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The Influence of Communication- and Organization-Related Factors on Interest in Participation in Campus Dialogic Deliberation

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Abstract

Grounded in participatory democracy principles, deliberation is designed to foster collaborative and thoughtful decision-making communication. On college campuses, deliberation can lead to a number of individual and organizational consequences, particularly for students, who may not believe that they have a significant voice in decision-making. Although deliberation ostensibly enables students to make their voices heard, the factors that shape students' interest in participation in such deliberation remain unclear. This study explored how communication and campus factors influence students' interest in and perceived helpfulness of dialogic deliberation participation. This manuscript concludes with recommendations for the development of campus-based and community-oriented deliberation programs.

Author Biography

Gregory D. Paul (PhD., Texas A&M University, 2009) is an associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies. His research interests center on community-building, conflict management, and restorative justice.

Keywords

Acknowledgements

Introduction

As higher education continues to evolve in response to stakeholder demands, individuals associated with colleges and universities, from employees to students to alumni, find themselves needing to make difficult decisions about pressing problems based on sometimes competing interests. Funding changes, calls for increased transparency and accountability, and increasing competition have made such decisions more difficult and intense, shaping the ways in which colleges and universities make decisions about their vision, goals, resources, and practices.

In both commercial and educational organizations, administrators tend to be the ones making these decisions. This top-down approach to decision-making comes with at least two problems in higher education. First, it can lead members to lose trust in administrators if they feel that decision-makers do not care for or ask for outside viewpoints. Members can begin to feel as if they have no voice, thereby undercutting their connection to or concern for their organization. Second, even if administrators ask for others' viewpoints, communication during the decision-making process tends to reflect a zero-sum, competitive orientation in that people tend to argue for and cling to their existing thought patterns and meaning systems rather than learn or explore new ones (Hurtado, 2007). Additionally, when communicating with someone from a different group over tightly held views, goals, and beliefs (such as where funding should go), such communication typically breaks down into entrenched argument, with individuals turning toward their in-groups to reify their opinions, beliefs, and worldviews (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997; Theiss-Morse & Hibbing, 2005). In colleges and universities with increasing diversity and decreasing resources, such monologic communication is counterproductive individually and organizationally.

One approach to overcoming these problems can be found in the growing communication literature on deliberation and dialogue (Diaz & Gilchrist, 2010; Hurtado, 2007; Schoem, Hurtado, Sevig, Chesler, & Sumida, 2001; Thomas, 2010; Trevino, 2001). Grounded in theorizing on deliberative democracy (Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004; Kim & Kim, 2008), deliberation involves community members coming together in a facilitated small group setting to make decisions on public issues (Bedinger, 2011; Burkhalter, Gastil, & Kelshaw, 2002; Cohen, 1997; Habermas, 2006; Ryfe, 2002). In an organizational context, deliberative decision-making can involve bringing people from diverse groups together in facilitated small group settings to foster mutual understanding and collaborative decision-making based on co-created goals regarding organizational issues and plans. During the deliberation process, the approach to communication can vary, from competitive, rationalistic argumentation to relationally sensitive dialogue that

attempts to foster relational connections and create shared meaning through an exploration of one another's personal assumptions about the world (Barge & Little, 2002; Bedinger, 2011; Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001; Isaacs, 1993; Kellett & Dalton, 2001; Pearce & Pearce, 2004; Yungbluth & Johnson, 2010). Deliberation grounded in principles of dialogue involves growing understanding and making decisions collaboratively while prioritizing empathic listening, open expression, and thoughtful inquiry of diverse viewpoints and experiences (Barge & Little, 2002; Bedinger, 2011; Black, 2008; Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001; Schoem et al., 2001; Spano, 2001).

On campus, the number of programs devoted to dialogue and deliberation has grown significantly over the past decade (van Til, 2011), particularly as colleges and universities have expressed heightened interest in civic engagement and diversity (Bedinger, 2011; Thomas, 2010). A growing body of research has investigated the outcomes of participation in these programs, which largely focus on off-campus community issues (in the case of deliberation programs) or social issues (in the case of dialogue programs) rather than on-campus decision-making (Burkhalter et al., 2002; Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Hurtado, 2001; Spano, 2001). While these outcomes are promising for participants, we still have only a limited understanding of *who* participates in these programs. Research to date has largely explored how participation is associated with individual-level factors (e.g., demographic factors such as race and psychographic factors such as need for cognition) (Goidel, Freeman, Procopio, & Zewe, 2008; Jacobs, Cook, & Delli Carpini, 2009; Neblo, Esterling, Kennedy, Lazer, & Sokhey, 2010). Given that deliberation is inherently social, it also is important to explore the influence of social factors, particularly regarding communicative and organizational characteristics, on interest in participating. Additionally, given the *democratic* orientation of deliberation, it is important to examine participation interest of people who do not hold traditional decision-making roles, such as students.

This study examines how undergraduate students' interest in participating in campus-based deliberative programming and the perceived helpfulness of such participation are influenced by communication-related and organization-related factors. Communication-related factors consisted of perceptions of debate and dialogue as approaches to communication. Organization-related factors included openness to diversity and ability to effect change. The study addresses the pragmatics of organizational decision-making by examining the influence of communication-related and organization-related factors on deliberation participation. Additionally, the study extends research on motivation to participate in deliberative programming as well as the factors underlying perceptions of such programming in higher education. Study findings have implications for how

colleges and universities can put democratic principles into practice in their decision-making policies and practices.

Deliberation in Higher Education

Western commercial organizations have traditionally adopted bureaucratic structures and procedures as a way to accomplish organizational goals, particularly profit. This bureaucratic approach tends to be largely individualistic, hierarchical, and organization-focused. Decisions are made by persons holding positions in the upper levels of the organizational hierarchy while members in relatively lower levels are responsible for receiving and carrying out those decisions. Decision-making in the corporate world tends to be market-driven, grounded in discourses of production and profitability (Pfeffer, 2009). This traditional corporate structure is evident in higher education, as well (Thomas, 2010), not only in the rationale for pursuing an education (e.g., "finding a job") but also in the increase in the number of administrators in university bureaucracy (a 28% increase between 2000 and 2012) (Carlson, 2014).

One result of the adoption of corporate structures and discourses is that decision-making becomes concentrated in the hands of administrators (and possibly faculty members through shared governance, and, to a lesser extent, students through student government). For students, in particular, one consequence of this burgeoning bureaucracy and market mentality is the positioning of students as customers (or at least members of a different, less-involved group) who receive organizational services managed by upper-level administrators and delivered by instructors (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2009).

Critics of this bureaucratic approach, concerned with member disempowerment and de-personalization, have explored the adoption of "postbureaucratic" structures and practices that flatten out the organizational pyramid and prioritize values of equality, collaboration, and relational connectedness (Ashcraft, 2000, 2006; Buzzanell, 1994). This community-oriented approach assumes that all organizational members are accountable to and interdependent with one another. Because of this accountability and interdependence, responsibilities such as decision-making become diffused throughout the organization rather than concentrated within a group of people at the top of the structure. Additionally, listening to people from multiple positions becomes a central part of organizing, with goal importance varying heterarchically based on the situation rather than hierarchically across all situations (Mumby & Putnam, 1992).

On campus, values of accountability and interdependence provide the foundation for campus engagement in forms such as participatory decision-making practices and conversation among members of all university stakeholder groups (Block, 2009; Monge, Heiss, & Margolin, 2008). Conversation lies at the heart of the community ideal (Block, 2009; Booth, 1995). Through conversations, members develop an awareness and understanding of people beyond themselves (Arnett, 2001; Barge & Little, 2002; Kellett & Dalton, 2001; Pearce & Pearce, 2004) and display a willingness to engage with one another (Hurtado, 2007; Lohmann, van Til, & Ford, 2011). Campus engagement asks all members to practice perspective-taking and awareness of others by breaking out of their homogeneous comfort zones and interacting with people who are different from them (Diaz & Gilchrist, 2010). It also asks members to participate actively by exercising their voices and engaging directly with one another to develop understanding and make decisions (McCoy & Scully, 2002; Schoem et al., 2001).

At the core of this push toward community and engagement is the value of participatory organizational democracy (Cheney, 1995; Hurtado, 2007; Spano, 2001). Participatory democracy promotes the idea of equality and inclusion among organizational stakeholders as they pursue diverse goals while maintaining interdependence and a larger sense of belonging that drive them to work together to address issues for the common good (Black, 2008; Dessel, Rogge, & Garlington, 2006; Habermas, 2006; Spano, 2001; Welsh, 2002). Such participation is "designed to empower and enable employees to identify with organizational goals and to collaborate as control agents in activities that exceed minimum coordination of efforts normally expected" (Stohl & Cheney, 2001, p. 357). Identification, empowerment, and collaboration, in turn, form the bedrock of a strong democracy (Spano, 2001).

Deliberation is one way to enact organizational democracy (Deetz & Brown, 2004; Hurtado, 2007; Schoem et al., 2001). Deliberation "involves processes of deliberative democracy, or public talk, wherein citizen participants engage in designed and moderated discussions with the goal of increasing understanding and reducing conflict among themselves and the solidarity groups to which they may belong" (van Til, 2011, p. 15). Such public talk, occurring in the small group setting (Cheney, 1995), ideally helps groups with different interests and worldviews find new ways of thinking, being, and communicating.

Communication among different groups tends to be decidedly individualistic, argumentative, top-down, and limited (Isaacs, 1993; Littlejohn, 2004; Tannen, 1998; Yungbluth & Johnson, 2010). This monologic approach to communication is largely characteristic of *debate*, which has as its aim the winning of an argument

between opponents (Black, 2008). In the workplace, approaching decision-making from a posture of debate has the potential to stifle member involvement on pressing organizational issues; discourage feedback, listening, and accountability; and reinforce existing power structures (Miller, 2009). Consequently, organizational members may experience lowered organizational identification, participation, satisfaction, and commitment, particularly if their viewpoint does not "win out" in the end (Allen, 1992; Miller & Monge, 1986).

Often held up as the antithesis of argumentation, dialogic communication is grounded in values of collective thinking, multivocality, and connection that can be uncommon in traditional organizational settings (Black, 2008; Bohm, 1996; Isaacs, 1993; Kim & Kim, 2008; Schoem et al., 2001; Spano, 2001). Dialogic communication is often framed as the more ethical and constructive posture for managing persistent, sometimes deep-rooted conflicts that divide groups (Barge, 2001; Black, 2008; Kellett & Dalton, 2001; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). Through dialogue, people ideally engage in a "real meeting" characterized by open sharing, "vigorous exploration," empathic listening, and co-construction of ideas and identities (Barge & Little, 2002; Black, 2008; Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001; Isaacs, 1993; Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997). Decision-making grounded in principles of dialogue emphasize the importance of active and deep listening, reasoned speaking, personal experience, trust, and diversity in the decision-making process (Kim & Kim 2008; McCoy & Scully, 2002; Yungbluth & Johnson, 2010). In organizations, meetings characterized by dialogic communication help members explore underlying values, exert power and influence, and delve into their own and one another's assumptions and experiences while addressing issues pertinent to them and their organization (Isaacs, 1993; Tracy & Dimock, 2004).

Advocates of deliberation, particularly dialogic deliberation, argue that it promises a number of benefits. For example, deliberation ideally promotes inclusion and equality, fosters changes in perceptions of people with whom individuals disagree, and facilitates the formation of a conceptualization of a common good (Cohen, 1997; DeTurk, 2006; Hicks, 2002; Melville & Kingston, 2010; Thomas, 2010). Deliberation also can foster greater learning about issues, better democratic skills, better decision-making, and better problem-solving (Carcasson, 2009). Deliberation characterized by dialogic communication can foster greater awareness and understanding of oneself and one another, deeper relationships, and intergroup collaboration by bringing people from differing perspectives together (Christiano, 1997; Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Nagda, Gurin, Sorensen, Gurin-Sands, & Osuna, 2009; Smith-Sanders & Harter, 2007; Spano, 2001; Yungbluth & Johnson, 2010). In organizations, dialogic deliberation can deepen relationships (Groth, 2001) and organizational commitment, in part by heightening members' perceptions of having

a voice (or say) in decisions (Bies & Shapiro, 1988; Colquitt et al., 2001; Konovsky, 2000). In colleges and universities, students who participate in deliberative processes tend to be more motivated to take part in civic events and be engaged as citizens (Gurin et al., 2004) and may be at decreased risk of leaving school because of greater organizational identification (Bean, 1980) and social integration (Tinto, 2006).

In short, deliberation, particularly when grounded in principles of dialogue, holds promise as a way to promote civic engagement and organizational democracy. Participation in such deliberation can foster a greater sense of community, interdependence, empathy, and learning. However, these consequences pertain to those people who actually participate, which, as Thomas (2010) notes, tends to be "a relatively small number of students" (p. 4). Thus, the question is: who participates in these programs?

Motivation to Participate in Deliberation

Participation is a deliberate, motivated choice of members to go beyond what is typically required of them to address organizational issues (Spano, 2001; Stohl & Cheney, 2001). For students in particular, this means eschewing the customer and spectator orientations by becoming involved in more than just classes and more than just community service. It involves being willing to sit down with other stakeholders as co-producers to work through organizational decisions that may or may not affect them directly.

Research has identified several features associated with participation in community-based deliberation programming. In terms of demographics, education level, which is tied in with socio-economic status, is among the strongest predictors, with individuals with at least a bachelor's degree being the most likely to participate (Goidel et al., 2008; Neblo et al., 2010; Ryfe, 2002). Goidel et al. (2008) also found that people who are Caucasian, male, between the ages of 45 and 54, married, and of moderate political ideology also were the most likely to participate in the deliberative forums they studied. Neblo et al. (2010), however, found slightly different outcomes regarding willingness to deliberate. They observed that people who were younger, racial minorities, and who had lower socioeconomic status were more likely to participate than people in other demographic groups. Beyond demographics, Eliasoph (1998, as discussed by Ryfe, 2002) observed that strong group identification promoted feelings of commonality among members that motivated participation. Moreover, factors such as political interest, conflict avoidance, need for cognition, and need for judgment also influence willingness to participate in a deliberation (Neblo et al., 2010).

However, not everyone wants to participate in deliberative decision-making, particularly in organizations. Participation may be less likely if people feel that they lack necessary skills or knowledge (internal efficacy), are unwilling to come together, are averse to conflict, or are too busy (Neblo et al., 2010; Saunders & Parker, 2011). Additionally, given that deliberative programming is inherently relational and involves perspective-taking (DeTurk, 2006), individuals who assign low importance to relationship maintenance and perspective-taking may be less likely to participate. Within the context of higher education, students who hold a more consumer-focused orientation may be less likely to engage in deliberation programming than students who hold a more accountability-driven orientation as a co-producer.

Thus, perceptions of appropriate approaches to communication and organization can be influential in shaping interest in participating in deliberative programming in organizations. With regard to communication, as noted earlier, debate and dialogue as general approaches to communicating differ along several dimensions, including willingness to consider an alternative viewpoint. This does not mean that they are incompatible or that one approach is always more appropriate than the other (Barge & Little, 2002). Instead, it may be that individuals' perceptions of the suitability of debate and dialogue as communication approaches may influence whether they have interest in participating in dialogic deliberation programming and whether they see such participation as being helpful. Given dialogic deliberation's emphasis on multivocality, empathic listening, and open expression, perceptions of dialogue's appropriateness would seem to positively influence both interest in (H_1) and helpfulness of (H_{1A}) participation. Meanwhile, perceptions of debate's appropriateness would seem to negatively influence perceived helpfulness (H_2).

Additionally, organization-related variables may influence deliberation participation. Given deliberation's emphases on multivocality and meaningful decision-making, three variables in particular—openness to diverse perspectives, outspokenness regarding organizational issues, and perceived ability to cause change—merit investigation. Openness to diverse perspectives is a key feature of dialogic communication (Yungbluth & Johnson, 2010). In higher education, increasing student body diversity has been an important goal of many colleges and universities (Hurtado, 2007; Trevino, 2001). Dialogic deliberation involves bringing members of diverse groups together to share experiences and collaborate. Although increasing diversity can enhance cross-cultural sharing and understanding of self and other (Dessel & Rogge, 2008; Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin, & Maxwell, 2009; Stromer-Galley & Muhlberger, 2009; Trevino, 2001), it may

also discourage some individuals, particularly if they fear experiencing discomfort as they grapple with unfamiliar or opposing ideas and beliefs. Additionally, people vary in their openness to these diverse viewpoints. If dialogic deliberation proponents frame such programs as a way to engage with diverse viewpoints, individuals who have a lower openness to diversity may have less interest in participating, whereas individuals with a higher openness to diversity may have greater interest in participating (H_3) and see such participation as being more helpful (H_{3A}).

Additionally, outspokenness, or willingness to communicate one's opinions regarding an issue, likely influences how interested people are in dialogic deliberation participation and how helpful they perceive such participation to be. Workplace democracy, in part, relies on members' willingness to express their thoughts and participate in democratic practices. Dialogic deliberation, likewise, attempts to encourage participants to express their thoughts and beliefs regarding the subject of deliberation in order to surface beliefs and assumptions (Black, 2008; Isaacs, 1993). Individuals who are reticent to express those thoughts and beliefs may perceive dialogic deliberation practices as potentially being uncomfortable. Consequently, they may be less likely to be interested in participating in such practices. However, individuals who are more outspoken may perceive deliberative practices as presenting an opportunity to express their views and thus may be more interested in participating (H_4).

A third organizational variable that needs investigating is perceived ability to cause change in an organization. This perception is similar to external political efficacy, but differs slightly from it in that external efficacy pertains to perceived system responsiveness to citizen needs (Gastil & Xenos, 2010) whereas ability to cause change refers to an ability to act *on* the system. Dialogic deliberation is typically framed as a way to engage in collaborative decision-making that will impact the direction of the organization (Jacobs et al., 2009). However, if that organization has a history of centralizing decision-making and shutting out voices outside of that centralized bureaucracy, members may perceive that deliberative programs lack legitimacy. Such programs may appear to be "window dressings" that look promising but are ultimately an ineffectual waste of time because they will lead to little or no substantive change. This perception could lower willingness to participate (Neblo et al., 2010). However, consistent with Neblo et al.'s (2010) hypothesis of a deliberative pattern of participation, if members believe they do have an ability to effect organizational change, they may be more interested in contributing their ideas through dialogic deliberation programs (H_5) and believe that such participation will be helpful (H_{5A}). Additionally, if members believe that participation is helpful, they may be more interested in participating (H_6). Thus, a

final consideration is whether interest in participating is influenced by how helpful people consider dialogic deliberation to be.

The resulting model depicting the hypothesized relationships discussed above is shown in figure 1. The model hypothesizes that perceived helpfulness of dialogic deliberation, ability to cause change, outspokenness, openness to diverse perspectives, and suitability of dialogic communication influence interest in participating in dialogic deliberation.
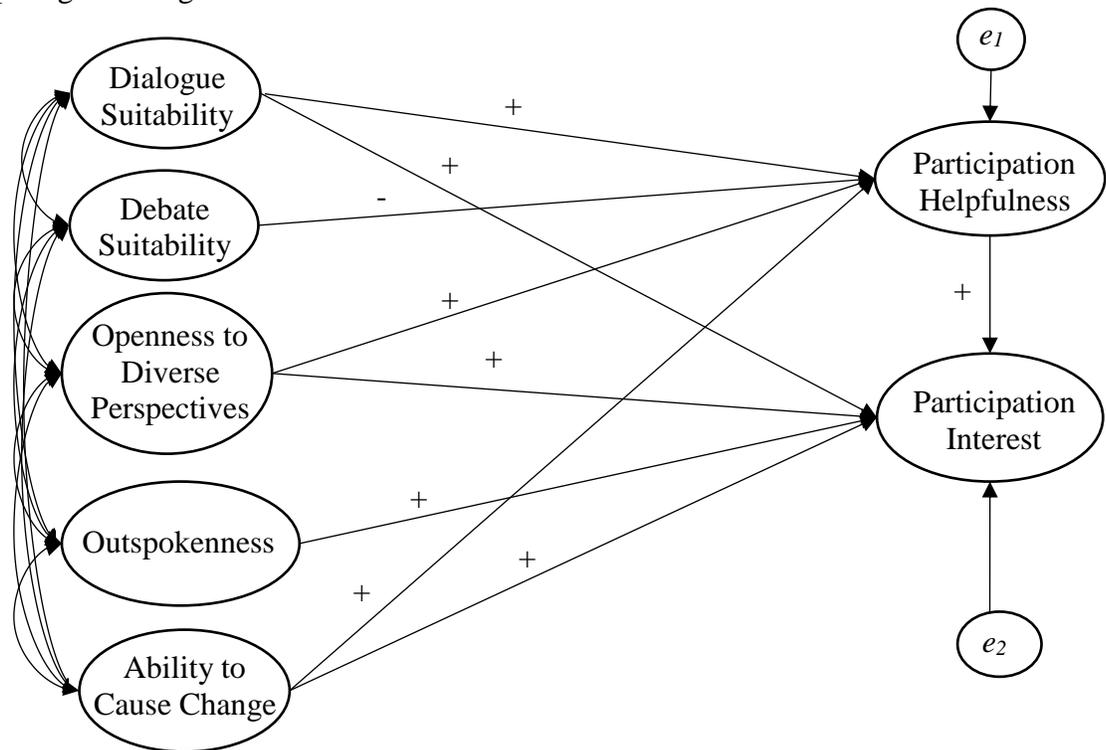

Figure 1. Hypothesized Model of Interest in Dialogic Deliberation Participation. Positive relationships denoted by + sign; negative relationships denoted by - sign.

Methods
Sampling and Procedures

In consultation with the researcher and their course instructor, a team of undergraduate students, assisting on this study as part of a course project, collected data by using convenience sampling at a medium-sized regional public university in the northeast United States. Approximately 8,600 students (7,400 undergraduates, 1,100 graduates) attended the university at the time of data collection, with more than 80% of those students attending full-time. The student

body was majority female and comprised predominantly ethnic majority students. However, the university was making gains in enrollment of ethnic minority students, in part, because of university efforts to enhance diversity. In general, because the city in which the university was located was relatively small (8,200) and was in essence a suburb of a somewhat larger city (60,000 people), many students commuted to campus daily from nearby townships rather than live on campus. One implication of having such a large group of commuting students was that participation rates in extra-curricular activities were relatively low. In other words, students tended to come to town for class and then leave for home or work. Relatedly, students tended to believe that decision-making was rather centralized and not all that attentive to their voices. This belief was strengthened after university administrators decided for legal reasons to eliminate support for a group on campus without student input and not in line with student wishes. Thus, the site presented an interesting opportunity to evaluate whether students would be willing to participate in deliberative decision-making practices and whether various demographic and organization-related factors would influence that willingness.

After receiving permission from instructors, the student researchers visited classes to carry out the survey. They informed prospective participants that the study was being conducted on behalf of a proposed campus dialogic deliberation program to identify campus issues that were important to them and their perception of how to address those issues. The researchers then distributed and collected the questionnaires during the same class period. A total of 276 students completed the questionnaire (see Table 1 for sample demographics). The majority of participants were seniors, females, Caucasians, and Democrats, which was generally representative of the research site as a whole. Power analysis using the G*Power 3 software (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) indicated that the sample size generated sufficient statistical power to test the hypothesized structural model and investigate differences in perceived interest and helpfulness.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Variable	Category	*N*
Ethnicity	Caucasian	215 (77.9%)
	Hispanic	19 (6.9%)
	African-American	16 (5.8%)
	Other*	24 (8.7%)
	Missing / No Response	2 (.7%)
Age	18 – 22	222 (80.4%)
	23 – 41	53 (19.2%)
	Missing / No Response	1 (.4%)
Gender	Female	168 (60.8%)
	Male	105 (38.0%)
	Missing / No Response	3 (.2%)
Grade Level	Freshman	61 (22.1%)
	Sophomore	44 (15.9%)
	Junior	67 (24.3%)
	Senior	103 (37.3%)
	Missing / No Response	1 (.4%)
Political Affiliation	Green	9 (3.3%)
	Democrat	114 (41.3%)
	Independent	72 (26.1%)
	Republican	47 (17.0%)
	Libertarian	8 (2.9%)
	Other	22 (8.0%)
	Missing / No Response	4 (1.4%)
Living Situation	On Campus	93 (33.7%)
	Off Campus with Friends	92 (33.3%)
	Off Campus with Family	60 (21.7%)
	Off Campus by Self	20 (7.2%)
	Missing / No Response	11 (4%)

*"Other" included ethnic identifications of Pacific Islander, Asian-American, and "Other" categories identified by participants.

Measures and Variables

The questionnaire was divided into four sections. The first section asked students to rate the appropriateness of debate and dialogue separately as approaches for

making decisions about issues important to their university. Rather than assuming that debate and dialogue were mutually exclusive approaches (i.e., a score on one end of the spectrum was equivalent to a debate orientation whereas a score on the other end was equivalent to a dialogue orientation), the study involved asking how participants perceived the approaches separately. Participants rated their perception of each approach's suitability with eight items assessed on a 5-point semantic differential scale (e.g., "ineffective-effective," "inappropriate-appropriate.").

The second section asked students to identify and rank order (beginning with most important) issues facing their university. They were then asked how helpful they believe it would be to participate in a dialogic deliberation on each issue they identified. They were asked next to indicate their interest in participating in a dialogic deliberation on each issue. Helpfulness and interest were assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very). To keep from potentially inflating scores by basing interest and helpfulness responses on the top issue identified, scores on both variables were averaged across all four issues (see Table 2).

Table 2

Top Issues Identified in Survey

Issue	Issue Rank*	Issue Points*	Interest Avg.	Helpfulness Avg.
Budget	1	249	3.49	3.88
Parking	2	164	3.51	3.81
Class Size	3	143	3.48	3.46
Tuition & Affordability	4	130	3.40	3.62
Course Availability	5	112	3.59	3.79
Program Cuts	6	87	3.46	3.78
Library	7	92	3.91	3.97
Diversity	8	65	3.69	3.68
Student Satisfaction	9	56	4.08	4.09
Food Quality	9	56	3.13	3.55

*Issue rank calculated by weighting the number of first-, second-, third-, and fourth-place rankings in terms of points. Items identified as "most important," "2nd most important," "3rd most important," and "4th most important" were worth 4, 3, 2, and 1 point respectively.

The third section assessed participants' openness to diversity, outspokenness on campus-related issues, and perceived ability to cause change at their university. Openness to diversity was measured with Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hoagedorn, and Terenzini's (1996) eight-item measure that assessed openness to diverse viewpoints in an academic setting. Items (e.g., "Learning about people from

different cultures is a very important part of my college education.") were assessed on a 5-point Likert-type scale. This measure was appropriate given its contextualization within higher education. Colleges and universities also have used the measure to assess students' openness to diversity on campus. Outspokenness and perceived ability to cause change were measured with three items each on a five-point Likert scale. A sample item of outspokenness was, "I'm pretty outspoken about how I feel and think about issues." A sample item of perceived ability to cause change was, "If I speak up, I'm confident that my voice will make a difference on campus." The final section requested demographic information.

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the measurement model consisting of the exogenous variables in figure 1: suitability of debate communication, suitability of dialogic communication, openness to diverse perspectives, outspokenness, and perceived ability to cause change. Using the Amos extension of SPSS, items were loaded as observed variables connected to the five latent variables identified above. Several statistics were used to evaluate the fit of the model to the data (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006): the χ^2 statistic, a goodness-of-fit test for which a non-significant statistic reflects suitable fit (Barrett, 2007; Mulaik, James, Van Alstine, Bennett, Lind, & Stilwell, 1989); the χ^2 / df ratio, with values of less than 3 reflecting appropriate fit (Kenny & McCoach, 2003; Wang, Fink, & Cai, 2012); the incremental fit index (IFI) (Mulaik et al., 1989) confirmatory fit index (CFI) (Bentler, 1990), for which values greater than .95 indicate appropriate fit; and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Browne & Cudeck, 1993), for which values less than or equal to .06 reflect appropriate fit to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Because the traditional chi-square statistic can be a problematic indicator of goodness-of-fit, all indices were evaluated together to assess the appropriateness of the measurement model.

Initial analysis revealed a poor-fitting measurement model, χ^2 (340) = 911.27, $p <$ .001, χ^2/df = 2.680, IFI = .845, CFI = .843, RMSEA = .078. Examination of the factor loadings of the individual items led to a decision to eliminate several items, resulting in a final measurement model (model 2) with somewhat appropriate fit, χ^2 (179) = 359.42, $p < .001$, χ^2/df = 2.008, IFI = .934, CFI = .933, RMSEA = .061. Although these statistics are somewhat below the thresholds identified above, they still represent mostly acceptable fit. For example, IFI and CFI statistics of .90 reflect marginally acceptable fit (Mulaik et al., 1989). Consequently, the final measurement model, while not perfect, was acceptable for analysis. Means, standard deviations, and correlations are presented in Table 3. Items, item loadings, squared multiple correlations, and measure reliabilities are presented in Table 4.

Table 3

Descriptives and Correlations among Dialogue Suitability, Debate Suitability, Openness to Diversity, Outspokenness, and Ability to Cause Change

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
Dialogue Suitability	4.29	.70					
Debate Suitability	4.06	.71	.343***				
Openness to Diversity	4.02	.61	.301***	.243***			
Outspokenness	2.34	.76	-.155**	-.246***	-.291***		
Ability to Cause Change	3.08	.88	.046	.063	.352***	-.186**	

**p < .01, ***p < .001

Results

Using the Amos extension of SPSS, the hypothesized model was tested against the data. The initial model showed an appropriate fit to the data, χ^2 (2) = .692, p = .708, χ^2/df = .346, IFI = 1.003, CFI = 1.000; RMSEA = .000. Examination of the model revealed that all hypothesized pathways were statistically significant except for the influence of perceived debate suitability on helpfulness (p = .972), outspokenness on interest (p = .266), ability to cause change on interest (p = .538), and dialogue suitability on interest (p = .079). Given the closeness of the significance value for dialogue suitability, the dialogue-interest relationship was maintained for the follow-up test, which again indicated a statistically non-significant relationship, p = .052. Thus, it was eliminated for the final model. That final model (see figure 2) again had appropriate fit to the data, χ^2 (6) = 5.346, p = .500, χ^2/df = .891, IFI = 1.002, CFI = 1.000, RMSEA = .000. A chi-square difference test, which evaluates the extent to which there is a significant difference in goodness of fit between models (Bollen, 1989), revealed no significant difference between the less saturated third model and the original, more saturated hypothesized model (χ^2_{diff} = 5.237, p = .263), as well as between the third model and the second model with the dialogue-interest relationship maintained (χ^2_{diff} = 3.744, p = .053). Thus, because there was no statistically significant difference between the least saturated model and the other more saturated models, the third model was accepted as the final model.

Table 4

Reliabilities, Item Loadings, Beta Weights, and Squared Multiple Correlations of Final Measurement Model

Item	β	R^2
Dialogic Communication Suitability (α = .897)		
Appropriateness	.844	.712
Propriety	.883	.779
Suitability	.877	.769
Goodness	.820	.673
Effectiveness	.615	.379
Debate Communication Suitability (α = .877)		
Appropriateness	.809	.654
Suitability	.779	.607
Goodness	.772	.596
Utility	.654	.428
Practicality	.761	.580
Effectiveness	.664	.441
Openness to Diverse Perspectives (α = .840)		
Learning about people from different cultures is very important to me.	.633	.400
I enjoy talking with people who have values different from mine because it helps me understand myself and my values better.	.716	.513
Contact with individuals whose background is different from my own is an essential part of my education.	.722	.521
I enjoy taking part in activities that challenge my beliefs and values.	.822	.675
The classes I enjoy the most are those that make me think about things from a different perspective.	.622	.387
I enjoy activities that are intellectually challenging.	.604	.365
Outspokenness (α = .653)		
If I feel that people won't like what I have to say, I won't share my feelings or thoughts on issues. (Reversed)	.757	.573
I'm pretty outspoken about how I feel and think about issues.	.648	.420
Ability to Cause Change (α = .794)		
If I speak up, I'm confident that my voice will make a difference on campus.	.696	.485
My involvement on campus has the potential to lead to change with what the university does.	.945	.892

Note: Model fit: χ^2 (179) = 359.42, p < .001, χ^2/df = 2.008, IFI = .934, CFI = .933, RMSEA = .061

Overall, the final model indicated that interest in participating in dialogic deliberation was primarily a function of perceived helpfulness (β = .58) and

openness to diverse perspectives (β = .22). Additionally, helpfulness, appearing to be a partial mediator of exogenous variables, was influenced by perceived dialogue suitability (β = .26), openness to diverse perspectives (β = .18), and ability to cause change (β = .23). Debate suitability and outspokenness had no direct influence on either helpfulness or interest. However, they were significantly correlated with other exogenous variables, thereby exerting largely indirect influence on perceived helpfulness of and interest in dialogic deliberation participation.
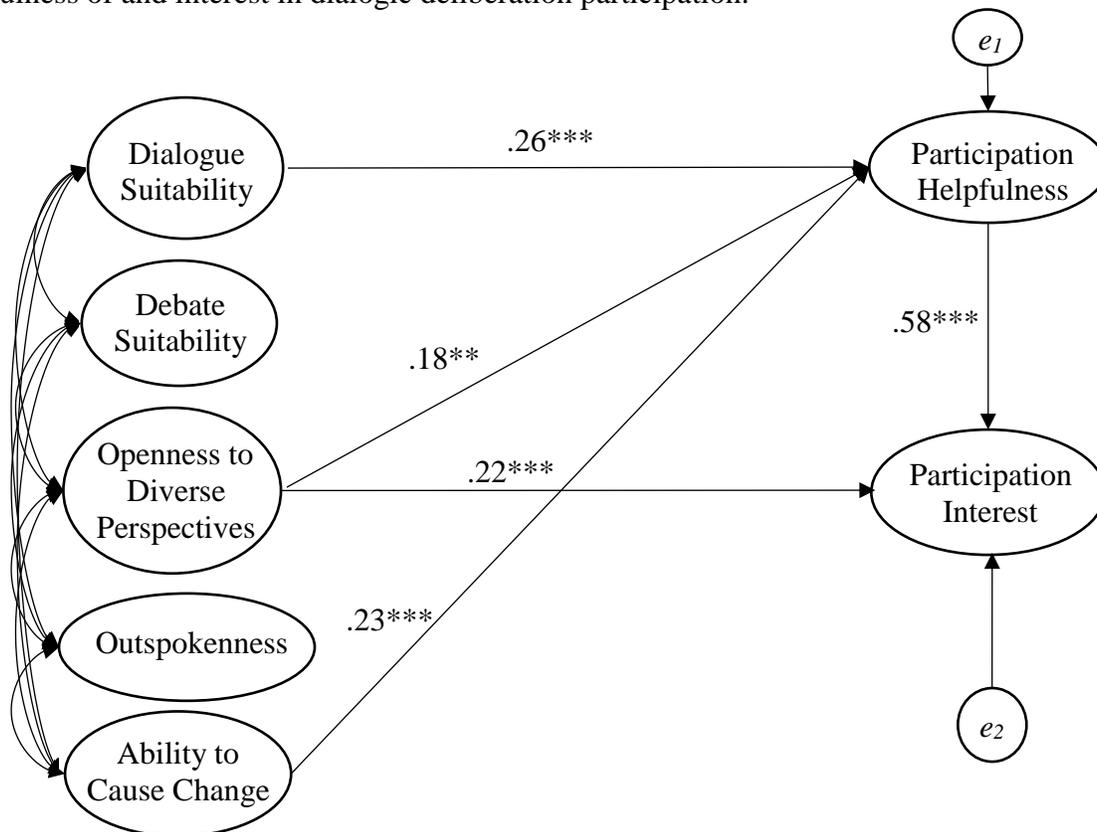

Figure 2. Final Model of Interest in Dialogic Deliberation Participation. Model fit: χ^2 (6) = 6.397, *p* = .380, χ^2/df = 1.066, IFI = .999, CFI = .999, RMSEA = .015. See Table 3 for correlations among exogenous variables. **p<.01, ***p<.001.

A final step was to evaluate whether interest and helpfulness ratings varied based on demographic variables of age, sex, political affiliation, ethnicity, grade classification, or living arrangement. There were no statistically significant differences in either interest or helpfulness based on age, sex, political affiliation, ethnicity, or living situation. There was, however, a significant difference in interest based on grade classification, $F(3, 271)$ = 3.59, *p* = .014, η^2 = .03. Sophomores (*m* = 3.27, *sd* = 1.03) reported the lowest degree of participation interest, with juniors

($m = 3.72$, $sd = .81$) reporting the highest interest, followed by seniors ($m = 3.61$, $sd = .72$) and freshman ($m = 3.37$, $sd = .85$). There was no statistically significant difference in perceived helpfulness based on grade classification.

Discussion

Dialogic deliberation comes with a host of promised individual, organizational, and civic benefits. However, one of the challenges facing programs seeking to foster both deliberative decision-making and dialogic communication in colleges and universities is motivating people, especially students, to participate in these types of decision-making programs, particularly when the dominant commercial discourse and current approaches to decision-making implicitly and explicitly depress that motivation. This study illustrates that students' interest in participation in dialogic deliberative programming is connected to an openness to listen to, consider, and work with other students who are different from them. Together, the communication- and organization-related variables help to shed light on why students decide to participate in deliberative decision-making processes.

Deliberation is a fairly non-traditional approach to decision-making that relies on participants being able to set aside adversarial tendencies characteristic of communication approaches such as debate and to engage perspective-taking, listening, and learning characteristic of dialogue (Dessel et al., 2006). This assumption is borne out by the results presented here, with perceptions of dialogue appropriateness, but not debate appropriateness, directly influencing perceived helpfulness and indirectly influencing interest in deliberation participation. The findings suggest that the more people find dialogue to be a suitable approach to communication, the more likely they are to find deliberation to be helpful and, thus, they may be more interested in participating. However, attitudes toward debate-oriented communication did not significantly affect either helpfulness or interest. The lack of a significant influence may suggest that people who gravitate toward a debate-centered communication orientation may prefer traditional, "winner-take-all" approach to decision-making rather than a multivocal approach.

Interest in participating also appeared to be a function of organization-related variables, particularly openness to diverse perspectives. The results show that students' openness to other perspectives significantly influenced both perceived helpfulness and interest. Given the emphasis placed on multivocality and mutual understanding in dialogic deliberation, the influence of openness to diversity is expected. Individuals who have a greater openness to diversity are more likely to perceive processes that highlight and privilege diversity as being both appropriate and productive. They are also more likely to see such processes as both helpful and

interesting because the practices are consistent with and reinforce their existing value structure regarding diversity.

The limited influence (and relatively low mean) of ability to cause change also was interesting, given that organizational decision-making is a site where members exercise both individual and collective power (Cheney, 1995; Miller, 2009; Stohl & Cheney, 2001; Waldron & Sanderson, 2011). There are at least two ways to explain the influence of change ability on helpfulness but not on interest. With regard to helpfulness, students' beliefs that they have little ability to cause change may be tied to a separate belief about the immovable, unresponsive nature of the university's bureaucratic decision-making system (i.e., external political efficacy), especially if the university has carried through recently with a decision that was unpopular with students. Conversely, if students believe that they can shape the direction of the university, any mechanism enabling them to voice their opinions is likely to be perceived as helpful. The result is that perceived ability to cause change is positively related to perceived helpfulness of deliberation because high change capability feeds the belief that involvement in decision-making will result in that change. Thus, findings that participation in deliberative practices enhance people's sense of external political efficacy (Gastil, 2000; Jacobs et al., 2007) may be less about the effects of participation and more about a self-fulfilling prophecy. Curiously, though, that relationship was not evident with interest in deliberation participation. One reason may be that, whereas deliberation is a collective process, ability to cause change (as conceptualized in this study) comes off as a more individualistic concept pertaining to a person's individual influence. Ability to cause change may have been positively associated with perceived helpfulness of deliberation because such interaction provided an outlet for exerting that influence. However, the more individualistic orientation of change capability may have limited its influence on interest in participating in a collective effort. Thus, the more someone believes they can effect change on their own, the less interested they may be in joining with others, even though it may provide an outlet for change.

Finally, interest in participating in dialogic deliberation was strongly and positively predicting by perceptions of its helpfulness. The findings align with research suggesting that people will not spend time participating in meetings they do not believe will be helpful (Tracy & Dimock, 2004). If people do not believe that their actions will lead to desired consequences, their likelihood of participation may decline. However, if they feel that participation can lead to some change, they may take part. For example, the Cupertino public dialogue faced a hurdle of skepticism when it first started out because people felt that it was "all work, no substance" (Spano, 2001). However, as community members saw tangible progress taking place, more people took part.

In short, participation in dialogic deliberation is motivated by more than how interested people are in an issue or how important people believe that issue to be. It is a function of attitudes toward approaches to communication, attitudes toward one another, and belief about one's place in the larger organization.

Implications

There are several implications of the study's findings, both for higher education and for community-wide deliberation organizations. First, the results suggest that participation interest is tied to openness to diverse perspectives. People who already are interested in learning about other points of view may be more inclined to find deliberation to be helpful and participate. This aligns with goals of deliberative practices to allow for multiple and diverse perspectives (Jacobs et al., 2009). Should campuses wish to foster participation, then, all stakeholder groups—faculty, administrative staff, and students—must play a part in emphasizing openness to diverse perspectives. In classrooms, instructors can utilize discussion techniques and other exercises that help students engage with different perspectives. Administrators should signal their openness to diverse perspectives through their involvement in and support for diversity-enhancing initiatives and practices that introduce students to new ways of thinking. Students should be meaningfully involved in creating those initiatives and practices, so as to avoid the appearance of another top-down diversity initiative.

Second, people are not likely to participate if they do not believe that such participation will be helpful or if they do not believe they currently have the ability to cause change. Perceived helpfulness and effectiveness are key concerns that should be addressed if attempting to enact and encourage deliberative processes and practices on campus. If, as asserted by Thomas (2010), students believe that traditional decision-makers are likely to disregard their ideas, they are likely to be unmotivated to participate. A key to reversing this belief is for administrators *and* faculty members to demonstrate openness in their spheres of influence to deliberative practices and regard for and responsiveness to students' ideas. One way to do this is to provide clear feedback as to how student input was considered in making decisions. Another way may be to open faculty meetings so that student voices are represented.

Third, students (and faculty and staff) should be introduced to principles of dialogic communication early in their academic careers. Unfortunately, the extent of students' exposure to communication tends to be reduced to public speaking classes that reinforce monologic communication practices. Such courses could benefit

from re-thinking and re-orienting so as to enable students to engage with principles of dialogue. This engagement may come in the form of classroom exercises as well as community engagement activities that encourage both dialogic communication and democratic decision-making. Helping people understand principles of dialogue and deliberation may enhance their perception that dialogic deliberation practices can indeed be helpful and thereby increase their willingness to participate in such practices both in college and beyond.

Limitations and Future Directions

Some limitations to the study's results should be noted. First, this study investigated perceptions of students rather than those of all stakeholder groups. The results, therefore, speak to perceptions among undergraduate students. Future studies should seek out and compare attitudes from multiple stakeholder groups. These comparisons can illuminate potential conflicts in perceived efficacy and legitimacy of such deliberation programs among the various stakeholder groups. Second, a more nuanced look at the *situational* suitability of dialogue and debate may help to tease out the influence of perceptions of those communication approaches on interest in deliberation participation. Are there some issues on which people see debate as a more appropriate approach than dialogue? For example, people may be more inclined to take a monologic approach to issues that are more salient to them but take a more dialogic approach to issues that are less central to their core beliefs. Third, the study gauges *interest* in participation rather than *actual* participation. Although interest is likely to be a valid predictor of actual participation, future research can explore the attitudes of people who have participated in campus-based deliberation efforts or have expressed an intent to participate in one in the near future. Finally, the measurement model, while exhibiting marginally good fit to the data, did not possess the ideal degree of goodness of fit. Future research is needed to investigate the relationships observed in this study.

Conclusion

Campus-based deliberation programming, while no panacea, offers one avenue for enacting organizational democracy and diversity in higher education. It certainly is no panacea, nor is it a cure-all for criticisms of traditional decision-making on campus. However, deliberation grounded in dialogic principles can be helpful for students as they enter a period of their lives in which they become exposed to new ways of thinking about themselves and their surroundings (Sorensen et al., 2009). Additionally, the enactment of deliberative practices to make campus-related decisions can promote connections between students and institution that exist even

after students graduate. Participation in such practices appears to be a function of both communication-related and organization-related practices.

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