempowered, could lead to a greater sense of alienation from government and citizens outside the group, increasing mistrust and undermining individual self-efficacy.[36]

The Potentials

Despite these concerns, some deliberative democrats see value in enclave deliberation among those with little power, especially as it occurs within voluntary organizations and social movements. There are several justifications for creating spaces within any democratic society for enclave deliberation among disempowered groups.

First, if enclave deliberation violates the ideal that all who are affected by a decision should have an equal opportunity to participate in making it, this is not a normative problem so long as enclave deliberation is one step in a larger public discussion that includes cross-cutting talk between social groups. Furthermore, the notion that all who may be affected must have a chance to be selected to deliberate through representative sampling is impractical in almost all cases. Strictly speaking, representative sampling for deliberation is enormously difficult and presents legitimacy problems of its own, even setting aside basic rights of free association. Ryfe summarizes the main reasons why.[37] It is impractical, and often impossible, to reconcile the demands of deliberation in small groups with the numbers required to achieve a representative sample of any large scale polity. If legitimacy requires that all those who are affected by a decision should be sampled, it is difficult to determine the boundaries of such a group given the interdependence of local, national, and global politics. And if participants are chosen to ensure that all major viewpoints or communities are represented, deliberators are also expected to learn and be open to changing their views as they discuss them with others, which means that participants may no longer represent the positions or communities that justified their inclusion in the first place. Thus, "by fulfilling one deliberative principle (learning), the method short-

circuits another (representativeness)."[38] Enclave deliberation does not elude these difficulties. Our point is that attempts at representativeness do not necessarily guarantee greater deliberative legitimacy than attempts to recruit enclaves.

Second, requiring consensus does not guarantee that those who hold minority views will be coerced. Mendelberg's review of the empirical literature concludes that the effect of decision rules on deliberation depends on a range of contextual factors, including homogeneity.[39] Empirical evidence shows that in groups of friends, women, or social equals, for example, requiring unanimity rather than majority rule can spark "deliberation that makes people more open-minded and willing to listen to minority views, resolving conflict properly and leaving deliberators feeling that everyone received a fair hearing."[40] Though such outcomes are not always to be found, they may be especially likely in groups that develop a strong sense of community with shared interests and norms.[41] It may be safer for people to reconsider their views among their peers than in more diverse settings, where defending minority identities against the majority may be more salient.[42]

Third, as Sunstein concedes, even if group polarization occurs, this is not an inherently undesirable outcome from a normative standpoint. At any given place or time, a normatively laudable position that is perceived as "extreme" by the majority – such as calling for the abolition of slavery in the United States in the early 1800s – may be more just than a "moderate" stance. Thus, to reject all instances of polarization within disempowered groups would be to adopt a conservative bias against innovative views or a centrist bias against minority positions. In at least some instances, polarization among disempowered groups may be a sign of deliberative breakthrough, not deliberative dysfunction. Similarly, genuine deliberation does not have to end in movement away from participants' pre-discussion attitudes.[43] As long as participants hear and seriously consider a range of views, it is as legitimate for deliberation to clarify and strengthen deliberators' pre-existing positions as to change them.

Fourth, the deliberation of the disempowered may be necessary to broaden the range of voices and views in the wider public sphere. Self-selected participants in organized public discussion tend to be disproportionately white, middle class or affluent college graduates, which undermines the aim of equal participation and diversity of views by failing to involve those who participate less in the political system.[44] Therefore, as Sunstein observes:

> A certain measure of isolation will, in some cases, be crucial to the development of ideas and approaches that would not otherwise emerge and that deserve a social hearing. Members of low-status groups are often quiet within heterogeneous bodies, and deliberation in such bodies tends to be dominated by high-status members. Any shift . . . that increases the number of deliberating enclaves will likewise increase the diversity of society's aggregate 'argument pool'.[45]

Enclave deliberation can thus serve the larger cause of a fully inclusive public discourse by giving disempowered or marginalized groups an opportunity to develop their own unique perspectives and arguments, which might otherwise be overlooked or ignored.

Fifth, as the anti-slavery and African American civil rights movements demonstrate as well, enclaves can serve equality by allowing marginalized groups to coalesce by discovering their common interests and identities, strengthening their resolve to advocate for themselves, and building organizations that can do so effectively.[46] By removing professional experts and high-status citizens from the group's deliberation over policy positions, enclave deliberation may allow disempowered participants to overcome oft-observed forms of coercion by elites, leading to greater group solidarity and political efficacy.[47]

Our review of the advantages and disadvantages of enclave deliberation suggests that there are in fact three kinds of enclaves that are sometimes conflated and that contextual factors, not simply the existence of common ties, have a good deal to do with whether such groups will polarize.. One kind of enclave consists of ad hoc groups who share similar pre-deliberation *views* on the issue at hand, such as the typical groups convened by experimental researchers in the lab. An example would be a racially and economically diverse group of U.S. citizens convened to discuss whether documented and undocumented immigrants in the USA should be given citizenship rights, in which a majority of the group already holds pro-immigrant views. Another type of enclave, suggested by the defense of homogeneous groups as a means of discovering affiliations and contributing new perspectives to the public sphere, may be defined as one in which members occupy a shared *structural location* in relation to the issue. In relation to the immigration example, such groups would include immigration lawyers, public school educators who teach immigrant children, or employers who depend on immigrant labor. A third kind of enclave may be defined as one in which members feel that they share a common pre-deliberation *identity*. This definition is suggested by experimental studies that find groups perceiving themselves as sharing an identity are more likely to polarize during deliberation and also by defenses of enclave deliberation as a tool for strengthening solidarity among groups, especially in the social movement literature cited above. For the immigration debate, examples would be groups of Mexican-Americans or Irish-Americans, some of whom have lived as citizens in the USA for generations and others who are relative newcomers, but all of whom see themselves in part through the prism of their ethnic identity. It is possible for an enclave to share a viewpoint, location, and identity, but our point is that this cannot be assumed by predeliberation agreement on an issue, or common social circumstances, or shared demographic characteristics (such as race). One need not embrace a postmodern theory of identity as radically contingent to appreciate that our self-concepts and views are shaped in part by group contexts and cues that make some aspects of our identity more salient than others.

Further, in each kind of enclave, the salience of members' viewpoints, locations, and identities may depend in part on the kind of issue that is put to them. Again, the context of group discussion can make potential enclave relationships either more or less salient. It may be that polarization is less likely to occur if the issue is not one that draws attention to their common bonds (e.g., for immigration lawyers, whether to ban burning of the U.S. flag or to repeal the estate tax), or if the organizer of the deliberation does not make group members' potential common stake in the issue more salient to them (e.g, by addressing them as "Mexican-Americans" or "Irish-Americans"), or if the group is confronted with an issue that is just emerging into public discourse and therefore is not easily incorporated into group members' existing political schemas (such as whether to offer public subsidies for nanotechnology research).[48]

With these understandings of enclaves and their potential roles in the discursive landscape in mind, we suggest that new civic forums could provide important spaces for enclave deliberation by the dispossessed. Such forums are designed to foster deliberation of higher quality and legitimacy than in many other contexts in which deliberation often fails, such as informal conversations among social networks[49] or traditional public hearings and meetings.[50] Civic forums are more likely to provide the conditions for successful deliberation on equal terms that have been identified by empirical research.[51] When these deliberative events are designed well, participants have access to a great deal of information, including from experts and stakeholders, and a broad range of arguments (to counteract groupthink and polarization).

Groups perceive the stakes of their decision as consequential for the wider policy sphere (sustaining the motivation to deliberate). A broad range of discursive styles, from rational argument to personal anecdotes, are accepted as valid in discussion (providing an inclusive climate). Supportive facilitation helps guide and model deliberative thinking for the group (offering training in what is an unfamiliar form of communication for many). Discursive rules protect participants' equal opportunity to participate and foster mutual respect (creating a willingness to consider others' views and build trust). In this way, a well-designed civic forum may serve to enhance the laudable qualities of enclave deliberation, while simultaneously guarding against its more worrisome possibilities.

Consensus Conference Case Study

To evaluate our claim that civic forums could improve conditions of equality by incorporating enclave deliberation by the marginalized, we draw on evidence from an established format for cross-cutting deliberation – the consensus conference – that was modified to foster deliberation among the disempowered about their interests. Consensus conferences aim to promote informed public deliberation among small groups of community members to arrive at policy recommendations by unanimous decision.[52] Developed by the Danish Board of Technology and adopted by government and civil society groups around the world, consensus conferences have mainly focused on science and technology policy. In an ideal-typical conference, the project's organizers appoint an advisory panel of stakeholders on the topic at hand to oversee the fairness and inclusiveness of the conference. The advisory panel reviews the process of selecting and educating a panel of 12 to 25 community members. Conference organizers provide the community panel with background briefing papers about the issue, some of which may be written from a neutral perspective on the issues, while others may reflect the views of different stakeholders. The organizers and advisory panel select a group of experts representing a wide range of perspectives on the controversy. A facilitator helps the community panel to identify the questions they want to pose directly to the experts at a public hearing. After the hearing, the facilitator leads the community panel in structured deliberation to produce a consensus statement of policy recommendations. Significantly, the community panel is not restricted to choosing between options provided to them by others on a predetermined agenda of issues, but is free to add their own issues and solutions throughout the process. Their findings are presented publicly to government, the news media, and the public to amplify the panel's voice, attract attention to the issue, and stimulate ongoing deliberation.

However, the traditional consensus conference is vulnerable to the same concerns about inequality that we have reviewed earlier. The organizers and advisory panel may subtly marginalize some views in their selection of briefing materials, community panelists, and experts. Norms of rationality and consensus may discriminate against community panelists who have less education, deliberative experience, and socio-economic status. Consideration of the common good and the goal of consensus may lead to coercion of those with minority viewpoints. To counteract these concerns, the conference organizers in this case study departed from standard practice by exclusively recruiting members of disempowered groups to form the community panel. Explaining how and why the panelists were chosen requires some discussion of the issues the conference addressed.

Municipal Broadband and Digital Inclusion

In response to the slow and uneven extension of commercial high-speed Internet service in the United States in the mid-2000s, hundreds of municipal governments began considering whether to build their own broadband networks, triggering a robust policy debate over whether cities should invest public funds in such endeavors at all, and, if so, whether to subsidize access for those least likely to have it.[53] In Silicon Valley, where the conference was held, an alliance of over 40 cities had begun to plan one of the largest regional wireless broadband networks in the country. Some municipal broadband projects, such as Philadelphia's and San Francisco's, had put a high priority on the goal of offering affordable broadband to all residents to close the digital divide between those with high-speed service and those without it. However, the Silicon Valley broadband network was driven primarily by the goals of improving economic competitiveness and the internal communications of government agencies.[54] The project was spearheaded by Wireless Silicon Valley (WSV), a task force led by city and county Information Technology managers that also included local electrical utilities, county sheriff departments, and public transportation authorities.

In a context of low public attention to the project, two centers based at Santa Clara University – the Broadband Institute of California and the Center for Science, Technology and Society – organized a consensus conference in October 2006 on municipal broadband and digital inclusion.[55] At the outset, the conference organizers (a law professor, a communication professor, a political science professor, and a professional facilitator) posed several broad questions for the conference to address, especially with reference to the planned Silicon Valley network:

1. Should governments become involved in creating municipal broadband networks?
2. If so, how should municipal broadband networks be paid for and operated to maximize public benefits, especially to underserved communities?
3. If so, will digital inclusion require governments to provide additional resources to help underserved communities use broadband to meet their economic, civic, and cultural needs? [56]

The conference offered the first substantive effort at public consultation about the Silicon Valley project, in an environment of sparse media coverage of the proposed network and no organized attempts to influence its direction by civil society organizations. The WSV director sat on the advisory panel for the conference; he and representatives from several of the private partners chosen to build the network testified to the community panel at the public hearing. Although some of the contours of the network had been defined – including private ownership and management – much was still to be determined, including subscription costs and digital inclusion efforts. Therefore, the community panel had a unique opportunity to influence the project's decision-makers, although it was clear that its recommendations were advisory, not binding.

Instead of recruiting a community panel reflective of Silicon Valley as a whole, the organizers formed an enclave, each of whom was a member of at least one of the groups that had the lowest rates of home access to commercial broadband in the U.S. at the time: low-income people, African-Americans, Hispanics, seniors, the disabled, and rural residents.[57] All of these groups were represented on the panel and many participants fell into more than one of these categories (e.g., African-American and disabled). Although the conference brought community panelists in contact with the views of government and industry leaders through background readings and the public hearing, the group's deliberation about its policy recommendations focused on the task of articulating the interests of a disempowered group relative to the issue of

broadband access, rather than on consideration of the common good (which might have included the interests of telecommunications companies, which feared competition from municipal networks, and other residents who could easily afford broadband access, and who therefore might not have been as willing to invest tax dollars in providing access to those who could not afford it). Thus, the panel formed an enclave in the sense that all shared a structural *position* as belonging to a group that was least served by home broadband Internet service. In deliberation, as they were asked by the conference organizers to consider recommendations for connecting these groups to broadband, the community panel likely developed a stronger shared *identity* as members and representatives of the underserved.[58]

Other elements of the project adhered to the typical consensus conference format. The organizers recruited an advisory panel of 11 stakeholders from local governments, civil society organizations working on digital inclusion, and the technology and telecommunications industries. The advisory panel approved plans for recruiting community panelists, reviewed a briefing paper to ensure that it was fair and inclusive of major perspectives on the issues, and approved the composition of the experts who testified at the public hearing. Panelists received the briefing paper about one month prior to the conference. During the first weekend of the conference, the organizers gave community panelists a presentation on the issues summarized in the briefing paper to refresh their memories and responded to the panel's questions. The facilitator helped the group prioritize and define their questions about the issues for the experts and identify additional readings for each member based on her or his interests. During the second weekend, the community panel posed their questions to 11 experts from industry, government, and community organizations who testified at the public hearing, then began their deliberations in small groups focused on specific issues and in the full group. During the third weekend, the facilitator helped the community members come to consensus on policy recommendations. The organizers publicized the community panel's policy recommendations widely to government, industry, community organizations, and the news media.[59] In addition, several months later the organizers convened a follow-up forum by videoconference to discuss the community panel's recommendations with 60 representatives of municipalities, community groups, and municipal broadband service providers in four California cities where similar projects were planned or underway.

In its recommendations, the panel agreed that local governments should commission and control municipal broadband networks, with private companies building and operating the networks, especially to reach the underserved. The panel also made detailed recommendations on how cities could extend broadband access to underserved groups by subsidizing computer hardware and software, provide training, design networks to be accessible to people with disabilities and non-English speakers, protect users' privacy and security, serve rural areas, and involve the public in network planning and oversight.[60]

Research Questions

Because this was exploratory research, rather than developing formal hypotheses, we posed research questions, which aimed to address some likely concerns of deliberative democrats and their critics about this example of structured enclave deliberation. First, did the enclave group become sufficiently well-informed about the issues it considered? Second, did the enclave group experience positive changes in civic attitudes that are often found in successful deliberation among more heterogeneous groups? Prior research indicates that deliberation in

mixed groups can increase issue knowledge, interest in politics, trust in government, individual self-efficacy, trust in others, and commitment to the common good.[61] Deliberative democrats may fear that the absence of information and viewpoints that more educated participants can bring to the discussion might weaken the group's information base and ability to build trust across social differences. Meanwhile, many critics of deliberation argue that the disempowered need to participate in social movements to acquire authentic issue knowledge and self-efficacy.[62] Our first and second questions are an attempt to understand the extent to which enclave deliberation can also be a valuable school for democracy, helping participants build the knowledge and skills needed to go forth and participate in mainstream policy circles on many issues.

Third, was the group able to consider a diversity of views, avoiding both groupthink and group polarization stemming from social comparison? Deliberative scholars' greatest concern about enclaves may be that they are unable to see beyond their similarities and come to appreciate the potential diversity of perspectives within their group. Fourth, were the deliberative process and outcomes seen as legitimate – both internally (by community panelists) and externally (by experts and policy makers in government, activists, and industry figures)? We have seen that despite their differences, both deliberative democrats and their critics appeal to the values of internal equality and autonomy, which may be threatened especially by the domination of forum organizers, expert authority, and mainstream ideology. Deliberation's proponents and critics also raise concerns about whether its process and outcomes can be seen as legitimate by outsiders.[63] In particular, there is a danger that external stakeholders will dismiss the deliberation as poorly informed, not open to diverse viewpoints, and powerless to influence public discourse. These worries may be especially well-founded when deliberation takes place among disempowered groups, who may be seen by others as less knowledgeable and more partisan than more heterogeneous, representative groupings.

Methods

To answer our research questions, we surveyed many different groups involved in the consensus conference process, including the community panel, a non-deliberating control group, advisory and expert panelists, and participants in the follow-up event on municipal broadband in California.

The community panel and control group were recruited by distributing applications to approximately 80 social service agencies and community-based organizations. Almost all of the members of each group were clients of these organizations. Two in the community panel (or 17 percent) and four in the control group (or 27 percent) were staff members (computer instructors to the disabled or elderly), but none occupied leadership positions in their organizations. To encourage open deliberation, applicants who were employed by or belonged to an organization that had previously taken a public position on municipal broadband were excluded from both the community panel and control group. From the 95 applications received, the organizers selected 12 community panel members and 15 control group members, each of whom belonged to at least one group with the lowest rates of home broadband access: low-income people (defined as household earnings below 50 percent of four-county median income), African-Americans, Hispanics, seniors, the disabled, and rural residents.[64] However, to ensure that each group had enough experience of home broadband access to discuss whether it was valuable, the organizers required that at least half of the community and control group had home access. Table 1 reports

the characteristics of each group. Although assignment to the control group was not strictly random (availability on the conference weekends sometimes determined placement in control or community group, for example), the two groups were fairly evenly matched, with two exceptions. The control group had slightly fewer years of education on average (although the difference is mainly between those with some college and a college diploma), and the control group had somewhat greater access to broadband at home.

Table 1 about here

The community panelists responded to surveys one month prior to the start of the conference, at the end of each weekend of the conference, and again one month following the conference's completion.[65] The control group completed survey questionnaires prior to the consensus conference and again one month after its completion.[66] Advisory panelists and experts who testified at the public hearing completed online questionnaires one month prior to the conference and one month after its completion. The experts and advisors were about evenly split between the telecommunications industry (n=5); civil society organizations working for digital inclusion (n=7); and representatives, consultants, and service providers to local governments (n=6). Follow-up event participants (n=57), who were asked to review the recommendations of the community panelists, were about evenly split between the government and civil society categories. The response rate for the community and control panels was 100 percent, for the advisors and experts 39 percent, and for the follow-up event participants 61 percent.[67] (We present operational measures along with our findings).

These data present limitations and strengths. Like most case studies, this one involves a quasi-experimental design involving a small number of participants in a unique context, all of which requires some prudence about the external validity and the generalizability of our findings. On the other hand, our case study approach also has some signal virtues for assessing the quality and equity of enclave deliberation. Compared with much of the research on enclave deliberation, which involves one-time discussions in a lab setting among college students, we are able to train the analytical microscope in fine detail on the dynamics of participant attitudes over an extended period of deliberation about a current issue of real-world significance. Repeated inquiry about community panelists' impressions of both the process and the substance of the issues allows us to show how participant attitudes changed (or remained constant) during the course of the deliberations. Much research on deliberation, such as that on deliberative polls, has been critiqued for failing to distinguish the effect of providing participants with more information on a topic from the impact of deliberation itself. The skeptics suggest that if the benefits attributed to deliberation are in fact merely the result of being more informed about a range of policy positions by briefing materials, or exposure to public officials, then perhaps deliberation is unnecessary.[68] Our research design surveyed participants before they received a briefing paper, at the end of all three weekends of deliberation, and one month after the conclusion of the conference – a research design that allows us to discern the effects of the initial provision of information and discussion on a number of outcomes more precisely than prior research. In addition, we are able assess the external legitimacy of the deliberation through surveys of a diverse group of policy advocates, industry, and government decision-makers. In all, this case study provides some of the most careful, detailed empirical data available today of structured enclave deliberation among the less powerful.

Findings and Discussion

Information

Our first research question asked about whether the enclave group was sufficiently well-informed about the issues it considered. A potential concern about deliberation in more homogeneous groups is that participants may not gain sufficient knowledge about an issue because they will not be exposed to facts that support alternative positions and will not have to deploy facts that support their positions to persuade others. There is reason to expect that community panelists might lack basic information, given their relatively low levels of internet access and familiarity with municipal broadband prior to the conference.

Figures 1a-1b about here

We begin with some objective measures of panelists' knowledge, which are broad indicators of basic learning that do not attempt to capture the sum of participants' issue knowledge. However, panelists' inability to report this information would raise doubts about whether they were sufficiently well-informed. Our evidence shows that participants came to know important facts about broadband technology over the course of their involvement with the conference. Whereas only two-thirds of panelists could describe the difference between broadband and dial-up Internet service without prompting prior to the conference, more than 90 percent correctly answered the question one month after the conference's conclusion (see Figure 1a). Knowledge levels of the control group also increased, but by only 7 percentage points, as opposed to the 25 points among the community panelists. In addition, compared to their pre-conference responses, community panelists were able to generate a significantly longer list of activities computer users could engage in with broadband but not with dialup access. As Figure 1b shows, community panelists were able to offer, on average, almost one more advantage of broadband after the conference than before it ($p=.017$) – an increase of nearly 70 percent, compared with little improvement in the control group.

Figure 2 about here

Community panelists also gained a better sense of how access to broadband within the United States compares to access in other countries. Whereas prior to the conference no community panelist could correctly rank the U.S. among OECD countries in broadband subscribers per capita, fully three-quarters of community panelists could do so one month after the deliberations, while the control group exhibited essentially no change (see Figure 2).[69]

Table 2 about here

These objective measures of information are strengthened by the subjective impressions of both conference participants and outside observers. Table 2 highlights participants' sense of their own levels of knowledge after each of the three consensus conference weekends as well as at-a-distance summary judgments from advisory panelists and experts who testified to the panel at a public hearing. From the first weekend on, participants felt that they were receiving high-quality information about municipal broadband, and they expressed strong agreement with the

idea that they were learning new information and considering new points of view. Just as importantly, community panelists appeared to grasp that they had much to learn and that such learning would continue over the course of each conference weekend. In other words, participants felt that they gained new information as the deliberation proceeded across each weekend. For them, learning about the issues appeared to include more than simply reading the background briefing paper, and their subjective sense of learning continued through the final full weekend of deliberation. After the first two weekends, participants were, on average, unsure whether they understood enough to make effective recommendations, but by the end of the last weekend, when they completed their policy recommendations, the panelists felt strongly that their conclusions had been backed by sufficient information.

Perhaps the strongest evidence supporting this point is provided by the outside experts who observed or testified at the conference's public hearing and read the group's policy recommendations. As Table 2 highlights, these experts tended to share participants' impression that they were provided with sufficient information to produce well-grounded policy recommendations. In addition, the experts who observed the public hearing came away satisfied that the community panelists were conversant in the important issues and found the panel's policy recommendations exhibited a solid understanding of "the basic issues surrounding municipal broadband."

We interpret this combination of evidence as cause for optimism about well-structured enclave deliberation's ability to inform disempowered participants sufficiently, though additional research is needed to explore the limits of such learning. Still, these results point to the conclusion that organizers of structured deliberations can ensure that information relevant to a broad range of arguments is provided and considered through background briefing papers, presentations, hearings, and facilitation that gently challenges participants to support their arguments with factual claims as well as other forms of evidence. In addition, these findings suggest that the effects of the initial provision of information in the briefing paper, exposure to experts at the public hearing, and deliberation among the group cannot be as neatly disentangled as skeptics of deliberation suggest. Participants did not simply stop learning after reading the briefing paper. Instead, they strongly agreed that they learned new information and discovered new perspectives on all three weekends of the conference (see Table 2), including the third weekend devoted entirely to their deliberations among themselves. The assumption that non-experts could absorb all the information they need from reading a paper, or from interaction with experts, is not borne out by our data. Rather, the community panelists repeatedly indicated that they learned in part through discussion with their peers. Given the striking consistency of their responses, it seems unlikely that other benefits from the conference discussed below can be attributed entirely to upfront provision of information or exposure to experts and not at all to deliberation.

Attitudes

Second, we asked whether the enclave group experienced positive changes in civic attitudes that are often found in successful deliberation among more heterogeneous groups. To the extent that these attitudinal benefits depend on interacting with a diverse set of deliberators, greater homogeneity, especially among the disempowered, could lead to a greater sense of disempowerment, difference or alienation from government and citizens outside the group,

increasing resentment or mistrust. Therefore, we administered a plethora of measures of these attitudes before and after the conference to the community panel and control group.

On a number of measures, we found that the conference did not provoke statistically meaningful change. Participation in the conference had no significant effects on broader interest in local politics or broadband policy, frequency of discussion of local affairs or broadband policy, trust in local government, confidence in speaking abilities, assessments of local government decision-making processes, confidence in the competency of average people to deal with a complex political world, or belief in the ability of ordinary people to consider all opinions or to back up their opinions with good reasons. On the other hand, the conference did not lead to any meaningful declines on these measures of civic attitudes, either.[70] We note, too, that community participants came to the conference with generally high levels of interest in politics and confidence in the abilities of ordinary people, so the lack of change can be attributed, in part, to a ceiling effect. In addition, with respect to some measures, such as trust in local government or assessments of local decision-making, it is not clear that the conference should have provoked change, as community panelists had little direct exposure to local politicians or decision-making processes.

Figure 3 about here

At the same time, we found moderate but statistically meaningful effects on some measures of efficacy and trust. The strongest changes in internal efficacy came with respect to respondents' sense that they were well-qualified to participate in community politics (see Figure 3). While the control group trended slightly in the opposite direction, community panelists tended to feel more confident about their abilities after participating in the consensus conference, moving approximately one-half point on the 5-point scale, a change that is significant at the 90 percent confidence level (p=.06).

Figure 4 about here

Community panelists' levels of interpersonal trust and their sense of ordinary individuals' commitment to the common good also increased meaningfully over the course of the conference. Interpersonal trust was measured with a three-item scale coded to range between 0 and 1, with higher numbers indicating greater trust.[71] Mean levels of trust among the control group did not change at all, while the community group saw an increase of over 11 percentage points on the scale. This change is significant at the .10 level, which we interpret as meaningful movement, considering the small sample size. As Figure 4 shows, the difference between the control group and the community panel increased over time, with the post-conference difference between the two groups reaching nearly a quarter of the trust scale, a difference that achieves solid levels of statistical significance (p=.06).

Similarly, the community panel showed an increasing commitment to the notion that most people can overcome their self-interest and pursue the common good. The survey question asked respondents how much they agree or disagree with the statement: "Most people are too self-interested to agree on solutions that serve the common good." While the control group showed a slight movement in the direction of increasing agreement with the statement, the community panel moved sharply in the other direction. Among the community panelists, the pre-conference mean was 2.5 (1="strongly agree", 5="strongly disagree"), while the post-

conference mean increased to 3.08 – not yet strong levels of disagreement, but definite movement in that direction. This change exceeds standard levels of statistical significance (p=.03).

As a whole, the consensus conference did not fundamentally alter most of the participants' attitudes about local government, including levels of interest in and discussion of local politics or municipal broadband. Given that the conference lasted for only three weekends, and participants' relatively high initial levels of interest and engagement, it is perhaps too much to expect dramatic improvement in these attitudes. Yet participants also did not become more disillusioned about their ability to participate meaningfully in civic life. We find solid evidence that the conference increased respondents' confidence in their qualifications to participate in politics and increased resistance to the notion that politics are too complicated for people like them to deal with. We also found that conference participation increased social trust and bolstered optimism that people can see beyond narrow self-interests to a broader public good. These results contradict concerns that enclave deliberation further alienates participants from mainstream civic life.

Diversity of Views

Our third set of research questions asked whether conference participants were able to consider a broad range of views rather than succumbing to groupthink (failing to consider diverse views in order to maintain group unity) or polarization (moving toward an extreme position in the direction to which the group was initially inclined) for the wrong reasons (social comparison rather than free reflection on the best arguments). We expected that quality deliberation would be marked by the ability to recognize points of common agreement, but also to acknowledge the presence of disagreement when it existed.[72] In contrast, groupthink would be characterized by a heavy focus on consensus without recognition of a diversity of opinions within the panel. Group polarization sparked by social comparison would be indicated by an extreme shift in position in order to avoid conflict within the group.

Figures 5a and 5b about here.

Early in the process, most community panelists did not perceive differences of opinion among the group. As Figure 5a reveals, after the first weekend most participants strongly disagreed that "important disagreements" separated the panelists. In response to an open-ended query about what the panelists "disagreed most" about, many panelists could not name any point of disagreement. However, the first weekend's activities focused on learning about the issues, identifying needs for additional information, and forming questions to pose at the public hearing, rather than on deliberation about the benefits of different policies. It is likely that the group perceived little discord because their group activities that week were focused on seeking information rather than taking positions. However, as participants shifted into deliberation over their policy recommendations during the second and third weekends, they reported an increase in disagreement about the issues under discussion and a much greater variety of perspectives being discussed (see Figures 5a and 5b). By the end of the final weekend, all twelve participants could name at least one important difference of opinion among group members in response to open-ended queries. In their assessments of the conference one month after its conclusion, community panelists judged that allowing "people to air differences of opinion and discuss different points

of view" was one of the most important goals of the conference (mean=6.75, SD=0.62 on a 1 to 7 scale, where 1= "not important at all" and 7 = "very important").[73]

Despite their perception of more differences being aired as the conference proceeded, the participants generally found these different perspectives were welcomed, considered, and respected, rather than being a source of discomfort (see Table 3). Even on the final conference weekend, when disagreements were confronted directly and the sometimes arduous work of forging agreement in the face of strong and diverse opinions took place, most panelists still felt relatively comfortable with the deliberative exchange. Most said the process helped them to consider alternative points of view rather than closing off consideration of diverse opinions. When asked a month later whether the conference process had caused them to rethink their initial positions about municipal broadband, only two panelists said that it had not. In the end, the panelists were able to come to consensus on ten pages of detailed policy recommendations. By the conclusion of the third conference weekend, their mean level of agreement with the statement "I fully support all of the community panel's policy recommendations" was 1.5 on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) (SD=.492).

Table 3 about here

These findings run in precisely the opposite direction expected by critics of enclave deliberation. Instead of groupthink, in which consensus is based on silencing dissent or adopting an illusory sense of unanimous agreement in the interests of group unity, participants increasingly recognized that their consensus emerged from a climate characterized by real differences of opinion. Rather than undesirable group polarization, in which members tip unreflectively toward an extreme position in which the group inclines in order to save face or follow perceived group norms, participants became increasingly aware of conflicts amongst themselves, but were not made uncomfortable by them, and still achieved consensus on those recommendations upon which they could agree.

On the two issues that provoked the longest debates, the panel hammered out carefully considered agreements that were inclusive compromises rather than a movement toward an extreme position. One debate focused on the role of private companies in operating municipal networks. After much discussion, the panelists agreed that "municipal governments should be involved in developing and controlling broadband networks and should require private companies to operate the networks in ways that provide public benefits."[74] The panel suggested that "a broadband oversight committee could be established with equal representation of public, private and municipal interests. Ongoing public input should inform decisions about these networks. However, private companies should build and operate the networks."[75] This recommendation expressed a nuanced compromise between those who prioritized private firms' expertise at building networks and those who prioritized government oversight to protect the public interest. Similarly, although the panelists agreed that broadband was a necessity, they recognized that they could not come to consensus on whether a free tier of service should be offered to low-income residents.[76] Some participants felt a free service would be accompanied by a significant drawback – that some low-income people like themselves would fail to value and use the service if they did not have to pay for it. They also worried that a free tier would mean something less than full equality of access, given the likelihood that a free service would mean fewer online tools and benefits than paying households would get. A deeply committed minority was unwilling, however, to cede their view that free service was integral to digital

inclusion. Thus, after a long and sometimes contentious discussion about the meaning of equality for disadvantaged groups and the tension between price and quality of service, the panel agreed to recommend a "free or discounted tier" for low-income residents, but insisted that the lowest-price tiers, whether or free or not, should offer the same speed, privacy, and security as a full-price tier of service offered to paying households.[77]

These findings contradict the groupthink and polarization theories of enclave deliberation. They suggest that the panelists achieved a high-quality consensus not based on the absence of disagreement, but rather a willingness to engage differences productively and to press forward together to achieve outcomes acceptable to all, even if some important disagreements remained (as they inevitably will in any real-world political process). The experience of the community panel thus appears to support claims that consensus-oriented deliberative processes must also incorporate elements of adversarialism to successfully sustain consideration of diverse views, encouraging participants to explore their differences and allowing room for negotiating them.[78]

Of course, these findings also suggest the need for additional research into the mechanisms that might have promoted such an apparently successful blending of consensus and adversarial approaches, such as the role of the facilitator in establishing group norms that prize both civil agreement and a willingness to air differences. We note, too, that the nature of the questions the community participants engaged may have played a role in the Silicon Valley outcome. The community panelists tackled only one closed-ended question (should governments be involved in municipal broadband), a question on which they quickly agreed. On the further, open-ended questions (how should governments be involved and what is needed to achieve digital inclusion), the panel achieved hard-won consensus amid conflict. But the outcomes may have been different if the panel had disagreed more on the initial closed-ended question or if their further deliberation had centered on other, closed-ended questions. More research is needed to better understand the ways in which the nature of the questions under consideration shape enclave deliberation.

Internal and External Legitimacy

Our final set of research questions had to do with whether this example of enclave deliberation was seen as both internally legitimate (by deliberators) and externally legitimate (by political actors outside the group). We have already addressed several factors commonly used to define the internal legitimacy of deliberation, presenting data indicating that participants perceived they had sufficient information, fully supported the group's recommendations, and deliberated in a climate characterized by openness to a diversity of viewpoints, mutual respect, and recognition of disagreement as well as consensus. In addition, we noted in the introduction that deliberative theorists and their critics both judge deliberation's internal legitimacy based on the extent that participants exercise autonomy to make their own decisions rather than being coerced by other group members, forum organizers, or mainstream policy discourse.

Self-reports and objective evidence suggest that the panelists were fairly autonomous.[79] When asked to evaluate the decision-making dynamics in the final post-conference surveys, participants expressed overwhelming agreement with the idea that the "community panelists' recommendations came from the panelists themselves, not from the conference organizers" (mean=1.08, SD=0.29 on 1-5 scale, where 1="strongly agree" and 5="strongly disagree) and strong disagreement with the statement that "conference organizers influenced the panel's

recommendations too much" (mean=4.67, SD=0.65). Most participants also rejected the notion that "a few members of the community panel dominated the discussion" (mean=3.92, SD=1.00).

Perhaps the strongest evidence of the panelists' level of autonomy was their ability to add to the issue agenda outlined by the organizers at the start of the conference. In particular, the panel identified two issue areas that were not mentioned in the briefing paper or initial face-to-face presentation of the issues by the organizers and made multiple recommendations on each area. The panel raised the issue of protecting municipal broadband users' privacy and security, calling for equal privacy protections for all tiers of service, preventing system operators from tracking or selling users' personally identifiable information, and suggesting several specific ways in which broadband providers could notify users about risks to their privacy and security online. The panel also broached the issue of greater public involvement in every stage of developing municipal broadband networks, recommending formation of a public advisory board and specific steps it could take to guarantee "greater levels of deliberation among community residents and frequent two-way communication between residents and other stakeholders."[80]

Beyond the deliberators themselves, policy recommendations that emerge from more homogeneous deliberation by marginal groups may be seen as illegitimate by stakeholders on the issue, especially if they do not agree with the recommendations. Because this is a practical question that is, strictly speaking, about *perceived* legitimacy, we measure external legitimacy as "the extent to which key actors, decision-makers and the media accept and support the procedure and its outcomes."[81] Here we have two sources of data – first, the impressions of the experts and advisory panelists who had a supervisory role in examining conference briefing papers and were involved in the public hearing, and second, a summary judgment from those who read the panelists' recommendations and attended the follow-up event several months later. These respondents are a small but diverse group of social activists, telecommunications industry representatives, and local government representatives who observed various aspects of the consensus conference or its outcomes.

Table 4 about here.

These stakeholders tended to evaluate the work of the community panelists quite positively. As we have already seen (Table 2), experts and advisory panelists expressed solid agreement with the idea that community panelists and their recommendations were grounded in sufficient factual information. In addition, Table 4 shows that the experts and advisory panelists who attended the public hearing believed the presenters reflected a diverse set of views (Mean=1.50, SD=.29) and that all different perspectives were treated fairly (Mean=1.25, SD=.25). The experts and advisory panelists expressed moderate levels of confidence that the panelists' recommendations could actually influence subsequent debate (Mean=2.14, SD=.26) and affect the perspectives of stakeholders (Mean=2.00, SD=.44). At the same time, the experts also recognized that the panelists' recommendations would not be embraced by all sides and would likely be opposed by some interests (Mean=2.29, SD=.57). In other words, the outside experts judged the panelists as having made a substantial contribution to subsequent deliberation and decision-making on municipal broadband, articulating perspectives that would be taken seriously but that were not simply parroting already-existing views and would likely provoke opposition from some quarters.

The experts judged the panel's recommendations as well-grounded and realistic, even if they did not perfectly match the ideas and perspectives of the experts themselves. On average,

experts and advisory panelists reported moderate levels of support for the recommendations (Mean=2.00, SD=.22), although participants in the follow-up event who had read the panelists' report were more enthusiastic (Mean=1.54, SD=.18). In their open-ended comments, experts mentioned a variety of additional concerns and ideas they wished had been part of the panelists' report, but invariably, these engaged stakeholders expressed admiration for the efforts of the community panel and treated their work as a significant contribution to ongoing public discourse, even if the experts did not agree with all the recommendations.[82]

Conclusion

This case study suggests that structured enclave deliberation among the less powerful that involves immersion in a broad range of policy information and arguments could help resolve the concerns of deliberative democracy's critics, while fulfilling basic criteria for legitimate deliberation that are widely shared by deliberative democrats. Participants in the consensus conference increased their knowledge of the issues and experienced modest increases in self-efficacy and interpersonal trust rather than growing alienated or cynical about civic engagement. Instead of adopting groupthink or dangerous forms of polarization, participants perceived greater diversity of views the longer they deliberated, yet were able to arrive at a long list of policy recommendations. These recommendations contributed new perspectives to the larger policy debate and did not simply parrot the issue agenda outlined by conference organizers. Both the participants and observers in government, industry, and advocacy groups perceived the deliberative process and outcomes as legitimate.

Deliberative democrats are moving away from judging the legitimacy of deliberation by the standard of a single ideal speech situation and toward a new appreciation for what different forms of deliberation in diverse contexts can contribute to the democratic system as a whole.[83] Having moved beyond rigid norms of consensus, the common good, and rationality that undermined equal participation, deliberative democrats might well reconsider an exclusive commitment to discussion in heterogeneous or quasi-representative groupings. We have argued that the idea of enclaves is complex and may include homogenous viewpoints, structural locations, or identities, with features of the deliberative context influencing whether or not enclave perspectives are made salient. We conclude that political inclusion may sometimes be served best by incorporating into deliberative civic forums more homogeneous groups of the least powerful. This can be justified on behalf of ensuring equal footing if it improves upon cross-cutting deliberative forums' ability to attract participation by the marginalized, to develop their political knowledge and skills, to discover common interests and positions without coercion from the privileged or from each other, and to contribute a broader range of arguments to the larger public sphere. Enclave deliberation is compatible with the normative basis for deliberative democracy if it is preceded and followed by exposure to the larger public sphere.

What might this mean for deliberation's practitioners and researchers? Comparative research on civic forums that include enclave deliberation and those that do not would be most helpful at identifying whether and why more homogeneity can boost deliberative quality and equality. Because this study had no comparison group that was more heterogeneous, we cannot offer evidence that structured deliberation in more homogeneous groups is *better* according to our measures of equity and quality than deliberation in more heterogeneous groups, only that the former need not lead to some of the problems foreseen by traditional deliberative theory and its critics. Comparative research on equality in civic forums with and without enclave discussion

would be helpful, but it would depend upon convincing forum organizers to include more homogeneous groupings.

The *quality* of any deliberative forum is perhaps more complex because it depends on the many contextual factors identified by Fung.[84] Especially salient factors include who deliberates, on what issues, and using what deliberative mode. First, our case study involved a group that did not share a powerful group identity at the outset, but shared a structural position in relation to the issue of broadband access and during deliberation developed a stronger collective identity as representatives of the underserved. Cases in which participants recognize a more cohesive group identity from the start would provide stronger tests of whether enclave deliberation among the less powerful can avoid polarizing for the wrong reasons. Second, our case study group deliberated over an issue that was only beginning to surface in the public sphere. Emerging issues may be ideal for the quality of enclave deliberation because participants' interests, identities, and commitment to policy options are undiscovered territory. Under such conditions, information tends to be scarce, issues are not yet clearly located in prevailing political frames, and interest groups' and policy makers' positions are still relatively fluid. At these times, deliberation among the dispossessed may be most likely to be educative, open, authentic, and influential. Other aspects of the issue may have favored good deliberation as well by helping clarify participants' stakes: there was a strong local angle (Silicon Valley's municipal broadband plans), the issue required both discussion of facts (such as whether people take full advantage of free services) and values (such as equal opportunity and privacy), and it allowed deliberators to draw on their personal experience (of using the Internet). Research on enclave deliberation about issues that are more established, less local, more fact-driven or value-driven, and less accessible to personal experience could illuminate whether and how they provide the same opportunities for high quality enclave deliberation. Third, research could help shed light on whether other kinds of civic forums besides consensus conferences offer more or less congenial homes for productive deliberation by the marginalized. Spaces for enclave deliberation could feasibly be incorporated into all such forums, but they differ in design and purpose in numerous ways.[85] Features of the consensus conference that may be most relevant to deliberative quality in enclaves include opportunities to interact directly with policy makers and activists, allowing participants to generate their own policy options rather than simply choosing among those presented by organizers, and requiring that recommendations be agreed to by consensus rather than majority rule.

Perhaps the most important factor that may influence the quality of enclave deliberation is how empowered these forums are in relation to government and other institutions. The spectrum ranges from simply educating community members, to playing a one-time or ongoing advisory role to government, to direct enactment of policy. Our case study involved a one-time advisory relationship to officials and activists. This may be the optimal level of empowerment for deliberative quality among the disempowered. In merely educative forums, the stakes may be too low for participants to sustain a commitment to the hard work of deliberation. Although we are not aware of civic forums in which disempowered people alone enact policy decisions directly,[86] and the prospects for such forums look dim, were they to come to pass they would likely present the same barriers to reaching consensus seen in legislatures, as interest groups attempted to "rig the jury" with their surrogates and bring other pressures to bear on behalf of their positions.[87] Ongoing advisory groups of the least powerful might increase in deliberative quality as they build issue knowledge and discussion skills. But prolonged relations with

government could also undermine deliberative quality by presenting possibilities for co-optation by more powerful policy actors.

Our proposal need not involve a naïve belief that deliberative quality and equity can be entirely perfected, only that they can be improved. We agree with Joshua Cohen's recent suggestion that quality deliberation, as opposed to lesser forms of discourse and discussion, is a "fragile accomplishment" and that it would be overly simplistic to expect that "people are waiting to deliberate."[88] Such caution seems to us especially wise with respect to enclave deliberation. Our case study results thus suggest the need for additional systematic research into the conditions under which enclave deliberation is likely to result in the sorts of encouraging outcomes we found in the Silicon Valley conference. Consistent with Mutz's call for testing aspects of deliberation that are specifiable and falsifiable,[89] we encourage further research that explores the individual factors that may be necessary to promote successful enclave deliberation. At the same time, such research should take seriously the possibility that these factors of group composition, issue, deliberative mode, and level of empowerment may interact and be mutually reinforcing, such that the whole of deliberative success is more than the sum of its parts, not all of which can be neatly and easily separated. For example, we found in this study that information acquisition cannot be easily separated from deliberation itself. Instead, the community panel discovered new information and perspectives throughout the conference, including during the final weekend when they deliberated as a group and finalized their recommendations.

One thing is clear: research that simply demonstrates that deliberation fails to reach ideal standards is less useful than studies that illuminate when, how, and why deliberation might achieve greater equity and quality. Along these lines, we suggest comparative research on new civic forums with and without enclaves of the dispossessed. Another strand of comparative work might assess whether our enthusiasm for civic forums as venues for enclave deliberation would be better invested elsewhere. This research could examine the extent that deliberation in forums of disempowered people satisfies criteria of equity and quality compared with other political arenas open to them. Do civic forums offer better prospects for discussion among those who hold different views in ways that lead to empowered participation compared with discussion in informal social networks, where talk with political opposites can lead to dispirited withdrawal from politics?[90] Might civic forums provide better possibilities for the least powerful to discover and express collective interests than in some social movement organizations that have become managed by distant professionals, hierarchical, and focused on single issues?[91] Could civic forums inform and interact with deliberation within other movements, such as the global justice movement, revitalizing earlier forms of popular discussion in the interests of leadership accountability, political education and mobilization?[92] Could civic forums allow the deliberation of the disempowered to exercise more influence than at typical public hearings, which are often designed in ways that make it especially difficult for disempowered groups to contribute meaningfully to the decision-making process?[93] If so, forums with enclaves of the marginalized might deserve a third cheer.

Table 1. Community Panel and Control Panel Characteristics

	Community Panel (n=12)	Control Panel (n=15)
Household Income		
Below median	92% (11)	100% (15)
Below 50% of area median	50% (6)	60% (9)
Education		
High school graduate or less	8% (1)	7% (1)
Technical school graduate	16% (2)	7% (1)
Some college	16% (2)	47% (7)
College graduate	50% (6)	27% (4)
Post-graduate or professional degree	8% (1)	13% (2)
Race/Ethnicity		
African-American	25% (3)	33% (5)
Hispanic	33% (4)	27% (4)
Asian/Pacific Islander	25% (3)	20% (3)
White	25% (3)	20% (3)
Other	12% (1)	0% (0)
Age		
60 years or older	25% (3)	20% (3)
31-59 years	50% (6)	40% (6)
Under 30 years	25% (3)	20% (3)
Gender		
Female	58% (7)	60% (9)
Male	42% (5)	40% (6)
Physical Disability	25% (3)	27% (4)
Rural resident	8% (1)	8% (1)
Home broadband access	58% (7)	86% (13)

Notes: Area median income was $87,400 for the four counties of Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, Alameda, and San Mateo, California. Some respondents identified with more than one racial/ethnic category. Some percentages may not total 100 percent because of rounding.

Figure 1a

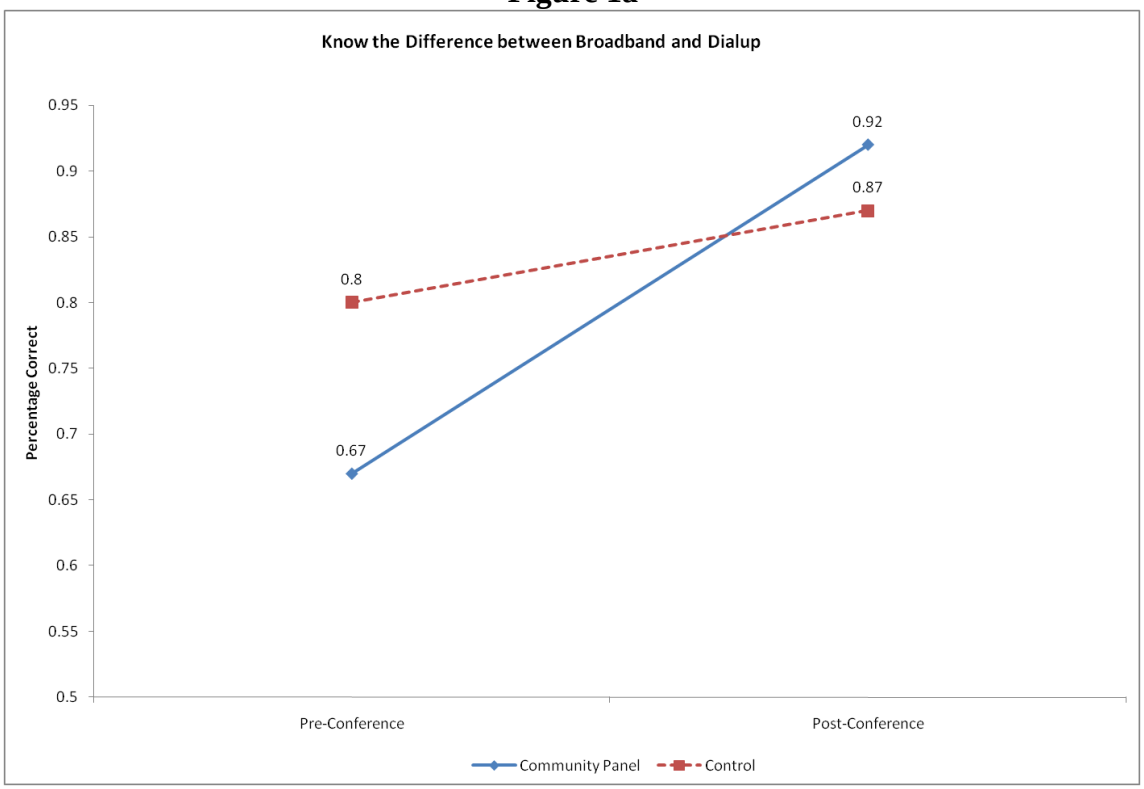

Figure 1b

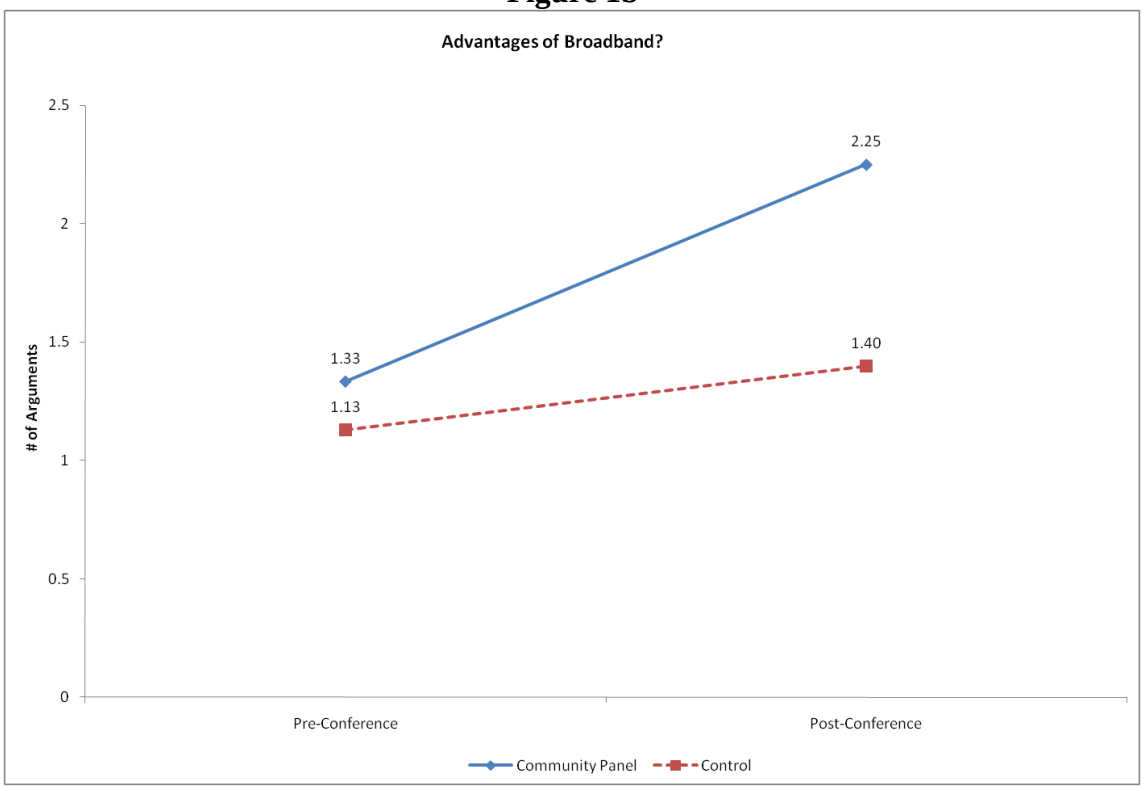

Figure 2

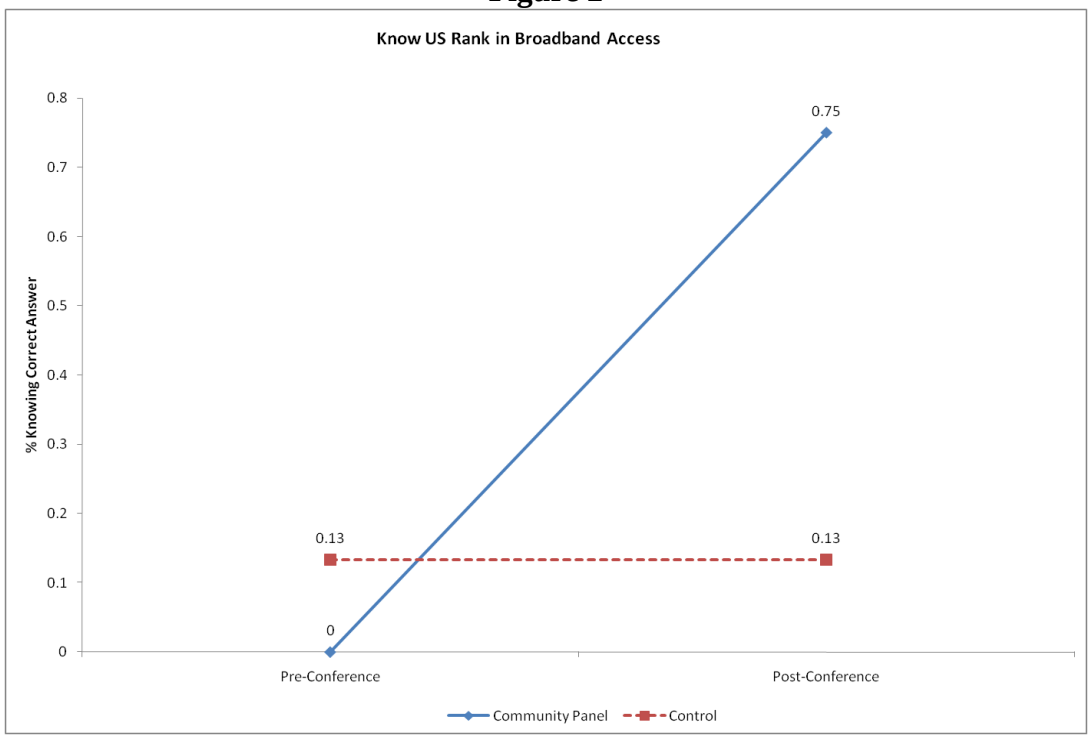
Know US Rank in Broadband Access
% Knowing Correct Answer
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
0.1
0
0.75
0.13
0.13
0
Pre-Conference
Post-Conference
Community Panel
Control

Figure 3

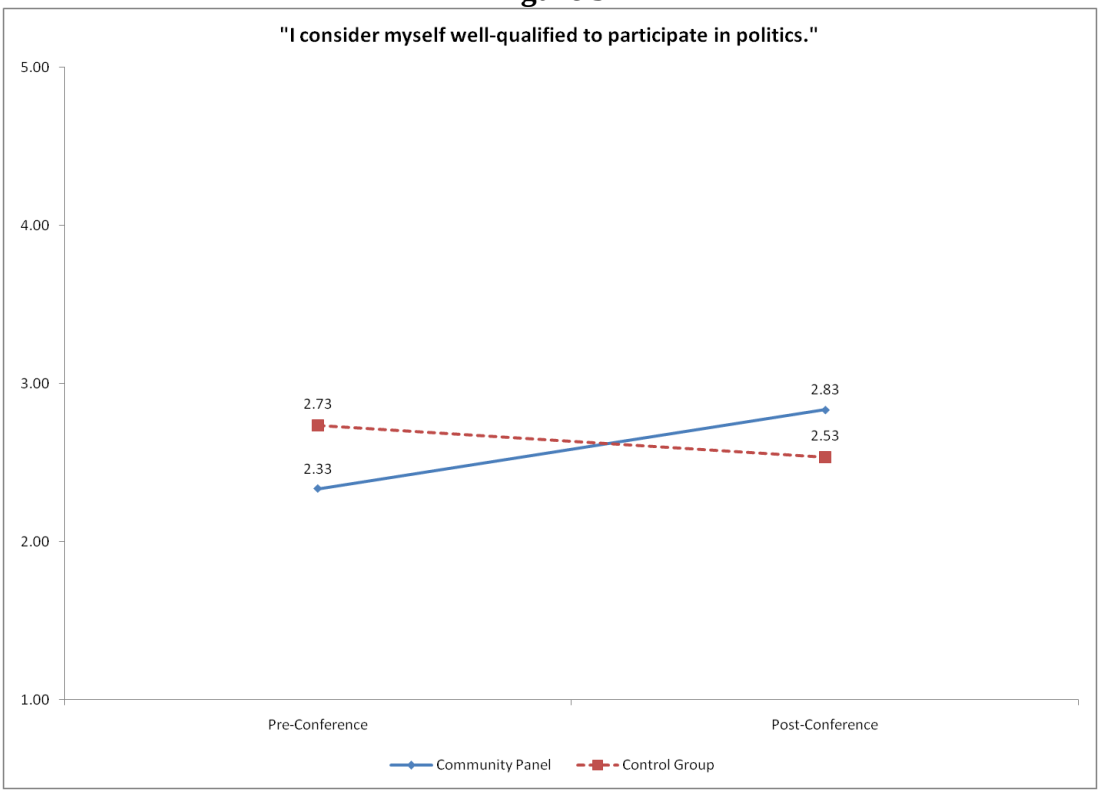

Figure 4

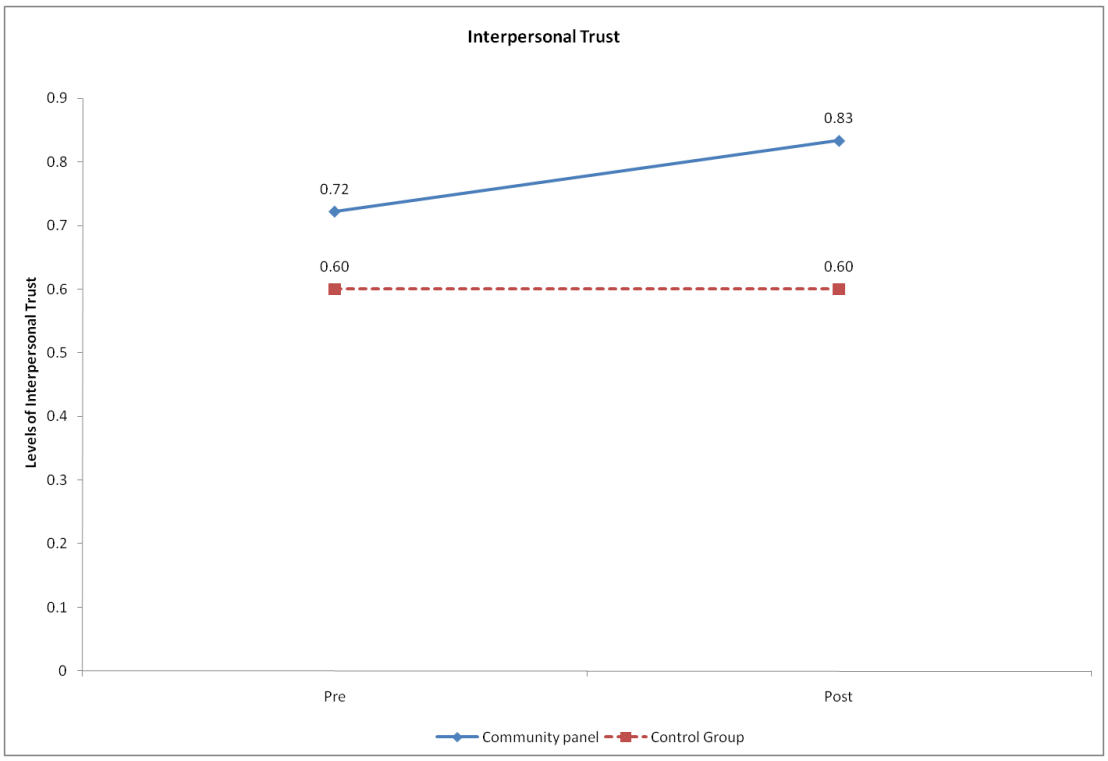
Interpersonal Trust
Levels of Interpersonal Trust
0.9
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
0.1
0
0.72
0.83
0.60
0.60
Pre
Post
Community panel
Control Group

Table 2. Impressions of Community Panelists' Knowledge of the Issues

Community Panelists' Impressions

Question	*Weekend 1 Mean*	*Weekend 2 Mean*	*Weekend 3 Mean*
The conference organizers provided sufficient information to enable the community panelists to make informed policy recommendations	1.5 (.82)	1.4 (.79)	1.3 (.45)
I learned new information about the issue of broadband access that I did not know before this weekend	1.2 (.40)	1.1 (.29)	1.5 (1.17)
This weekend's community panel discussions are helping me see new perspectives I had not considered before	1.3 (.47)	1.5 (.67)	1.4 (.90)
I do not yet understand enough to make a good recommendation about municipal broadband policy	3.0 (1.13)	3.3 (1.38)	4.7 (.89)

Experts' Impressions

Questions	*Post-Conference Evaluation*
The consensus conference provided sufficient information to enable the community panelists to make informed policy recommendations.	1.71 (.29)
Questions and comments from community panelists [at the public hearing] showed that they understood well the important issues related to municipal broadband.	1.50 (.29)
The community panel's recommendations show that the panelists understood well the basic issues surrounding municipal broadband.	1.43 (.20)

Note: All responses are on a 1-5 scale, with 1 meaning "Strongly Agree" and 5 meaning "Strongly Disagree", Standard Deviation in parentheses.

Figure 5a

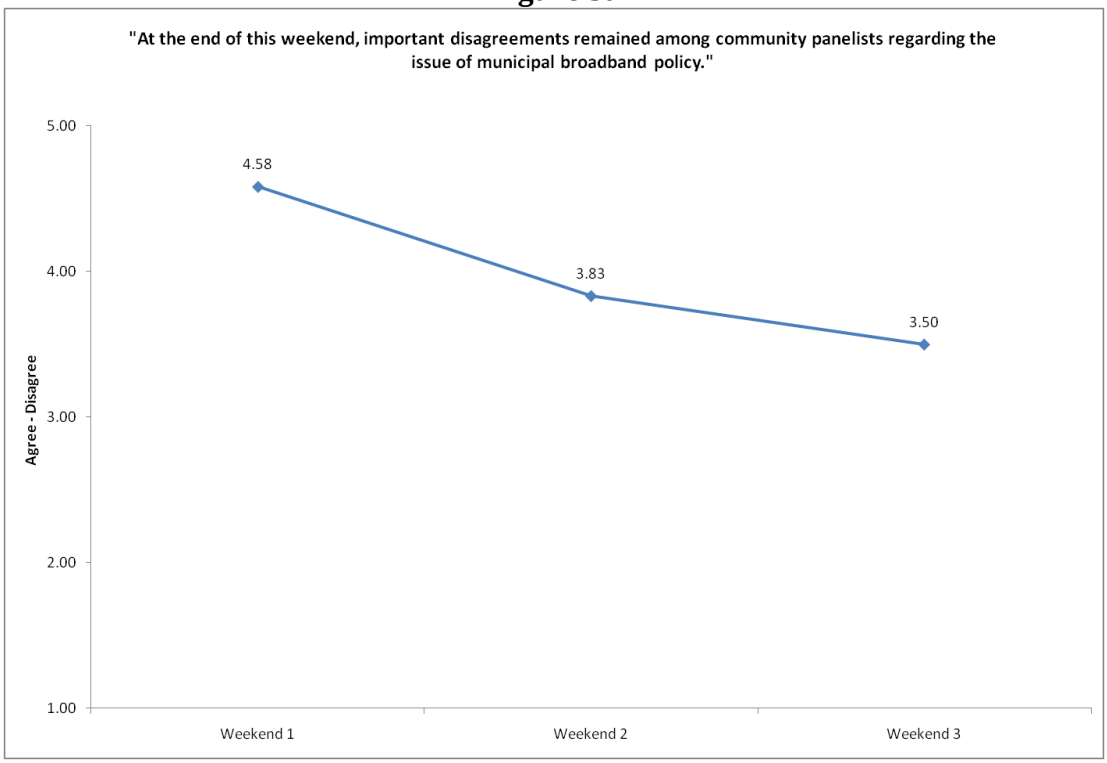

Figure 5b

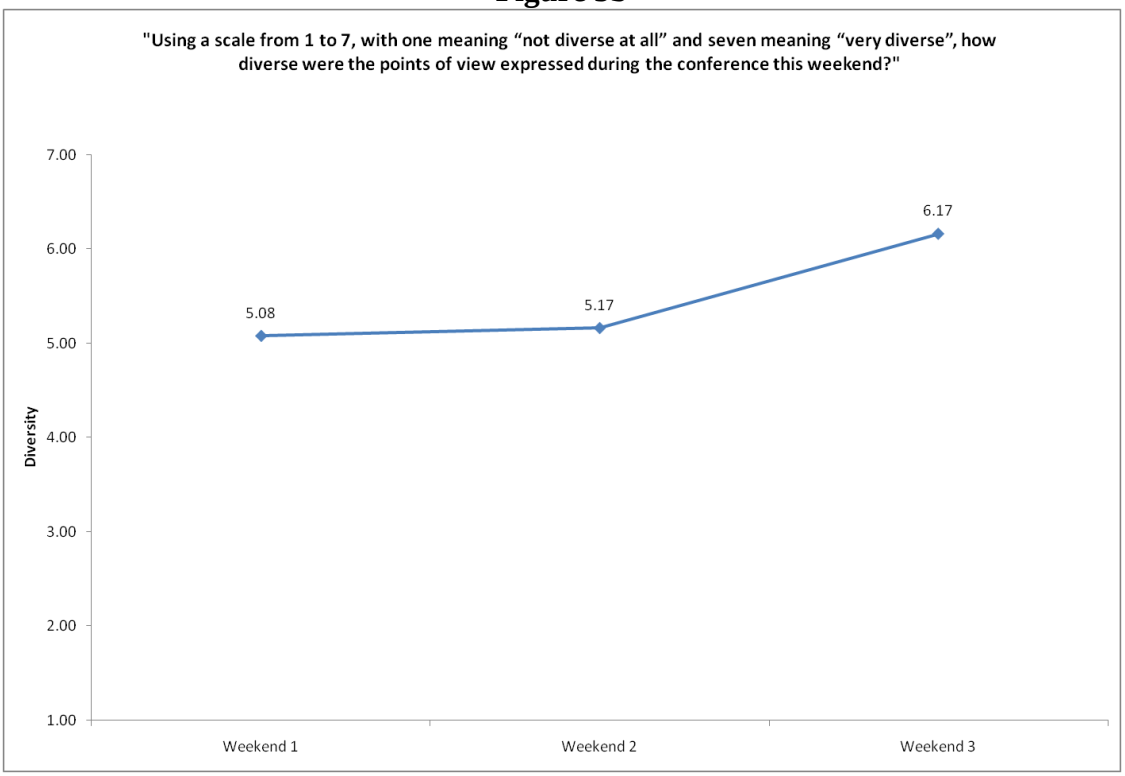

Table 3. Community Panelists' Views of the Quality of Deliberation

Question	Weekend 1 Mean	Weekend 2 Mean	Weekend 3 Mean
All different perspectives about municipal broadband were welcome during the group discussions	1.5 (.82)	1.3 (.65)	1.5 (1.00)
The community panelists carefully considered all sides of the issue	1.5 (.68)	1.8 (1.03)	1.5 (.80)
Some important perspectives or ideas about municipal broadband were not adequately considered or discussed	3.5 (1.37)	3.3 (1.30)	3.9 (1.44)
Community panelists respected each other's ideas, even if they disagreed about some important issues	1.5 (.82)	1.4 (.51)	1.4 (.79)
The group discussions this weekend made me uncomfortable because there was so much disagreement	4.9 (.30)	4.6 (.79)	4.4 (1.24)

Note: All responses are on a 1-5 scale, with 1 meaning "Strongly Agree" and 5 meaning "Strongly Disagree." Standard Deviation in parentheses.

Table 4. Expert Views of the Consensus Conference		
	Expert and Advisory Panel	Follow-Up Event Participants
Public Hearing		
Experts who testified at the public hearing represented a broad range of views.	1.50 (.29)	
At the public hearing, all different perspectives about municipal broadband were treated fairly.	1.25 (.25)	
Impact		
The consensus conference will have an impact on public policy decisions about municipal broadband.	2.14 (.26)	
The conference will affect the thinking of stakeholders in the municipal broadband issue.	2.00 (.44)	
The community panels' recommendations are likely to be opposed by important stakeholders or interests.	2.29 (.57)	
Panel Recommendations		
Some of my preferred issues and ideas did not make it into the community panel's recommendations.	3.14 (.46)	
The community panels' recommendations are not realistic.	4.43 (.30)	
I fully support all of the community panel's recommendations.	2.00 (.22)	1.54 (.18)
N	7	13

All responses scored on a 1-5 scale, with 1="Strongly Agree" and 5="Strongly Disagree"

Endnotes

[1] Josiah Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology, and the Power of the People* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).
[2] Jane J. Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 134-35.
[3] Archon Fung, "Recipes for Public Spheres: Eight Institutional Design Choices and their Consequences." *Journal of Political Philosophy* 11, no. 3 (September 2003): 344.
[4] Joshua Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," in *The Good Polity: Normative Analysis of the State*, ed. Alan P. Hamlin and Philip Pettit (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 17-34; Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984); Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
[5] Jane J. Mansbridge et al., "Norms of Deliberation: An Inductive Study," *Journal of Public Deliberation* 2, no. 1(2006): Article 7, 5, http://services.bepress.com/jpd/vol2/iss1/art7/.
[6] Lynn M. Sanders, "Against Deliberation," *Political Theory* 25, no. 3 (June 1997): 370.
[7] Tali Mendelberg, "The Deliberative Citizen: Theory and Evidence," in *Research in Micropolitics, Vol. 6: Political Decision-Making, Deliberation and Participation*, ed. Michael X. Delli Carpini, Leonie Huddy, and Robert L. Shapiro (New York, NY: Elsevier, 2002), 167.
[8] Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 43.
[9] Ibid.
[10] John Gastil, *Political Communication and Deliberation* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008); David M. Ryfe, "Narrative and Deliberation in Small Group Forums," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 34, no. 1 (February 2006): 72-93; Dennis F. Thompson, "Deliberative Democratic Theory and Empirical Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (June 2008): 497-520.
[11] John S. Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Christopher F. Karpowitz and Jane J. Mansbridge, "Disagreement and Consensus: The Importance of Dynamic Updating in Public Deliberation," in *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the 21st Century*, ed. John Gastil and Peter Levine (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 237-253.
[12] Vincent Price, Joseph N. Capella, and Lilach Nir, "Does Disagreement Contribute to More Deliberative Opinion?" *Political Communication* 19, no. 1 (January 2002): 95-112.
[13] Mansbridge et al., "Norms of Deliberation," 5.
[14] Simone Chambers, "Deliberative Democratic Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* 6 (June 2003): 309.
[15] James S. Fishkin, *The Voice of the People* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Archon Fung, "Recipes for Public Spheres"; John Gastil and Peter Levine , eds., *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005).
[16] Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).
[17] Gastil and Levine, eds., *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook*.
[18] David Dutwin, "The Character of Deliberation: Equality, Argument, and the Formation of Public Opinion," *International Journal of Public Opinion* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 239-264; Archon Fung, *Empowered Participation: Reinventing Urban Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). Katherine Cramer Walsh, "Communities, Race, and Talk: An Analysis of the Occurrence of Civic Intergroup Dialogue Programs." *Journal of Politics* 68, no. 1 (February 2006): 22-33; Carolyn M. Hendriks, "When the Forum Meets Interest Politics: Strategic Uses of Public Deliberation," *Politics & Society* 34, no. 4 (December 2006): 571-602..
[19] Jane J. Mansbridge, "Using Power/Fighting Power: The Polity," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 57; see also Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*.
[20] As Levine and Nierras summarize: "To create representative groups of citizens for these deliberations, organizers randomly select the participants (Citizens Juries, Deliberative Polls), recruit people who are deliberately diverse in various relevant ways (Twentieth-Century Town Meetings), recruit stakeholders who are known to represent all the major conflicting positions (Regulatory Negotiations, Consensus Councils), distribute background materials through a diverse network of community-based organizations (National Issues Forums, Study Circles), or try to include a

whole population in large-scale deliberations." Peter Levine and Rose Marie Nierras, "Activists' Views of Deliberation," *Journal of Public Deliberation* 3, no. 1 (2007): Article 4, http://services.bepress.com/jpd/vol3/iss1/art4/, 2.

[21] Peter Levine, Archon Fung, and John Gastil, "Future Directions for Public Deliberation," in Gastil and Levine, eds., *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook*, 271-288.

[22] Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, "The Two Faces of Power," *American Political Science Review* 56, no. 4 (December 1962): 947-52; John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

[23] Hendriks, "When the Forum Meets Interest Politics," 587.

[24] Jeffrey M. Berry and Clyde Wilcox, *The Interest Group Society*, 5th ed. (New York: Longman, 2009).

[25] Especially since the 1970s, impoverished Americans have been represented by less effective social movement organizations and parties than the poor in other developed countries (see David Brady, "The Politics of Poverty: Left Political Institutions, the Welfare State, and Poverty." *Social Forces* 82, no. 2 [December 2003]: 557-588), participate less than members of higher income groups in the political system through means such as voting and contributing to campaigns (see Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995]; APSA Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, "American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality," http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/taskforcereport.pdf), and have seen their economic conditions stagnate or erode by most measures of real wages, health insurance, and social welfare benefits (see William DiFazio, *Ordinary Poverty: A Little Food and Cold Storage* [Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005]). Undocumented immigrants, despite being highly integrated into the American labor force, do not enjoy basic citizenship rights, and their political fortunes have depended largely on balance of power between anti-immigrant and pro-immigrant interest groups in host countries. See James G. Gimple and James R. Edwards, *The Congressional Politics of Immigration Reform* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1999).

[26] Gastil, *Political Communication and Deliberation*; Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, translated by G.D.H. Cole (New York: Dutton, 1950).

[27] David M. Ryfe, "Does Deliberative Democracy Work?," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8 (June 2005): 49-71.

[28] John S. Dryzek, "Legitimacy and Economy in Deliberative Democracy," in *Contemporary Political Theory: A Reader*, ed. Colin Farrelly (London: Sage, 2004), 242; see also Seyla Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 68; Cohen, "Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy," 145-6.

[29] Carolyn M. Hendriks, John S. Dryzek, and Christian Hunold, "Turning up the Heat: Partisanship in Deliberative Innovation." *Political Studies* 55, no. 2 (June 2007): 362-383; Christopher F. Karpowitz, "Having a Say: Public Hearings, Deliberation, and Democracy in America" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2006).

[30] Irving L. Janis, *Victims of Groupthink* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1972).

[31] Ibid.

[32] Cass R. Sunstein, "Deliberative Trouble? Why Groups Go to Extremes," *Yale Law Journal* 110, no. 1 (October 2000): 74; Roger Brown, Social Psychology: The Second Edition (New York: Free Press, 1986), 200-48.

[33] Serge Moscovici and Marisa Zavalloni, "The Group as a Polarizer of Attitudes," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 12, no. 2 (June 1969): 125-135.

[34] Eugene Burnstein, Amiram Vinokur, and Yaacov Trope, "Interpersonal Comparison Versus Persuasive Argumentation: A More Direct Test of Alternative Explanations for Group-Induced Shifts in Individual Choice," *Journal of Experimental and Social Psychology* 9, no. 3 (May 1973): 236-245.

[35] Dominic Abrams et al., "Knowing What to Think by Knowing Who You Are: Self-categorization and the Nature of Norm Formation, Conformity and Group Polarization," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 29, no. 2 (June 1990): 97-119; Russell Spears, Martin Lea, and Stephen Lee, "De-Individuation and Group Polarization in Computer-Mediated Communication," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 29, no. 2 (June 1990): 121-134; John C. Turner et al., *Rediscovering the Social Group* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

[36] Sunstein, "Deliberative Trouble."

[37] See Ryfe, "Does Deliberative Democracy Work?"

[38] Ibid., 53.

[39] Mendelberg, "The Deliberative Citizen."

[40] Ibid., 179. See also Christopher F. Karpowitz and Tali Mendelberg, "How People Deliberate about Justice: Groups, Gender, and Decision Rules," in *Deliberation, Participation and Democracy: Can the People Govern?*, ed. Shawn W. Rosenberg (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 101-129.
[41] Christopher F. Karpowitz and Tali Mendelberg, "Groups, Norms, and Gender: Initial Results from the Deliberative Justice Experiment" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, August 28-31, 2008).
[42] Dan M. Kahan et al., "Fear of Democracy: A Cultural Evaluation of Sunstein on Risk." *Harvard Law Review* 119, no. 4 (February 2006): 1071-1109.
[43] Burkhalter, Gastil, and Kelshaw, "The Self-Reinforcing Model of Public Deliberation."
[44] Delli Carpini, Cook, and Jacobs, "Public Deliberation, Discursive Participation, and Citizen Engagement"; Mendelberg, "The Deliberative Citizen."
[45] Sunstein, "Deliberative Trouble?," 105.
[46] Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*; Robert E. Goodin and John S. Dryzek, "Deliberative Impacts: The Macro-Political Uptake of Mini-Publics," *Politics & Society* 34, no. 2 (June 2006): 219-244; Mansbridge, "Using Power/Fighting Power."
[47] Archon Fung, "Deliberation before the Revolution: Toward an Ethics of Deliberative Democracy in an Unjust World," *Political Theory* 33, no. 3 (June 2005): 397-419; Stephen Macedo et al., *Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation, and What We Can Do about It* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2005).
[48] Research in cognitive and political psychology indicates that direct experience and oft-repeated mass media messages are the main influences on shaping individuals' political schemas. People typically have a lack of both kinds of information on complex emerging policy issues. See Doris A. Graber, "An Information Processing Approach to Public Opinion Analysis," in *Rethinking Communication, Volume 2 Paradigm Exemplars*, eds. In Brenda Dervin, Lawrence Grossberg, Barbara J. O'Keefe, and Ellen Wartella (Newbury Park, CA: Sage), 103-16.
[49] Diana C. Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[50] Gastil, *Political Communication and Deliberation.*
[51] See Ryfe, "Does Deliberative Democracy Work?"
[52] The nomenclature of consensus conferences typically refers to "citizen participants" and "citizen panels." Carolyn M. Hendriks, "Consensus Conferences and Planning Cells: Lay Citizen Deliberations," in *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook*, 80-110. In the conference and this article, we substitute the terms "community members" and "community panel" because they more accurately reflect the composition of contemporary countries where mass immigration means that many people who reside and participate in public life are not citizens.
[53] Allen S. Hammond, IV and Chad Raphael, "Municipal Broadband: A Background Briefing Paper," http://broadbandforall.org/app/briefing_paper.doc. Proponents of municipal broadband systems argued that they would have multiple benefits, including enhancing local economic competitiveness, educational opportunities, government services, and civic engagement. Supporters also contended that municipal networks would inject competition from new providers into local broadband markets, bringing down subscription costs. Because municipal networks would offer free or affordable service and would have a stronger public service mission than the cable and telephone companies that were the main sources of high-speed service, the new networks would help close the digital divide by making broadband more widely available. In contrast, most commercial broadband providers strongly opposed municipal networks, arguing that they would be inefficient and pose unfair competition to existing private providers. At the telecommunications companies' behest, at least 15 states had passed laws by 2006 prohibiting their municipalities from building, owning, or operating broadband networks. However, most municipal projects involved cities and counties contracting with private companies to build and operate these networks with government oversight.
[54] Wireless Silicon Valley (WSV), the project's organizer, presented the benefits of the network to the community as consisting of:

> support for emergency response teams; save mobile workers, including police, fire, public works, sales people, and construction workers, from having to return to the office to file reports or get work orders; attract conventions by making it easy for visitors to connect; offer an alternative broadband service provider to businesses and residents; create opportunities for local wireless companies to develop new products and services; reinforce Silicon Valley's reputation as a center of innovation." Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network, "A Vision of a Wireless Silicon Valley," http://www.jointventure.org/programs-initiatives/wirelesssiliconvalley/wireless.html.

[55] Two of this article's authors co-organized the conference, while the third author served as the project's external evaluator.
[56] The term "digital inclusion" emerged in the early 2000s to refer to the closing of the "digital divide," or unequal access to Internet service among different groups. See National Telecommunications and Information Administration, *Falling through the Net: Toward Digital Inclusion* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000). In the consensus conference and this article, digital inclusion refers not only to the extension of Internet service, but also to the computer hardware and software required to access the Internet, training in computer and Internet literacy, provision of relevant content (e.g., in users' own languages), and resources for users to contribute their own content on the Internet.
[57] U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Telecommunications: Broadband Deployment Is Extensive Throughout the United States, but It Is Difficult to Assess the Extent of Deployment Gaps in Rural Areas* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, May 2006).
[58] In deliberation, panel members often drew conclusions from their personal frustration with barriers to securing and affording broadband service and frequently referred to underserved groups as "we" rather than "they." In the panel's final report, it wrote:

> The community panel worries about potential "disconnects" between the underserved and other stakeholders in broadband networks. Those who plan such networks need to reach out actively to underserved communities and strive to see the digital world from the perspective of those who have the least. Making claims about "broadband for all" without understanding the needs of the underserved could create a false – and ultimately disappointing – level of expectations.

Broadband for All?, "Final Report and Recommendations," http://broadbandforall.org/MBCCFinalReport.doc, 4.
[59] For a sample of news coverage see Geoffrey Bowker, Allen S. Hammond and Chad Raphael, "County residents can help shape the future of broadband," San Jose Mercury News, September 27, 2006; Mary Anne Ostrom, "Wireless Network Concerns Get Venting," *San Jose Mercury News*, October 8, 2006. Coverage of the recommendations appeared on over 20 websites about the telecommunication industry, telecommunication policy, as well as public, community and independent media sites. The press release announcing the panel's recommendations was also distributed to the 80 community organizations that helped recruit Community Panel members (as discussed in the methods section below) and through the personal networks of many Advisory Panelists. In the year after the panel issued its recommendations, they were downloaded almost 900 times in English, Vietnamese, and Spanish from the conference website (http://broadbandforall.org), which drew visitors from 48 countries.
[60] See "Broadband for All?"
[61] Stephanie Burkhalter, John Gastil, and Todd Kelshaw, "The Self-Reinforcing Model of Public Deliberation," *Communication Theory* 12, no. 4 (November 2002): 398-422; Joseph N. Cappella, Vincent Price, and Lilach Nir, "Argument Repertoire as a Reliable and Valid Measure of Opinion Quality: Electronic Dialogue during Campaign 2000," *Political Communication* 19, no. 1 (January 2002): 73-93; Michael X. Delli Carpini, Fay Lomax Cook, and Lawrence R. Jacobs, "Public Deliberation, Discursive Participation, and Citizen Engagement: A Review of the Empirical Literature," *Annual Review of Political Science* 7 (May 2004): 315-44; James S. Fishkin and Robert C. Luskin, "Bringing Deliberation to the Democratic Dialogue," in *The Poll with a Human Face: The National Issues Convention Experiment in Political Communication*, ed. Maxwell McCombs and Amy Reynolds (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 1999), 3-38; John Gastil, "Adult Civic Education through the National Issues Forums: A Study of How Adults Develop Civic Skills and Dispositions through Public Deliberation," *Adult Education Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (August 2004): 308-328.
[62] See the arguments of globalization activists reported in Levine & Nierras, "Activists' Views of Deliberation"; Iris Marion Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy," *Political Theory* 29, no. 5 (October 2001): 670-690.
[63] See Goodin and Dryzek, "Deliberative Impacts"; Levine and Nierras, "Activists' Views of Deliberation"; Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy."
[64] The low number of rural residents reflects the difficulty of recruiting them in a largely urbanized area.
[65] Pre- and post-conference surveys were administered over the telephone by a research assistant. During the conference, community panelists completed a self-administered pencil-and-paper questionnaire as the last task on the schedule at each conference weekend. Blind panelists were assisted by graduate student research assistants. Conference organizers left the room during the administration of the surveys.
[66] These were administered over the telephone by a research assistant.

[67] Approximately 89 percent of the expert and advisory panelists responded to the pre-conference survey, but only 39 percent completed the post-conference survey instrument, which included the questions assessing the community panelists' recommendations. This post-conference survey was administered more than one month after the conference's conclusion. In addition, our analysis of the attitudes of follow-up event participants is restricted to those who had actually read the community panel recommendations.
[68] Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*, 59.
[69] Answers were given in response to the following open-ended question: "Imagine a list that ranked the countries of the world by what percentage of their residents had access to broadband internet. The country with the highest percentage of residents who had broadband access would be first on the list. What number on this list do you think the United States would appear?" The U.S. ranked twelfth at the time. In both the pre- and post-tests, correct answers were counted as a ranking of between 10 and 14 or if participants did not provide an exact number, a more general answer that expressed familiarity with the idea that the United States ranks low relative to other similar countries.
[70] The fact that on some measures we failed to see dramatic change should not be a sign that the conference had no effects, however. Take, for instance, the question tapping respondents' confidence that they could make an effective statement at a meeting. Community panelists were already relatively confident that they could speak up effectively even prior to the conference (mean=2.25, with 1="definitely speak well enough" and 5="definitely do not speak well enough"). After participating in the conference, every member of the community panel either maintained their already high levels of confidence or increased in confidence. We also see change among the control panel, but there, the change seems haphazard – dramatic increases in confidence among some, dramatic decreases among others, and relatively little movement from the rest. In other words, the change among community panelists was small (and naturally so, given that they came to the conference with a relatively high level of confidence already), but the change is in a consistent direction, with every panelist maintaining or increasing in their expressed levels of confidence in public speaking.
[71] The interpersonal trust measures were a scale comprised of three separate questions: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people"; "Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair?"; and "Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or are they just looking out for themselves?" These are classic measures, used most famously by Robert Putnam as evidence of social capital. Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).
[72] See, for example, Mansbridge, *Beyond Adversary Democracy*.
[73] No other potential conference purposes scored as highly on the 1-7 scale: "To teach people about municipal broadband in a neutral, factual way" (Mean = 6.1, SD=1.0); "To help people come to agreement about municipal broadband" (Mean=5.42, SD=2.19); "To persuade people to support a specific approach to municipal broadband" (Mean=4.25, SD=2.34).
[74] Broadband for All?, "Final Report and Recommendations," http://broadbandforall.org/MBCCFinalReport.doc, 3.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Panelists moved quite sharply in the direction of believing that high-speed internet access was a "necessity" not a "nice luxury." Prior to the conference, the panelists were, on average, essentially non-committal about this statement, neither agreeing or disagreeing with it. By the end of the conference, however, the panelists expressed strong agreement with the idea that high-speed internet access was a necessity of contemporary life, and this strong attitude persisted one month after the conference's conclusion. In contrast with this dramatic change, control group attitudes remained essentially flat.
[77] Broadband for All?, "Final Report and Recommendations," 3.
[78] Karpowitz and Mansbridge, "Disagreement and Consensus."
[79] Critics of deliberation such as Young and Sanders may argue that participants' self-reports are unreliable evidence of independent thinking because they may be unable to see how dominant discourses structure their views. Young, "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy"; Lynn M. Sanders, "Against Deliberation." However, this is non-falsifiable: if the marginalized reject deliberation for being controlled by hegemonic views, then the theorist can claim she is correct. If, on the other hand, the disempowered assert that they deliberate autonomously, the theorist can argue that they are victims of false consciousness and she is again proved correct. This stance is also self-contradictory because the strongest evidence of domination it can offer are self-reports by the disempowered about their marginalization. If self-reports are to be believed in one instance, why not in others?
[80] Broadband for All?, "Final Report and Recommendations," 8.
[81] Hendriks, Dryzek, and Hunold, "Turning Up the Heat," 372.

[82] The eventual impact of the panel's recommendations is beyond the scope of our research questions, but we would note that citizens' recommendations can have a broad range of influences, even if they are not all adopted wholesale by decision-makers. See Goodin and Dryzek, "Deliberative Impacts: The Macro-Political Uptake of Mini-Publics." We have reason to believe that the recommendations were taken up by others in the policy process (such as the activist groups that attended the follow-up event in four California communities), that they informed public debate (through the extensive media coverage and almost 900 downloads of the recommendations from the conference website within a year), that they helped legitimate municipal involvement in broadband and digital inclusion (by providing the first organized expression of citizen interest in the Wireless Silicon Valley project and efforts to include the underserved in its plans), and exerted the first organized form of citizen oversight on the Silicon Valley project, which had received almost no media coverage and had held no public hearings on its direction before the conference sparked both. The conference organizers were later asked by one of the partners in Wireless Silicon Valley to organize further public consultations in other parts of the state where the organization was bidding on municipal broadband projects, offering some further evidence of increased attentiveness to citizen voices in network planning. At the time of this writing, the Wireless Silicon Valley project was proceeding slower than planned, having piloted service in just one community, amidst uncertainty about funding commitments from local governments and private partners in the project.

[83] Gastil, *Political Communication and Deliberation*; John Parkinson, *Deliberating in the Real World: Problems of Legitimacy in Deliberative Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Thompson, "Deliberative Democratic Theory and Empirical Political Science."

[84] Fung, "Recipes for Public Spheres."

[85] See Gastil and Levine, eds., *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook*.

[86] Even municipal participatory budgeting in Brazil involves neighborhood participants electing representatives to conduct final citywide negotiations.

[87] Jürg Steiner, André Bächtiger, Markus Spörndli, and Marco Steenbergen, *Deliberative Politics in Action: Analyzing Parliamentary Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[88] Joshua Cohen, "Deliberative Democracy," in *Deliberation, Participation and Democracy: Can the People Govern?*, 233.

[89] Diana C. Mutz, "Is Deliberative Democracy a Falsifiable Theory?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (June 2008): 521-528.

[90] Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*.

[91] Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

[92] On deliberation within the global justice movement, see Donatella della Porta, *Globalization from Below: Transnational Activists and Protest Networks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). On the deliberative strains in the American New Left, civil rights, and feminist movements, see Sara M. Evans and Harry C. Boyte, *Free spaces: The Sources of Democratic Change in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986); Francesca Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[93] Gastil, *Political Communication and Deliberation*, 177-212.