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## Who Wants to Deliberate - and Why?

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**HARVARD Kennedy School**  
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**Faculty Research Working Papers Series**

**Who Wants to Deliberate – and Why?**

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## Who Wants to Deliberate – and Why?

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*Abstract:* Interest in deliberative theories of democracy has grown tremendously among political theorists over the last twenty years. Many scholars in political behavior, however, are skeptical that it is a practically viable theory, even on its own terms. They argue (inter alia) that most people dislike politics, and that deliberative initiatives would amount to a paternalistic imposition. Using two large, representative samples investigating people's hypothetical willingness to deliberate and their actual behavior in response to a real invitation to deliberate with their member of Congress, we find: 1) that willingness to deliberate in the U.S. is much more widespread than expected; and 2) that it is precisely people who are less likely to participate in traditional partisan politics who are most interested in deliberative participation. They are attracted to such participation as a partial alternative to "politics as usual."

Deliberative democracy has entered a kind of adolescence. Many of the broad questions emerging from its infancy have been explored extensively, so that we know much more about both deliberation's potential and its limits than we did a decade ago. That being said, the future is still quite open, especially in matters of how deliberation can work in practice. There are still purely theoretical questions remaining, to be sure, but many of the big advances in our understanding of deliberation are likely to come through carefully aligning normative and empirical inquiry in a way that allows the two to speak to each other in mutually interpretable terms (Thompson, 2008: 16; Neblo, 2005: 170).

In that spirit, we propose to start at the beginning: rather than focusing on the content of applied deliberation, we analyze who is willing to engage in deliberation in the first place. We pose the question as "Who is willing to deliberate?" rather than simply "Who deliberates?"<sup>1</sup> Our question is pertinent since some deliberative democrats claim that people would deliberate more if we gave them better opportunities. Cook et. al. (2007: 33), for example, found that "85% of those who said they had not attended a meeting to discuss public issues reported they had never been invited to do so." Many scholars of political behavior are skeptical that more opportunities will make a difference, believing that people simply do not want to deliberate (Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002). If the deliberative democrats are right, however, then the two questions are crucially distinct: current patterns of deliberation do not necessarily reflect how citizens would participate given more attractive opportunities. Thus we broaden our focus beyond current levels of deliberation in the mass public, and the characteristics of those who already engage in it without being offered novel opportunities. We expand our inquiry to systematically investigate people's willingness to deliberate under varying conditions. We directly asked respondents how interested they would be in

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<sup>1</sup> "Who Deliberates?" is the title of two important pieces of scholarship: first, Benjamin Page's (1996) book on the way that media elites can massively pre-structure political debate in the broader public sphere; and second, Cook et. al.'s (2007) paper on the rates and patterns of current, naturally occurring discursive participation, including very informal "talk" and somewhat more formal "deliberation." We focus on the latent demand for opportunities to deliberate, rather than current rates of doing so, and on deliberation in a narrower sense, rather than informal talk.

participating in hypothetical deliberative forums by experimentally varying the forum's institutional features. Using a different sample, we also invited citizens to participate in real deliberative forums with their Member of Congress. We report both the hypothetical and behavioral responses below. We find greater eagerness for deliberative opportunities than skeptics would expect, as well as a profile of those willing to deliberate that is markedly different from those who participate in standard partisan politics and interest group liberalism (e.g., voting, attending a rally, giving money to a lobbying organization, sending emails at the behest of an interest group, etc.). This profile suggests that average citizens do not seem to regard deliberative opportunities as filigree on "real" politics nor as an indulgence meant only for political activists and intellectuals.

Given the recent proliferation of applied deliberative forums and research on them, there has been surprisingly little work focused on who is willing to participate.<sup>2</sup> This gap is a missed opportunity to understand a crucial component of deliberative politics. To the extent that deliberation is a procedural theory, the composition of the deliberating body looms as an enormously important question (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996). Claiming that there is such a big gap in the literature may seem strange given that most studies, of course, report on the characteristics of those who engage in deliberation, and many contrast them with those who do not participate. Luskin and Fishkin (2005), for example, report one hundred and fourteen difference-of-means (or distributions) tests on a huge range of demographic, attitudinal, behavioral, and other variables. Such analyses are crucial for showing that the sample of participants in the National Issues Convention was representative enough to warrant the normative benefits ascribed to Deliberative Opinion Polls. However, this applied concern leads Luskin and Fishkin to treat those potential selection mechanisms as, in effect, nuisance variables. We pursue a different analytical strategy by focusing on those selection mechanisms as theoretically and substantively important phenomena in themselves.

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<sup>2</sup> Depending on how one conceptualizes "naturally occurring" deliberation, there is a similarly surprising, though less acute, gap in research on its rate and predictors. Cook et. al. (2007) and Mutz (2006), in their very different ways, are leading exceptions.

Once we understand the basic psychology and sociology of deliberative participation, we can link up with normative theory to think more systematically about which selection processes really threaten the goals of deliberation, and perhaps devise remediation strategies. Many critics reasonably worry that deliberation in practice could be perverse, magnifying political power inequality if the people who select into deliberation are already privileged (Sanders, 1997). Some sources of variation in willingness to deliberate may be normatively benign, and others that are less benign might be ameliorated in practice if we understood how they worked. But we cannot know until we sort out such selection processes. Alternately, it may be that inequalities in deliberative participation will run so unavoidably deep that deliberative reforms would be hopelessly perverse from the outset. Not even the most ardent deliberative theorist would want to move toward institutionalizing the theory under such conditions.

The best known study to address the putative desire for greater deliberation came to a resoundingly negative conclusion that should give potential reformers pause. In their important and influential book, Stealth Democracy, John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse (2002) argue that most Americans want nothing to do with a more deliberative democracy, that such reticence is reasonable, and moreover that their unwillingness is a very good thing, because the average citizen is ill equipped to discharge the duties that deliberative theorists would assign to them. In effect, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse argue that people's apparent desire for more participatory democracy is actually a misleading artifact of non-separable preferences (Lacy, 2001).<sup>3</sup> That is, most people hate politics. But the only thing that they hate more than being involved in politics is the thought that corrupt politicians might feather their own nests at the expense of the public good. Far from participation being attractive in itself, citizens reluctantly consent to be

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<sup>3</sup> Non-separable preferences occur when one's preference on some choice is conditional on some other conditions obtaining. For example, one might prefer divided government, and so condition one's preference for President on the control of Congress. Hibbing & Theiss-Morse claim that people's preferences about political participation are conditional on their trust in the integrity of the political process. To our knowledge, neither they nor any deliberative democrats explicitly identify their competing claims as a matter of non-separable preferences.

involved only to prevent their *summum malum*. If the political process could be made less corrupt, they would eagerly withdraw, and prefer that it operate quietly in the background. Deliberative reforms predicated on the contrary “are unlikely to improve the system and may very well damage it” (p. 162).

The stealth democracy thesis, thus, runs precisely counter to one of deliberative theory’s central claims – i.e., that a significant amount of citizen apathy is actually a *consequence* of frustration with and disempowerment in the current political system.<sup>4</sup> Deliberative democrats claim, in effect, that many citizens’ apparent desire to avoid politics is also partly a matter of non-separable preferences, though in the opposite direction from the stealth thesis. If the political process could be rendered more rational and responsive in their eyes, they would be *more* inclined to engage it more robustly. The disagreement between the stealth thesis and the deliberative thesis could hardly be clearer.<sup>5</sup> And given the significant resources being poured into both applied deliberative institutions (e.g., Deliberative Opinion Polls, or the British Columbia Citizens Assembly) and research on them, the stakes in determining who is right are high both in terms of political science and political practice.

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse are among the most unequivocal of those claiming that the deliberative project is at best wasteful and, at worst, “would actually do significant harm” (p. 163). Their book was influential for a reason. They prosecute a case against normatively ambitious theories of democracy that appears to show that deliberation is ill-founded and paternalistic. They combine evidence from surveys and focus groups to explore people’s political process preferences in great detail, concluding that most people’s attitudes toward political processes would make them ill-disposed toward deliberative reforms.

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<sup>4</sup> Some deliberative democrats might not want to make this empirical claim about people’s motivations, sticking to purely normative claims on behalf of the theoretical superiority of deliberative democracy as an account of legitimacy. Presumably they would then have to trade off this normative superiority against the value of respecting people’s putative desire to avoid politics.

<sup>5</sup> In one sense, the two claims could coexist if they applied to different subsets of people. Yet they would still be diametrically opposed in their account of the relative balance of such people. As we demonstrate below, the imbalance in types is so skewed as to render this issue beside the point.

However strong their case against deliberative democracy might appear, it nonetheless rests upon what they admit to be circumstantial evidence. They note, “our survey did not contain numerous questions dealing specifically with instituting a direct democracy” (p. 91). We would add that it contained none that dealt specifically with deliberative democracy (the two are not equivalent). This portion of their argument is built on excerpts from their focus groups, and relies on a fairly stark dichotomy between delegate and trustee models of representation. They are careful to note that “our interpretation of admittedly circumstantial data should be taken for what it is,” (p. 129) though they go on to dismiss deliberative democracy in less circumspect terms: “pushing people to be more involved in politics and political decision making will not lead to better decision, better people, or a more legitimate political system. Theorists are misguided if they think otherwise.” (p. 161-162)

At least three lines of response to their claims have emerged so far. First, Thompson (2008) has pointed out that deliberative democracy is a normative theory that is supposed to challenge the status quo, so arguing that American politics as it stands does not meet this normative standard hardly disposes of the normative claims. Muhlberger (n.d.) combines a similarly normative response with empirical evidence that Stealth attitudes contribute to a larger syndrome of anti-democratic attitudes (e.g., authoritarianism) that cannot be dismissed as easily as Hibbing and Theiss-Morse do in their (qualified) defense of people with Stealth attitudes. Finally, Dryzek (2005) levels a more fundamental attack on the survey and focus-group methods that Hibbing and Theiss-Morse use to warrant their empirical claims.

All three lines of critique have merit, though they also risk being seen as overly dismissive. We pursue a different strategy by confronting the claims for Stealth democracy on their own terms. Rather than attacking survey methodology wholesale, or claiming that Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s normative conclusions do not follow from their premises, we focus on rebutting the empirical premises themselves. We start by conceding that Hibbing and Theiss-Morse make a strong circumstantial case given their evidence. However, we execute much sharper, direct tests that, on Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s own terms, should be decisive. And our direct tests of people’s willingness to deliberate both reverse Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s



findings, and explain how their circumstantial evidence led them to mistaken conclusions: while it is true that many people find standard partisan politics and interest group liberalism distasteful, they regard deliberation as a partial alternative to standard forms of participation, and are thus much more open to deliberating than Hibbing and Theiss-Morse would predict.<sup>6</sup> Their critique may be damaging to a theory of *direct* or *participatory* democracy that simply called for a larger volume of standard forms of political participation.<sup>7</sup> Many critics implicitly assume that deliberative democracy is simply an extension of participatory democracy. But the theory does not conceive of deliberation as merely “voting plus” – an activity for political junkies akin to attending rallies or donating to an issue advocacy group. Nor do average citizens regard it this way, as we shall see. Thus, it would be hasty in the extreme to dismiss deliberative reforms as hopelessly utopian or perverse merely because many citizens do not vote, or find much about status quo politics distasteful. None of this is to suggest that deliberative democracy could do without voting and much of the machinery of status quo politics. Quite to the contrary. But rather than thinking of deliberation as, at best, a nice thing to add onto interest group liberalism (Walzer, 1999), we might better think of the deliberative character of a political system as conditioning the legitimacy of standard democratic practices. As New York governor and reformist presidential candidate Samuel J. Tilden urged, “The means by which a majority comes to be a majority is the more important thing.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> In practice there is no strict dichotomy between partisan politics and interest group liberalism on the one hand, and deliberation on the other. We are using them as ideal types. That said, we think that the distinction between, for example, participating in a Deliberative Opinion Poll and a partisan rally is sufficiently robust to warrant contrasting the terms without a recurring caveat.

<sup>7</sup> It is not clear, however, that any major theorist really advocates such a flat-footed conception. Carole Pateman’s seminal book, Participation and Democratic Theory (1970), shows how previous critics of more ambitious theories of democracy spent a lot of time debunking a putatively “classical” theory that did not track much of what any major figure actually advocated.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Dewey (1954 [1927]) p. 207. There are actually two issues here: first, the normative claim that process should matter, and second, the empirical claim that citizens care a great deal about process.

*Non-separable preferences about deliberative participation:* Before we present the main evidence characterizing who is willing to deliberate, it is important to establish that doing so even answers an interesting question. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) take it as more or less settled that few people beyond political theorists and political junkies would actually want to deliberate. Needless to say, such a narrow, skewed, subpopulation would prove problematic on deliberative theory's own normative grounds. Moreover, they argue that whatever willingness to deliberate that we might observe in the general population would not have the kind of impetus behind it that many deliberative democrats seem to want.<sup>9</sup> As we noted above, Stealth democracy and deliberative democracy make starkly contrasting claims about why people would or would not want to participate more in politics, and thus about the prospects for various democratic reforms. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's central claim aims to resolve the puzzle of how citizens who purportedly hate politics would nonetheless want, by wide margins, more direct forms of democracy. Their answer is that the only thing that most citizens hate more than participating in politics is for corrupt politicians to subvert the process: "Ironically, the more the public trusts elected officials to make unbiased decisions, the less the public participates in politics" (p. 159). They state their broader thesis in stark terms:

"Americans do not even want to be placed in a position where they feel obliged to provide input to those who are making political decisions...People often view their political involvement as medicine they must take in order to keep the disease of greedy politicians and special interests from getting further out of hand...This form of latent representation, stealth democracy, is not just what people would settle for; it is what they prefer, since it frees them from the need to follow politics...This desire for empathetic, unbiased, other-regarding, but uninstructed public officials is about as distinct as possible from the claim that people want to provide decision makers with more input than is currently done." (pp. 131-132)

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Deliberative democrats obviously make the first claim. We agree with Hibbing and Theiss-Morse regarding the truth of the second claim, though we interpret the ways in which process matters to citizens quite differently.

<sup>9</sup> Most deliberative democrats, however, would not object to participation on the basis of the Stealth rationale of "holding the bums accountable" when warranted, as long as the public did not completely withdraw into quiescent ignorance in the absence of scandal and crisis.

We agree that citizens want empathetic, unbiased, and other-regarding public officials. Note, however, that none of this contrasts with deliberative theory. Once we acknowledge the need for elected representatives (which all major deliberative democrats do), no sensible person would prefer alienated, biased, and selfish public officials. All of these criteria are red-herrings. So, everything hinges on whether people want *uninstructed* public officials.<sup>10</sup> On this point, their thesis is indeed very distinct from the deliberative thesis.

Reversing the Stealth thesis, deliberative democrats argue that much disaffection with modern mass democracy stems from feelings of disempowerment and disillusionment. If people thought that the system was not rigged and corrupt, they would be more willing to contribute their voices to the process. The contest between these two claims can be usefully framed as a question of non-separable preferences (Lacy, 2001). That is, people's preference about one question (whether to participate more or less) is conditional on the outcome of some second question (whether the political system is more or less corrupt).

Recent work in public opinion research gives us a sharp, simple, theoretical framework for testing the competing accounts of non-separable preferences. In a recent, nationally representative survey, we asked each respondent two versions of a question about the conditions under which people would be more or less interested in getting involved in politics.<sup>11</sup> In the first, we stipulate that the conditions Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (p. 158) argue underpin Stealth motivated participation get worse, and in the second they get better.

*If politics were [1:less/2:more] influenced by self-serving officials and powerful special interests do you think that you would be more or less interested in getting involved in*

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<sup>10</sup> The strong term “uninstructed” is misleading here because it conjures the old Burkean distinction between delegates and trustees that deliberative theories attempt to cut across. Most deliberative democrats would be willing to often leave representatives “uninstructed” in the strong sense, but none would be willing to leave them *unadvised* by a vigorously deliberative public sphere.

<sup>11</sup> The survey was administered by Knowledge Networks (KN) to a sample of 404 subjects between 9/9-19/2008. KN maintains a probability sample panel of survey respondents that is designed to be representative of the U.S. population (see [www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/index.html](http://www.knowledgenetworks.com/ganp/index.html) for technical details).

*politics? [1: Definitely more interested; 2: Probably more interested; 3: Probably less interested; 4: Definitely less interested]*

The questions were asked of a nationally representative, random sample recruited by Knowledge Networks in September of 2008. Following Lacy (2001) we sort subjects into three categories to test for non-separability. Those subjects who give the same response to both questions have “Separable Preferences” because people’s attitudes toward involvement in politics were the same whether we stipulated more or less influence by politicians and special interests. “Positive Complements” (Lacy, 2001) are subjects who would want to participate *less* under the reduced corruption condition relative to the increased corruption condition (consistent with the Stealth thesis, the two processes move in the same direction since less perceived corruption would lead to less participation, and vice versa). “Negative Complements” are subjects who would want to participate *more* under the reduced corruption condition relative to the increased corruption condition (consistent with the Deliberative thesis, the processes would move opposite each other).

**Table 1: Separability of Interest in Politics & Change in Corruption (N = 404)**

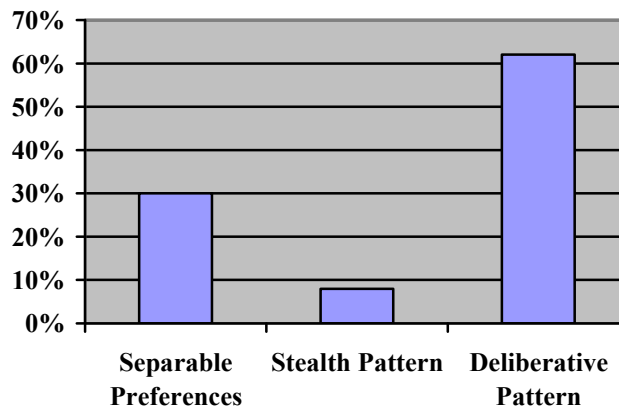


Figure 1 demonstrates that there was quite a bit of attitude dependence (non-separability), with only 30% of respondents exhibiting separable preferences. The results do uncover some evidence for the Stealth thesis – i.e., that some people only participate as a form of taking their medicine, and that they would happily withdraw if they could. However, such “positive” complements were relatively rare, comprising only 8% of respondents – many fewer than one would have predicted given the circumstantial evidence for the Stealth

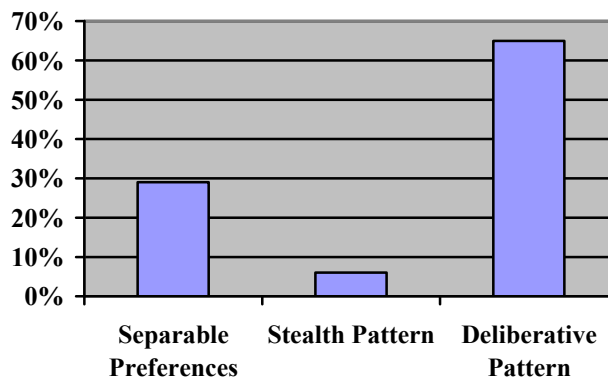
thesis presented in Hibbing and Theiss-Morse. On the other hand, the test found vastly more evidence in favor of the deliberative thesis – i.e., that people would participate more if they thought that the system were less corrupt (and would be further de-mobilized if it were even more corrupt). A solid majority, sixty-two percent of respondents, were such “negative” complements, dwarfing the rate of the Stealth pattern. For every respondent who fit the Stealth thesis, another *eight* fit the Deliberative thesis.

On the same survey, we asked a similar pair of questions about deliberative forms of participation more specifically:

“Recently there has been interest in helping regular citizens get more input into the policy process. For example, some organizations run sessions where citizens discuss important issues with their Members of Congress. If politics were [less/more] influenced by self-serving officials and powerful special interests do you think that you would be more or less interested in participating in such a session?” [1: *Definitely more interested*; 2: *Probably more interested*; 3: *Probably less interested*; 4: *Definitely less interested*]

The results were even more skewed in favor of the deliberative thesis: more than *eleven* times as many

*Table 2: Separability of Interest in Deliberating & Change in Corruption (N = 404)*



subjects fit the Deliberative pattern<sup>12</sup> as did the Stealth pattern. (See Table 2.) There was even more enthusiasm for specifically deliberative opportunities than for more general political participation. We agree

<sup>12</sup> We label this pattern “Deliberative” to contrast it with “Stealth.” In both cases the pattern is merely what the corresponding theory would predict given their explanatory accounts of why people do not participate,

that the Stealth thesis “is about as distinct from the claim that people want to provide decision makers with more input than is currently done.” (p. 132) However, on this matter, the Stealth thesis applies to only a small portion of the public, whereas the Deliberative thesis applies to a wide swath.

In order to understand what went wrong with the Stealth thesis, we need to revisit another claim, namely that “stealth democracy, is not just what people would settle for; it is what they prefer” (p. 131). Hibbing and Theiss-Morse provide very strong evidence that many people do hold Stealth beliefs. *In fact, we agree that many people would settle for Stealth democracy given a restricted range of choices.* However, as we shall see, it is *not* what they ultimately prefer if they believe that effective republican consultation<sup>13</sup> might be available. Below we demonstrate that most people with Stealth attitudes are highly ambivalent about them, and that their frustration with status quo politics is not the same as apathy or dislike. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse miss this ambivalence, which is how they ended up over-extending their otherwise insightful analysis of Stealth attitudes. In order to substantiate this claim, we now shift gears and turn to a more detailed discussion of who is willing to deliberate.

*Theory & Data on Deliberative Participation:* The terms “deliberation” and “deliberative democracy” encompass a range of phenomena, and mean somewhat different things to different people (Neblo, 2007). In the present paper, we focus on direct, real-time deliberation among citizens, and direct, real-time deliberation between citizens and their elected representatives. To investigate citizens’ interest in these two deliberative processes, we conducted two surveys in the summer of 2006. The first survey investigates citizens’ attitudes toward hypothetical opportunities for deliberation, as did Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s study. The second

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rather than anything related to the internal, normative workings of deliberative theory, for example. See footnote five, above.

<sup>13</sup> By “republican consultation” we mean communication between citizens and their representatives in which the representatives seek input from their constituents in forming agendas, and in advance of their formal votes, as well as efforts to explain their votes to constituents post hoc, rather than delegate instructions.

survey investigates citizens' interest in a real opportunity to deliberate with their member of the U.S. House of Representatives, where the invitation (via the investigators) comes from the members themselves.

*Interest in Hypothetical Deliberative Sessions.* In the first survey, we investigate the determinants of citizens' interest in participating in a hypothetical deliberative session.<sup>14</sup> To assess these determinants, we randomized the characteristics of the hypothetical deliberative session, and we also collected data on the attitudes and attributes of respondents. These sessions were hypothetical in the sense that there was no promise or suggestion that their response would lead to an invitation to an actual session.

In their landmark study of participation, Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995) find that resources, recruitment, and engagement drive traditional political participation. Burns, Scholzman, and Verba (2001) extend that general account, reaching further back into “the private roots of public action.” In our models of willingness to deliberate, below, we start from this base by including a broad array of demographic and political variables known to influence traditional political participation. On the one hand, it is reasonable to expect that many of the same factors that drive one's willingness to attend a rally, for example, will also drive deliberative participation. Time, money, and education are fairly general resources. On the other hand, deliberative theorists conceive of deliberation as a partial alternative to traditional partisan politics and interest group liberalism (or, perhaps, a condition enhancing the legitimacy of traditional politics). If such theorists are right, then deliberation may be especially motivating to precisely those people for whom

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<sup>14</sup> The survey was part of the 2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study, conducted by Polimetrix Inc. See <http://web.mit.edu/polisci/portl/cces/commoncontent.html>. Polimetrix obtains interviews from a very large number of people, and then draws a weighted sample from this large pool to produce a representative final sample. Our question battery was asked of more than 3000 subjects, even though our sample representative of the general population contains only 1000 observations. For all analyses below whose inferences rely on marginal distributions, we use the smaller, representative sample. For regression analyses on the deliberative-conditions experiment, we use the larger sample.

traditional participation (under status quo conditions) is relatively unattractive. So we have conflicting theoretical expectations, and regard it as an important, open question as to how such factors will play out.

In addition to standard demographic, resource, and engagement predictors, we also include a set of psychological *antecedents of motivation* that have strong theoretical links to the kinds of demands that may be particular to deliberative participation. Mutz (2006) argues that many people are *Conflict avoidant*, and so will be especially keen to avoid the inherently contentious give and take of deliberation. Cacioppo and Petty (1982) describe the personality variable *Need for cognition* as the extent to which people enjoy effortful cognitive activities and Bizer et. al. (2004) develops the *Need to evaluate* as a disposition to make judgments or take sides. Several studies show that both play an important role in forming and changing attitudes, so they are good theoretical candidates for increasing one's willingness to deliberate. As with some of the other standard participation predictors, we have competing theoretical expectations about how *Political efficacy* might relate to willingness to deliberate. Several studies have shown, unsurprisingly, that feeling confused and powerless in the face of politics is de-motivating. However, deliberative forums are designed to be inviting opportunities to remediate confusion, and to provide an alternate channel for involving oneself in politics. So it is possible that citizens will regard deliberative opportunities as a chance to become more empowered. Again, it is an interesting question as to how these competing mechanisms will play off against each other. (See Appendix for the original items and details on all scales.)

In addition to these variables, we include an index of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's original four *Stealth* items. We also include an index of people's *Trust in government*, because the stealth democracy thesis stipulates that any apparent interest in more direct democracy is predicated on a lack of trust in current decision makers. If so, we should observe a significant negative interaction between stealth and trust – those high on stealth but low on trust will want to participate, but those high on both will opt out at higher rates.<sup>15</sup> In addition, we include an index we label *Sunshine* democracy. The original idea behind the sunshine items

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<sup>15</sup> Alternately, one might think of low trust as constitutive of stealth attitudes, but the modest correlation between the two scales,  $r = -.10$ , precludes this interpretation.



was to make the stealth index more reliable and balanced in coding, and to assess acquiescence bias in the marginal distribution of the original items (which were all coded such that agreement indicated higher stealth). Toward that end, we wrote four new items (in italics below) similar in content to the original stealth items (no italics), but reverse coded such that agreement indicated lower stealth:

[Stealth 1] Elected officials would help the country more if they would stop talking and just take action on important problems.

*[Sunshine 1] It is important for elected officials to discuss and debate things thoroughly before making major policy changes.*

[Stealth 2] What people call “compromise” in politics is really just selling out one’s principles.

*[Sunshine 2] Openness to other people’s views, and a willingness to compromise are important for politics in a country as diverse as ours.*

[Stealth 3] Our government would run better if decisions were left up to successful business people.

*[Sunshine 3] In a democracy like ours, there are some important differences between how government should be run and how a business should be managed.*

[Stealth 4] Our government would run better if decisions were left up to non-elected, independent experts rather than politicians or the people.

*[Sunshine 4] It is important for the people and their elected representatives to have the final say in running government, rather than leaving it up to unelected experts.*

Despite the rather direct content overlap, the new items correlated well with each other, but not with the original stealth items, resulting in two separate factors.<sup>16</sup> Surprisingly, the two scales are nearly orthogonal, correlating at only  $r = -.07$ . Moreover, this weak connection is not a matter of acquiescence bias; including a methods factor in the measurement model only increases the strength of the relationship to  $r = -.12$ . (See Figure R1 in the reviewer’s appendix for the specification.) Below, we shall argue at greater length that this counterintuitive finding indicates a kind of ambivalence on the part of many citizens when it comes to

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<sup>16</sup> Confirmatory factor analysis also indicated that the original four Stealth items might also be regarded as two closely related factors (i.e., the first two items form a kind of “get on with it” sub-scale, while the last two both express a desire for technocratic alternatives to politicians). However, all four items do scale up reasonably well together, so for the sake of continuity with the existing literature we treat Stealth as a single construct. Doing so does not materially affect any of our results.

stealth/sunshine beliefs. The Sunshine items tap how they think that a representative democracy should work in principle, whereas the Stealth items tap what they would settle for as a first step away from what they perceive as the corrupt status quo.

Finally, willingness to deliberate is likely to vary according to characteristics of the deliberative events themselves. There are many ways to construct a deliberative forum, even if we restrict them to direct, real-time events. To get a sense of how willingness to deliberate varies according to several dimensions relevant to applied deliberative institutions, we embedded an experiment permuting the following variations in a large, nationally representative survey (see footnote 14, above):

*“Recently there has been interest in helping regular citizens get more input into the policy process. For example, many organizations run [one day / one hour] sessions where citizens [come together / use the internet] to discuss [important issues / immigration policy] [*<none>*; with local officials; with their Member of Congress]. [*<none>*; Participants get \$25 as thanks for their involvement.]*

If you had the chance to participate in such a session, how interested do you think you would be in doing so: (5) Extremely interested; (4) Quite interested; (3) Somewhat interested; (2) Not too interested; (1) Not at all interested”

In sum, we varied: 1) the length of the deliberative session; 2) whether it was face-to-face or computer mediated; 3) involved an unspecified issue or a specific issue; 4) whether it was conducted among citizens, as a consultation with a local official, or their Member of Congress; and 5) whether subjects got a monetary incentive to participate.

People are busy, and politics takes time, so it seems obvious to test for people’s sensitivity to the amount of time necessary to participate in a deliberative event, as well as their sensitivity to monetary incentives. Computer mediated deliberation is generally more convenient (for those who have access to the Internet) and greatly reduces travel and logistical costs. Moreover, it accommodates geographically disparate participants, which is especially crucial for deliberation within sub-publics that might not be geographically concentrated. In addition, the relative buffer of computer mediated deliberation may mitigate reluctance to deliberate among those who dislike conflict or prefer partial anonymity. There are potential down-sides as well: “digital divide” bias, decreased civility, loss of non-verbal communication channels, etc. We included

a general versus specific topic manipulation to see if marginal rates of interest in deliberation are predicated on people imagining the one topic that most interests them, versus a more general interest in talking about important issues of the day. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002), among others, claim that most people have a very narrow range of issues that they care about enough to be mobilized to participate around. Under an interest-group liberalism frame, we should not be surprised to find that participation is linked to particular interests. Deliberative theory, however, predicts somewhat weaker such effects for deliberative participation because we have reasons to participate even when we do not have a large, direct stake in some particular outcome. Finally, there are both theoretical and practical differences between deliberation among fellow citizens, versus citizens and their elected representatives, so we randomized the type of session. Together, these constitute a 2x2x2x3x2 experimental design, yielding forty-eight conditions. None of the interactions between experimental conditions had significant effects in a saturated model (even with an “n” over 3000). So for clarity of presentation, below, we include only the main effects (as fixed effects) in our larger model.

Before explaining variation in willingness to deliberate, we should note that absolute levels of interest in deliberative participation were quite high. A large majority of people (83%) expressed at least some interest in participating in some kind of deliberative session. Combining across the various conditions, 27% said that they would be “Extremely” interested in participating, another 27% said they would be “Quite” interested, and 29% “Somewhat” interested. Twelve percent said they were “Not too interested,” and only 5% said that they were “Not at all” interested. Since this sample’s interest attitudes were comparable to what Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) report, there is little reason to believe that peculiarities of the sample can account for such a high level of general interest in deliberation.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, deliberative participation appears to be quite distinct in its predictors relative to traditional participation in partisan politics and interest group liberalism. Of the eight demographic characteristics from the literature, only education is even of the sign normally associated with

greater participation in partisan politics or interest group liberalism (and it is not statistically significant).<sup>17</sup> (See Table 3 below.) Younger people, racial minorities,<sup>18</sup> and lower income people are significantly *more* willing to deliberate, all of which are reversals from traditional participation patterns. Similarly, women, less partisan people, and non-church goers are slightly more likely to want to deliberate, though not to a statistically significant degree. On these criteria, it would appear that the kinds of people attracted to deliberation are fairly distinct from those drawn to partisan politics and interest group liberalism, consistent with deliberative democracy's claim to provide an outlet for those frustrated with status quo politics.<sup>19</sup>

There were fewer surprises with the effect estimates for the cognitive antecedents of motivation. General political interest, need for cognition, need for evaluation, and conflict avoidance all had significant effects in the expected direction (i.e., positive for the first three and negative for the last). Efficacy had a

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<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that these reversals in demographic effects are not driven by some peculiarity in our sample. As a check, we specified models of vote-turnout and an index of traditional participation, using the same CCES sample. Those models yield a pattern on these variables much more in keeping with previous research, suggesting that there really is something different about deliberative participation. See Table R1 in the reviewer appendix.

<sup>18</sup> Initially we thought that the somewhat surprising sign for the coefficient on race was a function of Hispanics being attracted to deliberate about immigration policy in that condition. However, more detailed analyses revealed that not to be the case. The sign for "White" stayed the same when we included a Hispanic dummy, indicating that other racial minorities were also more interested in deliberation. In addition, interacting the Hispanic dummy with the General v. Immigration topic condition did not show up as significant, so the particular issue does not seem to be driving this result. The same pattern emerged in the equation predicting willingness to deliberate in the Congress experiment below, though the coefficient reverses in the equation for actual turnout at the session.

<sup>19</sup> These findings suggest that some deliberative forums may not face the difficult trade-off between deliberation and participation that Mutz (2006) identifies with naturally occurring, cross-cutting political talk. Similarly, we found no such de-mobilization in our experiments involving deliberation between members of Congress and their constituents. None of this contradicts Mutz's argument, but it does suggest possible ways to soften the blow of her findings for deliberation in practice.

small, negative coefficient, but was not statistically significant. Similarly, the insignificant interaction between Conflict Avoidance and the face-to-face v. on-line condition suggests that the distance provided by online discussion does not ameliorate conflict-avoidant people's relative distaste for deliberation.

<b>Table 3 : Predicting Hypothetical Willingness to Deliberate (CCES Respondents) (OLS Regression Estimates)</b>	
	B (SE)
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>	
Strength of Partisanship	-.025 (.022)
Church Attendance	-.015 (.018)
Education	.019 (.018)
Income	-.012 (.007)*
White	-.202 (.071)***
Full Time Employment	.045 (.053)
Age	-.008 (.002)****
Male	-.006 (.047)
<b>Motivation</b>	
Political Interest	.296 (.033)****
Conflict Avoidance	-.051 (.027)*
Efficacy	-.016 (.024)
Need for Cognition	.136 (.027)****
Need for Judgment	.048 (.027)*
<b>Democratic Practice</b>	
Sunshine Democracy	.021 (.025)
Stealth Democracy	.026 (.029)
Trust in Government	.040 (.042)
<b>Deliberative Conditions (Treatments)</b>	
Member of Congress	.144 (.047)***
Length of Session (hour/day)	.013 (.044)
Place of Session	.010 (.044)
Topic of Session	.038 (.044)
Incentive for Participation	.124 (.044)***
<b>Interactions</b>	
Congress Condition x Stealth Democracy	-.131 (.047)***
Place Condition x Conflict Avoidance	-.024 (.036)
Constant	3.74 (.093)****
Number of Observations	2242
R <sup>2</sup>	.135
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.126
*p<.1 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001	
Note: All covariates – except the level-1 dummies and treatment dummies – have been centered.	

Presenting the results from the variables in people's attitudes toward democratic processes is a bit more complicated. None of the main effects for Stealth, Sunshine, nor Trust are significant.<sup>20</sup> However, the interaction between Stealth and the experimental "Congress" condition was negative and highly significant, indicating that, unlike their fellow citizens, people high on Stealth were not dazzled by the *hypothetical* prospect of talking with their (presumptively corrupt) Members of Congress.<sup>21</sup> This finding is consistent with the way that Hibbing and Theiss-Morse present Stealth (though, as we noted above, baseline levels of willingness to deliberate were quite high).

The main effect for the Congress condition was positive and significant. Most people were motivated by the thought of talking with a high ranking government official. Unsurprisingly, people were also attracted by a monetary incentive. More surprisingly, people did not seem especially sensitive to the length or mode of the deliberative session. Nor was there a significant effect on general, unspecified issues versus a specific issue of the day (immigration policy). This last finding suggests that, contrary to the Stealth

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<sup>20</sup> Since the Stealth thesis conceives of participation as a second best in the face of untrustworthy elites, we also ran a model that included an interaction between *Stealth* and *Trust* that proved insignificant. To give this version of the Stealth hypothesis its strongest chance for finding support, we also tested separately for moderating effects across the whole range of the interaction (following Brambor et. al. 2006), and found no substantial heterogeneity. Trust neither moderates Stealth nor constitutes a syndrome with it through high correlation ( $r = -.10$ ). These findings would seem to cut rather deeply at a core claim about stealth democracy.

<sup>21</sup> There was substantial heterogeneity in the interaction between Stealth and the Congress condition using the Brambor et. al. (2006) checks. Stealth moderated one's reaction to the Congress condition when it was low, but those high on Stealth were simply unresponsive to the manipulation. See Figure R2 in the appendix. Thus, it is not that people high on Stealth were especially turned off by their Congressperson, but unlike everyone else, they simply did not care that it was a relatively high ranking official. We should also note that the Congress condition is in contrast to a collapsed version of the other two conditions <None; local officials> since preliminary analyses showed no difference between those two.

thesis and in contrast to an interest-group politics frame, people are not especially parochial in their willingness to deliberate.<sup>22</sup>

These findings present quite a different picture of willingness to deliberate than we might have expected if we thought of deliberation as just another form of traditional political participation, and they suggest likely effects of a wide variety of institutional permutations. We now turn to comparing these results on interest in hypothetical deliberation with those analyzing actual behavior in response to a concrete invitation to deliberate.

*Deliberating with Members of Congress:* In the summer and early fall of 2006 we conducted a series of field experiments in which random samples of citizens from thirteen congressional districts were offered an opportunity to participate in an online deliberative forum with their Member of Congress to discuss immigration policy.<sup>23</sup> Sixty-five percent of respondents agreed to participate in principle. Subjects who agreed to participate in principle were randomized into treatment and control groups.<sup>24</sup> Of those assigned to

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<sup>22</sup> Alternately, it may be that nearly everyone was highly motivated by immigration policy as an issue. This interpretation seems unlikely for two reasons. First, immigration was chosen as the “most important problem” by only 10% of subjects. Second, this model is controlling for general political interest, so the immigration manipulation should be a fairly strong test of parochialism in willingness to deliberate.

<sup>23</sup> Knowledge Networks conducted this survey in the summer of 2006. The Congressional Management Foundation, a non-profit, non-partisan organization (see [www.cmfweb.org](http://www.cmfweb.org)) recruited the Members of Congress to participate in the study. Five of the members were Republican and seven Democrats, spread across all four major geographical regions. The members themselves were diverse ideologically, including one member from each party who voted against their party on recent immigration legislation. We also conducted two sessions in which citizens were invited to deliberate with an immigration policy expert, as a kind of level two control condition.

<sup>24</sup> We realize that randomizing after such a filter complicates estimating treatment effects from the field experiment. However it is important to note that *none of the results in the current paper are affected by this decision*, since we are modeling the filter itself as the first stage in the Heckman model. In concurrent work,

the treatment condition, 34% showed up on the specified date and time for the discussion with their Member of Congress. Given typical response rates to surveys, and the relatively burdensome requirements of this invitation (four surveys, reading background materials, plus an hour long commitment at a specific date and time), these participation rates are reasonably high.

Since actual participation was conditional on agreeing to participate initially, we first estimated both stages simultaneously as a Heckman selection model. However,  $\rho$  was not significant ( $p=.428$ ), indicating that patterns in the determinants of the actual turnout were not conditioned on patterns in initial agreement to participate. Indeed, there was very little systematic variation in actual turnout at all. The only factor that rose to statistical significance at  $p<.05$  was political efficacy, which predicted increased turnout. For the most part, then, once someone expressed a willingness to deliberate, their actual participation seems to be largely a function of random variation (probably surrounding availability for the specific date and time set by their Member of Congress). Thus, Table 4 below displays separate specifications for each stage, and we focus our discussion on the first.

As with the varying deliberative conditions experiment above, willingness to deliberate in this field experiment did not follow the standard pattern from previous research on participation in traditional partisan politics and interest group liberalism. Again, the coefficients for age, race,<sup>25</sup> gender, strength of partisanship, and income were all the reverse sign of models predicting standard participation, though only income was statistically significant (and being white predicted a slightly higher rate of actually showing up for the session). Unlike the hypothetical experiment, in this specification, traditional employment dampened willingness to deliberate, probably as a proxy for constraints on specific dates and times. However, having young children in the household (which would also seem to affect availability) was positive and significant.

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we justify this design choice for research questions affected by it, and develop statistical techniques to properly analyze those data.

<sup>25</sup> As with the survey experiment example above, this result does not seem to be driven by Hispanics being especially interested in discussing immigration.



**Table 4. Participation in Deliberative Sessions with Member of Congress (Knowledge Networks)**

	Willingness to participate Logit B (S.E.)	Showing Up for Session Logit B (S.E.)
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>		
Strength of Partisanship	-.033 (.061)	-.062 (.080)
Education	.090 (.079)	.087 (.106)
Income	-.034** (.015)	.015 (.019)
White	-.198 (.144)	.315* (.184)
Children (<12) in Household	.180*** (.069)	.092 (.080)
Employment	-.761**** (.121)	-.208 (.153)
Age	-.013 (.015)	-.018 (.030)
Male	-.057 (.122)	-.053 (.163)
<b>Motivation</b>		
Conflict Avoidance	-.163** (.066)	-.026 (.085)
Efficacy	.130* (.067)	.228*** (.088)
Civil Society	.128*** (.046)	-.032 (.051)
Attention to Issue	.161* (.092)	.172 (.124)
Need for Cognition	.049 (.069)	.073 (.095)
Need for Judgment	.108 (.069)	.026 (.095)
<b>Democratic Practice</b>		
Sunshine Democracy	.144*** (.053)	.156* (.084)
Stealth Democracy	.160*** (.059)	-.032 (.075)
Trust in Government	.186*** (.057)	-.032 (.074)
<b>Other Model Variables</b>		
Panel	2 Controls	2 Controls
District	12 Controls	12 Controls
Constant	.460 (.468)	-1.150 (.741)
Number of Observations	2006	991
Cox & Snell R2	.126	.111
Nagelkerke R2	.182	.152
*p<.1 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001		

We also included a more extensive battery of questions about participation in non-political forms of civic engagement, *Civil society*. Consistent with Putnam (2000) and contrary to Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002: 184-189), an index of such engagement powerfully predicts willingness to deliberate.<sup>26</sup> The motivational factors all had the expected sign. *Conflict avoidant* people were significantly less likely to want to deliberate, whereas efficacious people and those paying attention to the issue were slightly more likely to express willingness.<sup>27</sup>

Some of the most powerful and most interesting results, however, hinge on citizen's attitudes about democratic practice. Recall that *Sunshine* attitudes and *Trust* in government were not significant in the hypothetical deliberation model. In the current model, though, both of them are substantively large, statistically significant and positive. Indeed, *Sunshine* also seems to have a marginally significant effect in driving turn-out for the session as well. This finding regarding *Trust* fits uncomfortably with the Stealth democracy story, since, presumably, those who trust government should be willing to withdraw and let it operate in the background. Recall that the Sunshine index was designed to mirror the content of Stealth, but with the opposite valence (though empirically, they formed nearly orthogonal scales). Thus, it is not too surprising that *Sunshine* should positively predict willingness to deliberate.

However, things become much more interesting when we consider the results for *Stealth*. In the earlier model, *Stealth* had large, negative, and significant effects in the Congress condition (which emulates

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<sup>26</sup> Again, sample differences do not seem to be driving demographic and other differences. We specified another set of models of vote-turnout and an index of traditional participation, using the same Knowledge Networks sample. And again, those models yield a pattern on variables much more in keeping with previous research, suggesting that there really is something different about deliberative participation. See Table R3 in the reviewer appendix.

<sup>27</sup> We did not have a general political interest question in this data set, so we cannot test directly for parochialism of interest in this model. However, given the weak effect for "paying attention" (and that without controlling for general interest) it seems unlikely that we would have found much evidence for specificity of interest driving willingness to deliberate, as Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) would suggest.

the conditions in this field experiment). Yet here we get a complete reversal. *Stealth* has substantively large, statistically significant, and *positive* effects on willingness to deliberate. Given Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's (2002) interpretation of Stealth attitudes, this stark reversal is difficult to explain. Indeed, that the *Sunshine* and *Stealth* indexes should point powerfully in the same direction is, in itself, perplexing at first blush. The items for the scales were explicitly designed to point in opposite directions in their content. However, if we question the standard interpretation of *Stealth*, the results become less perplexing. People often have both negative and positive evaluations of the same target content. Ambivalence is ubiquitous in attitude formation generally, and political attitudes in particular. It is not uncommon to have negative and positive evaluations of the same phenomena, with the two forming largely independent factors (Marcus, 2002).

If many or most people expressing Stealth beliefs are actually ambivalent about the content of the items, then a different interpretation of the meaning of *Stealth* offers itself. On the standard interpretation, most people dislike politics intrinsically, do not want to be more involved, but reluctantly agree to more direct democracy as a hedge against the corrupt status quo. They would most prefer a non-democratic technocracy that operates in the background. Recognizing that this model might not be achievable, they settle for more referenda and other forms of direct democratic control.

We actually agree with Hibbing & Theiss-Morse to a large extent – i.e., that most citizens prefer stealth democracy to direct democracy (which is not the same as deliberative democracy), and more direct democracy to the status quo. However, we extend, by one more step, the same move that they make regarding direct democracy. That is, just as with the apparent desire for more direct democracy, people do not really hold Stealth democracy as their first preference. Instead, they will settle for Stealth democracy if the civics textbook version of deliberative representative democracy is not achievable.

With this expanded menu in view, we can see why the *Stealth* index reverses its effect between the hypothetical and actual offer to deliberate: the actual offer from their Member communicates new information about that Member that runs counter to their stereotype of politicians. Constituents might believe that most Members of Congress are corrupt politicians who do not really care about what average

citizens think. But when their Member, in effect, says “*No, really, I do want to talk with you. Will two weeks from Tuesday at 7pm work?*” they update and reason that their Member must be one of the (perhaps few) good ones. The frustration and desire for reform evinced by Stealth attitudes indicate motivation for change, rather than apathy or aversion. On this reading, those high on Stealth order their preferences thus:

*status quo* → *more direct democracy* → *stealth democracy* → *more deliberative representative democracy*

These preferences are not single-peaked with respect to Hibbing and Theiss-Morse’s notion of “process space,” (2002: 47) so it makes sense that the Stealth index might behave non-monotonically when new options enter the perceived choice set.

However, people high on *Stealth* might also want to participate in deliberation with their Member of Congress at higher rates for entirely different reasons. For example, they might consider it a golden opportunity to hold their presumptively corrupt Member’s feet to the fire. But this explanation would not account for why the effect should *reverse* itself so dramatically between the hypothetical version of talking to one’s Member of Congress and the actual version. Any proffered alternative explanation must make sense of how the new information being conveyed by the Member’s concrete offer leads to the differential effects of Stealth beliefs specifically.

One might argue that differences in the composition of the sample or contextual features of the two questionnaires might explain the difference. To test for this possibility, in addition to the session with the Members of Congress, we invited people to participate in identical sessions with a non-partisan expert on the issue of immigration. Under these conditions, the coefficient on Stealth is very similar to its effect in the corresponding hypothetical conditions – basically indistinguishable from zero.<sup>28</sup>

*A Closer Look at Stealth:* In order to test the ambivalence thesis more thoroughly, it will be helpful to take a closer look at how Hibbing and Theiss-Morse build their case for their interpretation of Stealth Democracy.

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<sup>28</sup> See Table R4 in the appendix.

On the one hand, they defend average citizens from the accusation that they are unreasonable for not wanting to take a greater role in politics. On the other hand, they indicate that people's dislike of politics rests largely on an interrelated set of factual misconceptions and normatively suspect attitudes. More specifically, they claim that Stealth is a kind of syndrome predicated on: 1) "false consensus;" 2) "dislike of debate, compromise, and conflict;" and 3) "fondness for non-democratic decision making structures." As we shall see, people's support for these three pillars of Stealth Democracy are real, but they also manifest the ambivalence that we have uncovered and described above. Thus they need to be re-interpreted in this new light.

*False consensus:* Hibbing and Theiss-Morse write: "A key factor causing many Americans to be attracted to the deferential, 'don't bother me' political process we have described is their disinterested attitude toward most issues on the political agenda...and their belief that most other Americans are similarly disinterested. Psychologists and others have consistently found that people perceive false consensus." (p. 132) For example, they show that 39% of Americans think that "most" of their fellow citizens agree with them on the "Most Important Problem" facing the country, when, in fact, perceptions of the most important problem are spread over a very wide range of issues. We grant that the phenomenon of false consensus is real. However, we argue that it is less severe, less stable, and less consequential for attitudes toward democracy than one might think.

In the 2006 CCES survey, we repeated the question on beliefs about what fellow citizens think about the most important problem facing the country. We were able to replicate the finding (and then some); in our sample a full 51% of subjects thought that "most" people agreed with them.<sup>29</sup> However, we embedded a question wording experiment in this survey giving a random half of subjects the original version of the question, while the other half got a battery asking them to judge what percentage of the population agreed

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<sup>29</sup> We should note, however, that with advent of the Iraq war and attention to Terrorism post 9/11, actual agreement about the most important problem increased dramatically: the sum of the two most mentioned items went from under 13% to over 40%.

with them on each of the top ten issues using a more concrete scale: *Under 10%*; *Between 10% & 30%*; *Between 30% & 50%*; *Over 50%*; *Don't Know*.<sup>30</sup> This simple way of reframing the answer categories does not involve a dramatic change in the question, yet in this percentage-specified condition, the proportion of people expressing a belief that most people agree with them falls rather dramatically from 51% to 29%.

In the percentage specified condition, the propensity to think that one's issue had majority support as the most important also tracked the actual level of support that the issue had – for example, if one removes those identifying the Iraq War, the most popular choice, then the fraction thinking that a majority of their fellow citizens agree with them falls to 24%. This process continues as the percentage actually choosing that issue falls.

The inference of rampant false consensus seems quite fragile if a simple question wording variation can produce a 43% reduction in the number of people who express such a misperception. The public looks much more sensible when the frame and presentation have a format likely to elicit slightly – just slightly – more reasoned and contextualized responses. With a small nudge, many citizens can trigger thoughtful processing quite well, which gives us reason to think that more aggressive changes along the lines of what some deliberative democrats propose would engender even more dramatic remediation of false consensus.

Most importantly, criteria beyond agreement on the *single* most important problem (MIP) are surely more valid measures of the public's capacity to appreciate both the range of issues and how their fellow citizens' concerns are distributed over these issues. When we move beyond people's personal MIP, judgments about others' beliefs become more accurate. For example, the average rating of others' views on the percentage-specified scale correlated with the actual rate at which people chose that issue as the most important at  $r = .82$ . That is, other than having an unsurprising bias regarding the percentage of the

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<sup>30</sup> The original response options were: *most*; *some*; *very few*. As far as we can tell, there was no *Don't know* option. If so, then some, though not all, of the decline in false consensus that we observe comes from that difference. However, we would argue that our approach is clearly more appropriate to the question at hand – i.e., it is invalid to deny people who are willing to express ignorance on an issue an opportunity to do so, and then criticize them for holding a foolish belief that they do not really hold.

population favoring one's own MIP, the public is actually remarkably good at estimating how their fellow citizens regard the importance of a wide range of salient issues.

*Dislike of debate and compromise:* Hibbing and Theiss-Morse write: “[T]he main source of the desire to make government a less visible part of people’s everyday lives springs from people...who are convinced political arguments are unnecessary.” (p. 135) Their main source of evidence for this claim comes from two items on the Stealth scale:

*Elected officials would help the country more if they would stop talking and just take action on important problems. [86% Agree]*

*What people call “compromise” in politics is really just selling out one’s principles. [64% Agree]*

We replicate the finding that large portions of the public agree with these statements: 86% agreed with the “talk v. action” item, and 64% agreed with the “compromise” item.<sup>31</sup> It would seem reasonable to infer, as they do, that many members of the public have attitudes that would make it difficult for them to function in a deliberative public culture. Yet it is worth exploring more closely what these attitudes mean and how they function in a broader view of public debate. A different frame on very similar questions produces precisely the opposite conclusion, namely that average citizens evince a remarkably *favorable* disposition for deliberative participation. Consider the agreement rates of positively framed versions of the two questions above, from the Sunshine scale:

*It is important for elected officials to discuss and debate things thoroughly before making major policy changes. [92% Agree]*

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<sup>31</sup> Unlike Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, we included a “neither agree nor disagree” choice. Unless otherwise noted, for comparability to their marginals, we simply calculate agreement and disagreement as a proportion of those not choosing the middle category. The resulting rates of agreement are very comparable to theirs. They also find 86% agreeing with the “talk” item, and they actually found slightly lower, 60% agreement, with the “compromise” item. On the other two items, below, we get slightly lower rates of agreement from theirs. Across the four items the rates are quite close, so sample differences are not likely to be driving our more optimistic findings on the other items and analysis.

*Openness to other people's views, and a willingness to compromise are important for politics in a country as diverse as ours. [89% Agree]*

Even more people agree with these pro-deliberative attitudes than with the corresponding Stealth statements. It is thus incorrect to infer that large majorities of the public have unambiguously negative attitudes about debate and compromise. We do not wish to repeat the same mistake in the opposite direction by arguing that large majorities of citizens have unambiguously positive attitudes about debate and compromise. Indeed 52% of the citizens in our sample agreed with *both* the positive and negative version of the “compromise” question, and 83% with both versions of the “talk v. action” question. Either citizens are deeply confused about these issues (i.e., they exhibit rampant non-attitudes) or they are deeply ambivalent.

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's many systematic findings regarding Stealth, as well as ours regarding both Stealth and Sunshine, indicate that the non-attitudes explanation is implausible here. If we were really dealing with random noise, the indices would not have so many interpretable causes and consequences. We are left to conclude that very large percentages of the public have more complex attitudes about the role of debate and compromise in public discourse. In our view, such ambivalence is unsurprising and perhaps quite appropriate. The folk intuition that much elite political talk is a mix of reasonable debate and demagogic drivel seems entirely sensible. Similarly, some compromises are rightly regarded as reasonable, even noble, forms of mutual accommodation, while others are cynical or craven.<sup>32</sup>

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse suggest that most citizens over-react to the negative parts of the mix and discount the positive. Quoting a participant in one of their focus groups as complaining that “Congress bickers all the time between the two parties, and they're always struggling for the power, rather than taking care of the issue” they argue that “The people's impatience with deliberation and compromise is an important

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<sup>32</sup> Depending on how one conceptualizes ambivalence, some might resist categorizing such reactions as “ambivalence” per se, rather than differential reactions to heterogeneous phenomena that fall under a single term (e.g., “compromise”). However, constantly parsing terms into things like “good compromise” and “bad compromise” seems both clumsy and tautological, so we stick with ambivalence, acknowledging that the ambivalence might be the result of capacious terms like “compromise.”



element of the American political system” (p. 137). However, this assumes that there is little truth to this person’s accusation about the quality of elite political discourse.<sup>33</sup> The implication is that most people typically misperceive genuine deliberation as bickering, and reasonable compromise as the result only of power struggles. On the basis of this and other comments in their focus groups, they infer that: “The notion that debating among elected officials may actually be necessitated by their responsibility to represent the interests of diverse constituencies across the country is rejected by most people” (p. 142).

We doubt that most people are so simplistic and reductive in their views, so we decided to test this claim more systematically on a representative sample of Americans. We asked a standard Likert agree/disagree question based on a close paraphrase of the quote above:

*One of the main reasons that elected officials have to debate issues is that they are responsible to represent the interests of diverse constituencies across the country.*<sup>34</sup>

Far from most people rejecting this notion, only a small minority disagrees with it (6%). A large majority (84%) explicitly agrees with it. Most citizens seem quite willing to make room for debate and compromise, though (reasonably, in our view) they do not regard all debate as constructive or sincere, nor all compromise as principled. It is simply inaccurate to characterize all public frustration with partisan politics and interest group liberalism as rooted in naïve perfectionism. As we have seen, it is precisely those people who are high on Stealth who *want* to deliberate when given a signal that they can actually have both rational debate and republican consultation at the same time.

*Fondness for non-democratic decision-making structures:* Hibbing and Theiss-Morse also argue that most people do not distrust elites in general, but rather only what they see as irredeemably corrupt

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<sup>33</sup> If we read this person’s accusation that politicians behave non-ideally “all the time” as “routinely” rather than as literally “in each and every instance” it is not even clear that his statement is hyperbole.

<sup>34</sup> This question was asked on the 2006 CCES. We also included a randomization that substituted “often disagree about” for “have to debate” in this question. We got similar (though less lopsided) results across conditions, so the finding is robust regarding the public’s attitudes toward both debate and disagreement.

politicians. Citizens are so concerned to avoid politics themselves that they are eager to hand power over to anti-democratic institutions, if such institutions do not implicate self-serving politicians. Their main evidence for this cluster of claims comes from the remaining two items on the Stealth scale:

*Our government would run better if decisions were left up to successful business people.*

*Our government would run better if decisions were left up to nonelected, independent experts rather than politicians or the people.*

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse choose a rather negative frame for their data on these questions. They find that 32% of citizens agreed with the “business people” statement and 31% with the “experts” statement, and infer from these numbers that the public likes “decision-making structures that are not democratic, and not even republican” (p.138). Simply turning around the frame provides a more optimistic interpretation: each of these statements was rejected by more than two-thirds of the public, so it seems gratuitously pessimistic to describe the public as having a broad “fondness for nondemocratic decision-making structures” (p. 137).

Moreover, in qualitative follow up interviews on these questions,<sup>35</sup> we found that many respondents who agreed with the “successful business people” item interpreted it as implying that such people would make good *candidates* for public office (e.g., Ross Perot or Michael Bloomberg), rather than directly crafting policy qua business people. Needless to say, there is nothing anti-democratic about such beliefs on this interpretation. Indeed, the other interpretation conjured up images of having energy policy crafted by oil executives – a prospect that was decidedly unpopular, even among those who initially agreed with the item.

Finally, as with the first pair of Stealth questions, there was substantially more agreement with the reverse coded statements than with the original ones:

*In a democracy like ours, there are some important differences between how government should be run and how a business should be managed. [84% Agree]*

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<sup>35</sup> The brief qualitative interviews were conducted with a separate convenience sample of people asked many of the same questions from our CCES module, not the subjects from the CCES themselves.

*It is important for the people and their elected representatives to have the final say in running government, rather than leaving it up to unelected experts. [92% Agree]*

Whereas significant minorities agreed with the Stealth questions, overwhelming super-majorities agreed with the corresponding Sunshine versions. Unlike the first pair of Stealth items, most of the public is not even ambivalent here – they simply reject the Stealth attitudes and embrace the Sunshine ones. We conclude that any picture of the American public as so desperate to avoid politics that they are willing to submit lightly to technocratic rule is misleading.

*Why some people do not want to deliberate:* As we have repeated on several occasions, none of the foregoing is meant to suggest that the public is unambiguously positive about the prospects of a more deliberative democracy. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse are surely right that substantial numbers of people do not want to deliberate, even if they over-estimate how many and misinterpret why. Recall that in our experiment assessing interest in participating in different kinds of deliberative sessions we found a skew toward substantial interest: *Extremely interested 27%; Quite interested 27%; Somewhat interested 29%; Not too interested 12%; Not at all interested 5%*. Of the 17% who said they were “Not too” or “Not at all” interested, we followed up to find out why they did not want to participate. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse argue that the main reasons are that most people are uninterested in politics and that they consider deliberation unnecessary because everyone already knows what needs to be done. We did not find much support for these claims. Indeed, as Table 5 shows, they were among the least cited reasons.<sup>36</sup>

**Table 5:** *Percent citing reasons for not wanting to deliberate  
(Among those 17% “not too” or “not at all” interested in deliberating)*

Don't know enough to participate	42%
Too busy	31%
Dislike conflict	29%
Will not lead to binding decision	26%
Impossible to discuss politics rationally	17%
Political views private	15%
No interest in politics	15%
Everyone already knows what to do	4%

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<sup>36</sup> For the full question and response wording, see the Appendix.

As we have argued above, people seem to regard deliberation as a partial alternative to more standard partisan politics and interest group liberalism. As a result, a general lack of interest in politics as conventionally understood does not seem to be driving people's unwillingness to participate in deliberation. Similarly, consistent with our finding that most Americans are well aware that debate and compromise are often necessary, very few people find the exercise pointless on the grounds that everyone already knows what needs to be done. On the contrary the modal response to the question about why respondents did not want to deliberate indicates that many people are quite humble in the face of complex policies, and do not feel like they know enough to participate meaningfully. We do, however, find support for Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's claim that conflict aversion is a substantial deterrent to people's willingness to deliberate. As they note: "[O]ne out of four American adults appears turned off by political argumentation regardless of how dignified or noble it might be" (p. 135). We found even more conflict aversion in our sample than they did, with 32% agreeing with their conflict aversion item on the baseline survey, and 29% of those not interested in participating in the hypothetical deliberative session citing it as their reason why. That said, many factors go into people's decision to do things, and it would be easy to over-estimate the effect of conflict aversion. For example, 60% of those who were conflict avoidant on the baseline survey were nevertheless willing to deliberate with their Member of Congress. Thus, even though some aversion to conflict may be widespread, it is hardly decisive with respect to participating in deliberation.

If we multiply out the rate of people who were not interested in deliberating (17%) with the percentage of those who cite conflict aversion as the reason (29%), we get a predicted net decrease in willingness to deliberate due to conflict aversion of about 5%. As it happens, this estimate comports well with the behavior we observe in the model predicting willingness to deliberate with one's Member of Congress. Holding the other variables constant, moving from one standard deviation above the mean to one standard deviation below the mean on a conflict avoidance index predicts about a 6% decrease in one's willingness to deliberate. This level of suppression indicates that conflict aversion should be regarded as a significant, but not overwhelming, impediment to realizing a deliberative culture.

*Consequences of deliberation:* Hibbing and Theiss-Morse argue that, “Unfortunately, in specific practice, getting people to participate in discussions of political issues with people who do not have similar concerns is not a wise move. The reasons are numerous” (p. 190). They present a list of negative consequences alleged to follow from forcing deliberation upon reluctant citizens, leading to even greater frustration with and aversion toward politics. The present paper focuses on who is willing to deliberate, not the content and consequences of deliberation, which we address in concurrent work. Here, we cannot fully develop our response to the alleged consequences of deliberative disagreement, but it is worth mentioning that nothing like the negative consequences predicted by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse came to pass in our field experiments. Quite the contrary: participants almost uniformly described the experience as positive: 95% Agreed (72% Strongly Agreed) that such sessions are “very valuable to our democracy” and 96% Agreed (80% Strongly Agreed) that they would be interested in doing similar online sessions for other issues. Such positive reactions were nearly independent of whether the citizens were of the same party or agreed on the issue with their Member of Congress or the majority of the other citizens in the session. Open ended responses to the sessions were also overwhelmingly positive, with participants remarking on various aspects of the sessions that fit quite well with the hopes and intentions of deliberative democrats. E.g.:

*“It was great to have a member of Congress want to really hear the voices of the constituents.” / “I believe we are experiencing the one way our elected representatives can hear our voice and do what we want.” / “I thought he really tried to address the issues we were bringing up instead of steering the conversation in any particular direction, which was cool.” / “I realized that there are A LOT more sides to this issue than I had originally thought.”*

In addition to their positive attitudes, we have identified positive causal effects on people’s issue-specific political knowledge, attention to politics beyond the issue under discussion, and external political efficacy as a result of participation (with many more potential benefits of deliberation yet to be tested for). Reviewing previous work on group discussion Hibbing and Theiss-Morse declare that “the clear conclusion of empirical research is that enhanced involvement does not have the benefits theorists claim” (p. 184). As with their

conclusions about Stealth democracy, such sweeping claims have some truth to them, but need careful qualification.

*Conclusion:* Many scholars of political behavior (as well as many non-academics interested in politics) are inclined to be skeptical of the aspirations of deliberative democrats. The story goes that average citizens hate politics and cannot even get it right when they show up every four years (if they show up) to cast a vote on a simple binary choice between candidates who have been bombarding them with information for months. How can anyone seriously expect them to want to participate in more detailed discussion of policy (much less do so competently)? The intuition behind such skepticism is reasonable on its face. However, the aspirations of deliberative democrats do not seem so hopelessly utopian or perverse when we consider that many citizens are de-mobilized precisely by the peculiarities of partisan and interest-group politics that political sophisticates take as exclusively constitutive of political participation. The motivation and competence to participate are not, we argue, arranged in such an ordered way as to preclude a greater desire for alternative forms of participation. Our findings suggest that willingness to deliberate is much higher than research in political behavior might suggest, and that those most willing to deliberate are precisely those turned off by standard partisan and interest group politics. If the standard forms of participation can be embedded in a more deliberative framework, the tension between the two may well lessen. Far from rendering deliberative democratic reforms ridiculous or perverse on their own terms, these findings suggest that the deliberative approach represents opportunities for practical reform quite congruent with the aspirations of normative political theorists and average citizens alike.

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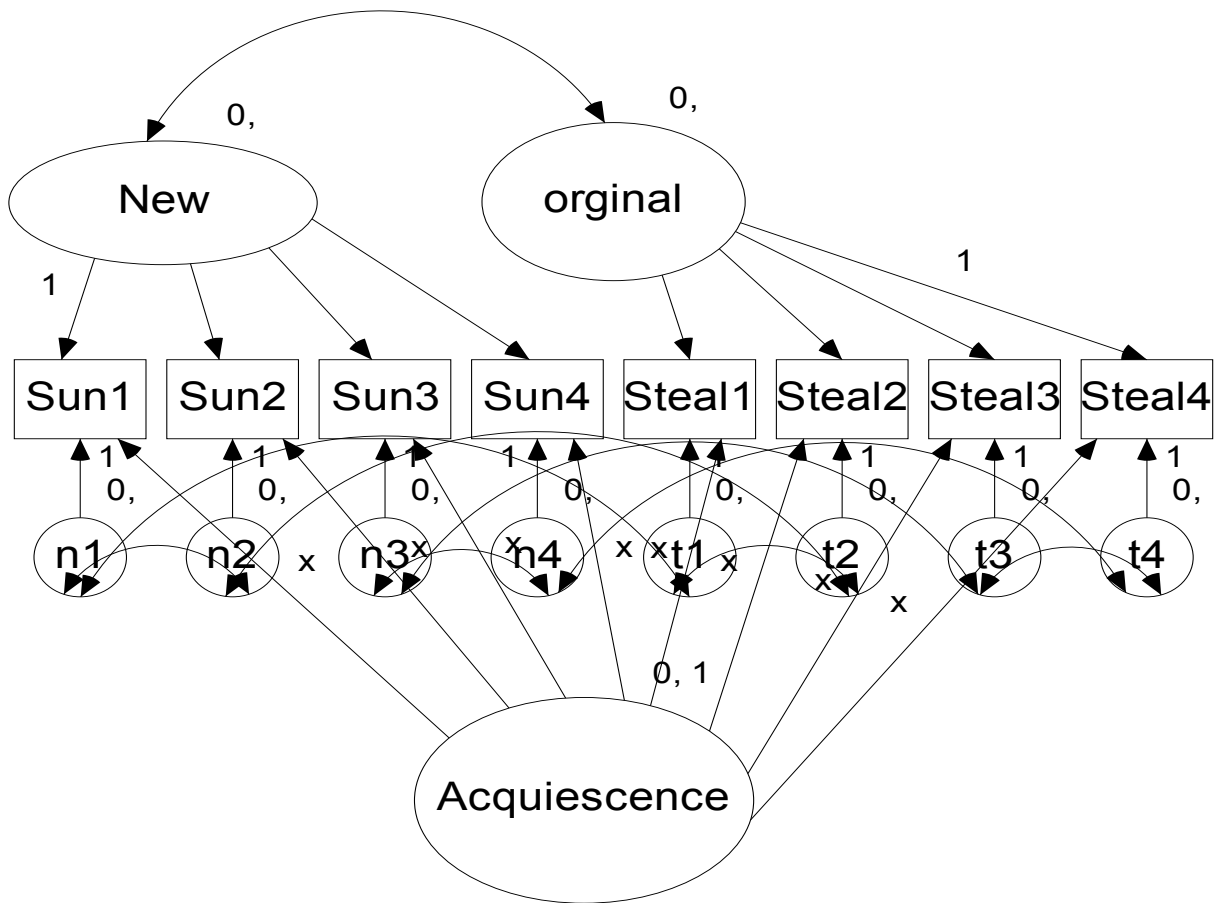
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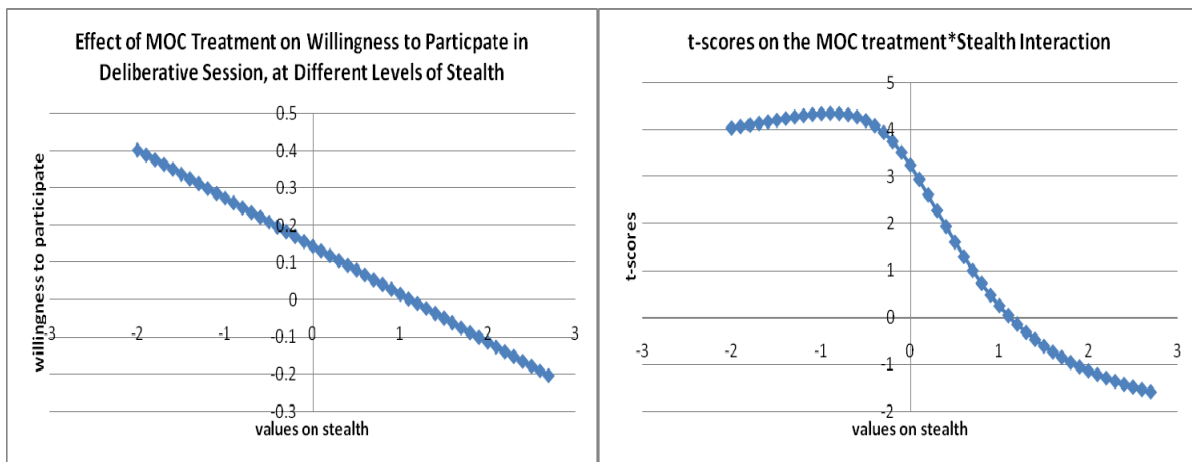


Reviewer Appendix

**Figure R1: Three Factor Measurement Model (Stealth, Sunshine, Acquiescence)**



**Figure R2: The Interaction between the Member of Congress Treatment & Scores on Stealth**



Source: 2006 CCES

<b>Table R1: Predicting Two Types of Political Participation, CCES Respondents</b>			
	<b>Model 1: Turnout</b> (logistic regression)	<b>Model 2: Index of Participation</b> (negative binomial regression)	
	B (SE)	B (SE)	Predicted Counts
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>			
Strength of Partisanship	.241(.082)***	.008 (.014)	
Church Attendance	.117 (.074)	.020 (.011)*	.06
Education	.242 (.069)***	.098 (.011)****	.33
Income	.053 (.026)**	.019 (.004)****	.16
White	.548 (.226)**	-.032 (.044)	
Full Time Employment	.150 (.207)	-.010 (.033)	
Age	.046 (.007)****	.005 (.001)****	.15
Male	.322 (.188)*	-.023 (.029)	
<b>Motivation</b>			
Interest	.632 (.105)****	.382 (.027)****	.72
Conflict Avoidance	-.010 (.080)	-.057 (.012)****	-.16
Efficacy	-.020 (.100)	.061 (.014)****	.15
Need for Cognition	.144 (.109)	.066 (.017)****	.16
Need for Judgment	.062 (.113)	.018 (.017)	
<b>Democratic Practice</b>			
Sunshine Democracy	-.146 (.092)	-.017 (.016)	
Stealth Democracy	-.196 (.103)*	-.095 (.015)****	-.23
Trust in Government	.056 (.157)	.002 (.026)	
Constant	-5.494 (.715)****	-1.589 (.156)****	
Alpha (dispersion parameter)	---	.028 (.013)**	
Number of Observations	2103	2237	
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.22	.09	
LR $\chi^2$	257.90 (.000)	810.01 (.000)	
*p<.1 **p<.05 ***p<.01 ****p<.001			
Note: Stealth and Trust have been centered in both models. Predicted Counts are calculated using S-Post, and are calculated from +/- ½ s.d			

**Turnout is vote in the 2006 midterm election.**

**Index of Participation is a simple count of reporting the following behaviors in the last two years:**

Attended a political protest or rally; Contacted a public official; Worked for a campaign; Given money to a campaign; Worked with others in your community to solve a problem; Served on a community board; Written a “letter to the editor”; Held a publicly elected office

[These criteria apply to Table R2, below, as well.]

**Table R2: Predictors of Political Participation (Knowledge Networks)**

	Voted in 2004 Election Logit B (S.E.)	Participation Index Negative Binomial B (S.E.)	Predicted Counts (+/- ½ s.d.)
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>			
Strength of Partisanship	.443**** (.085)	.062** (.030)	.05
Education	.366**** (.099)	.145*** (.042)	.11
Income	.071**** (.020)	.005	(.007)
White	.054 (.181)	.180** (.072)	.13
Children (<12) in Household	-.025 (.082)	-.123**** (.035)	-.09
Employment	.008 (.162)	-.072	(.057)
Age	.329**** (.058)	.016*** (.006)	.01
Male	-.075 (.177)	.034	(.058)
<b>Motivation</b>			
Conflict Avoidance	.101 (.089)	-.078** (.032)	-.06
Efficacy	.234** (.094)	.180**** (.032)	.13
Civil Society	.278**** (.075)	.281**** (.017)	.21
Attention to Issue	.389*** (.121)	.242**** (.048)	.18
Need for Cognition	-.019 (.092)	.114*** (.037)	.08
Need for Judgment	.218** (.093)	.076** (.036)	.05
<b>Democratic Practice</b>			
Sunshine Democracy	-.164** (.083)	.053* (.031)	.04
Stealth Democracy	-.173** (.079)	-.062** (.028)	-.05
Trust in Government	.103 (.075)	-.008	(.029)
<b>Other Model Variables</b>			
Constant	-3.658**** (.575)	-2.173**** (.230)	
Alpha	---	.248**** (.041)	
Number of Observations	1867		1980
Cox & Snell R2	.134		.131
Nagelkerke R2	.243		---
*p<.1 **p<.05 ***p<01 ****p<.001			

**Table R3: Participation in Deliberative Session with Expert (Knowledge Networks)**

	Willingness to participate Logit B (S.E)	Showing Up for Session Logit B (S.E.)
<b>Individual Characteristics</b>		
Strength of Partisanship	-.206 (.189)	.055 (.258)
Education	-.154 (.260)	-.086 (.373)
Income	.019 (.059)	-.157* (.094)
White	-1.243 (1.184)	-.999 (1.294)
Children (<12) in Household	-.108 (.269)	.198 (.356)
Employment	-.883*** (.412)	-.530 (.534)
Age	-.282 (.173)	-.332 (.239)
Male	.316 (.360)	.227 (.485)
<b>Motivation</b>		
Conflict Avoidance	-.207 (.188)	-.086 (.269)
Efficacy	-.039 (.215)	.508* (.274)
Civil Society	-.031 (.121)	-.082 (.174)
Attention to Issue	.427 (.293)	.430 (.417)
Need for Cognition	.592*** (.209)	.231 (.314)
Need for Judgment	.156 (.207)	.112 (.306)
<b>Democratic Practice</b>		
Sunshine Democracy	.286 (.180)	-.395 (.304)
Stealth Democracy	-.093 (.181)	-.198 (.216)
Trust in Government	.355** (.180)	-.070 (.231)
<b>Constant</b>		
Constant	3.255 (2.056)	3.818 (2.556)
<b>Model Characteristics</b>		
Number of Observations	192	108
Cox & Snell R2	.123	.155
Nagelkerke R2	.168	.208
Percent Correct	67.2%	68.5%

\*p<.1 \*\*p<.05 \*\*\*p<.01 \*\*\*\*p<.001

**2006 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES)**

▪**Sunshine Democracy: An index – created by a principal components factor analysis – composed of the following four items:** (5 point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

1. Openness to other people's views, and a willingness to compromise are important for politics in a country as diverse as ours.
2. It is important for elected officials to discuss and debate things thoroughly before making major policy changes.
3. In a democracy like ours, there are some important differences between how government should be run and how a business should be managed.
4. It is important for the people and their elected representatives to have the final say in running government, rather than leaving it up to unelected experts.

▪**Stealth Democracy: An index – created by a principal components factor analysis – composed of the following four items:** (5 point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

1. Elected officials would help the country more if they would stop talking and just take action on important problems.
2. What people call "compromise" in politics is really just selling out one's principles.
3. Our government would run better if decisions were left up to successful business people.
4. Our government would run better if decisions were left up to non-elected, independent experts rather than politicians or the people.

▪**Trust in Government:** A 4-point scale of responses to the following statement:  
I trust government officials generally. (1=not at all; 4= always)

▪**Political Interest:** A 5-point scale of responses to the following statement:  
"I am interested in politics." (5=strongly agree; 1=strongly disagree)

▪**Conflict Avoidance:** A 5-point scale of responses to the following statement:  
"When people argue about politics, I feel uncomfortable." (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree)

▪**Efficacy:** An Index – created through a principal components factor analysis – composed of the following two items:

- "Public officials don't care what people like me think."  
"I can't influence government decisions."

▪**Need for Cognition:** An Index – created through a principal components factor analysis – composed of the following two items:

1. Would you say you have opinions about... [almost everything, about many things, about some things, about very few things]?
2. Some people like to have responsibility for handling situations that require a lot of thinking, and other people don't like to have responsibility for situations like that. Do you... [like them a lot, like them somewhat, neither like nor dislike, dislike them somewhat, dislike them a lot]?

▪**Need for judgment:** An Index – created through a principal components factor analysis – composed of the following two items:

1. Please tell us how much the statement below describes you: It is very important to me to hold strong opinions.
2. Please tell us how much the statement below describes you: I often prefer to remain neutral about complex issues.

▪**Strength of Partisanship:** A 7-point party identification scale, folded. (1=independent, 4=strong partisan).

▪**Church Attendance:** Respondents' answers about frequency of church attendance. (1=almost never or never; 4=once a week or more)

▪**Education:** Respondent's level of formal education (6 categories)

▪**Income:** Respondent's family income. (14 categories)

▪**White:** 1=white; 0=non-white; ▪**Age:** Respondent's age; ▪**Male:** 1=male; 0=female.

▪**Full Time Employment:** 1=full time employment; 0= non full-time employment.

▪**Treatment Conditions:** “Recently there has been interest in helping regular citizens get more input into the policy process. For example, many organizations run [**one hour/one day**] sessions where citizens [**come together/use the internet**] to discuss [**important issues/immigration policy**] [**none/with their member of Congress/with local officials**]. [**none/participants get \$25 as thanks for their involvement**]” 1=one hour; 0=1 day; 1=internet; 0=come together (in-person); 1=important issues; 0=immigration policy; 1=meet with member of Congress; 0=other two conditions; 1=\$25 incentive; 0=no incentive

### Knowledge Networks Study

▪**Sunshine Democracy** ▪**Stealth Democracy** ▪**Efficacy** ▪**Need for Cognition** ▪**Need for Judgment**

▪**Strength of Partisanship** ▪**Male [Same As CCES Above]**

▪**Trust in Government:** An index – created by a principal components factor analysis – composed of the following four items: (1=not at all; 4= always)

1. How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington DC to do what is right?
2. How much of the time do you think you can trust [MOC], your Member of Congress, to do what is right?
3. How much do elections make government pay attention to what the people think?

▪**Conflict Avoidance:** An index – created by a principal components factor analysis – composed of the following eight items: (5 point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree)

1. When people argue about politics, I often feel uncomfortable.
2. If I'm sure I'm right about a political issue, I don't waste time listening to other people's arguments.
3. I usually find it easy to see political issues from other people's point of view.
4. I have no problem revealing my political beliefs, even to someone who would disagree with me.
5. I would rather not justify my political beliefs to someone who disagrees with me.
6. I do not take it personally when someone disagrees with my political views.
7. When I'm in a group, I often go along with what the majority decides is best, even if it is not what I want personally.
8. When I'm in a group, I stand my ground even if everyone else disagrees with me.

▪**Civil Society:** An additive index – created by a count of the respondent's reported active participation in the following groups: service club or fraternal organizations (e.g., Elks, Rotary); veterans groups; religious groups; senior citizen's centers or groups; women's groups, issue-oriented political organizations; non-partisan civic organizations; school clubs or associations; hobby, sports teams, or youth groups; neighborhood associations or community groups; groups representing racial/ethnic interests.

High scores = high number of groups in which the respondent participates.

▪**Attention to Issue (Immigration):** Response to the following question:

Recently there has been a lot of reporting about the issue of illegal immigration. Would you say that you have... [Followed reporting on the issue very closely, Followed reporting on the issue somewhat, Heard about the issue, but not followed it, Have not heard much about the issue]?

▪**Education:** Four-category measure of education [less than high school, high school, some college, bachelor's degree or higher], with higher levels of education indicated by higher scores.

▪**Income:** Nineteen-category measure of reported household income, with higher scores indicating higher income.

▪**Children under 12 in Household:** Number of children under 12 years old living in the household of the respondent.

▪**Employment:** Dummy variable based on reported employment status. Respondents assigned a 1 if they responded that they are employed in one of the following ways: I work as a paid employee; I am self-employed; I am an owner/partner in small business, professional practice, farm; or I work at least 15 hrs/wk w/o pay in family business/farm. Those who reported that they were unemployed, laid off, disabled, retired, a homemaker or gave another response were assigned a 0.

▪**Age:** A seven-category scale of the respondent's age. Higher scores indicate higher age.