

## **Deliberation and Framing**

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### **Introduction**

Most theories of democracy expect an actively engaged citizenry. To fulfill their role, citizens are called upon to acquire knowledge, develop well-informed preferences over political candidate alternatives, make reasoned choices about political matters, and express those preferences and choices through voting and possibly other forms of participation (see Berelson 1952; but see Althaus 2006). For example, Dahl (1989, 112) stressed that a key feature of the democratic process is that citizens are able to acquire an “enlightened understanding” of political issues that will allow them to make “the choice on the matter to be decided that would best serve the citizen’s interests.” In this view, a basic premise of representative democracy is that citizens can form and express their preferences for which public policies they want government to pursue and that those preferences are, in turn, implemented as policy or at least influential in representatives’ decision making (Dahl 1989; Mansbridge 2003).

Varieties of democratic theories, of course, argue this point in different ways. Some see citizens as required only and perhaps best represented by a mere veto on elite decision making (Riker 1982). Others see the public as more engaged but limited in capacity or opportunity for preference formation and expression (Lippmann 1928; Schumpeter 1942). More commonly, citizens are treated as a collective body to be quantified into a narrow conception of “public opinion” as an average tendency toward favor or disfavor of particular policies (see Herbst 1995). Still others envision an active, talkative, “deliberative” form of citizen involvement. It is on this final form of citizen engagement that we focus in this essay.

Our goal is to examine the extent to which deliberative forms of democracy provide uniquely valuable opportunities for preference formation and engagement relative to an elite-driven politics we see as prevalent in contemporary democratic societies. We begin with the empirical literature on elite influence on public opinion—centered around the concept of framing—and characterize the psychological process by which citizens form opinions under these conditions. Next, we introduce deliberation as an alternative or perhaps complement to this individualistic process. Highlighting the claimed advantages of deliberation for democratic health, we then discuss whether and under what conditions citizens are able to form political preferences of similar quality to those formed in a deliberative encounter. Leveraging the evidence for the psychological process of “elaboration,” we argue that much of the advantages of deliberation can be achieved through citizens reasoning alone over the alternative arguments provided by a competitive party system. We conclude with implications of this result for the literature on deliberation and for democratic politics writ-large.

## Normative Ideals

The heart of politics and government is the formation and aggregation of preferences – that is, the process of determining how citizens’ comparative evaluations of political alternatives (Druckman and Lupia 2000, 2) are bound together into the implementation of governance. Individual evaluations are a natural byproduct of lived human experience. Humans evaluate the world in order to appraise or understand the various objects we encounter in our lived environment (Eagly and Chaiken 1998, 303). Democratic theorists, however, are often interested in the “quality” of these evaluations; that is, whether they are well-justified or perhaps “correct.” In turn, different political institutions can vary in the collective choice resulting from those preferences and from the information-sharing and preference-changing capacities of those institutions, and this invites questions about how particular institutional configurations might produce higher or lower quality choices (Riker 1982; see Druckman, Leeper, and Mullinix 2014 for a review). What kinds of institutions produce the best collective choices? Scholars disagree, of course, but one prevalent topic of study is deliberative models of politics.

Though there is no single, consensus definition of deliberation (Bächtiger, Niemeyer, Neblo, Steenbergen, and Steiner 2010; Mendelberg 2002: 153), many theorists focus on a few essential features of deliberative democracy. Deliberation “implies that political decision-making is or should be ‘talk-centric’ rather than ‘vote-centric’,” which emphasizes agenda-setting and the consensual nature of deliberative democracy. Furthermore, deliberation is “not concerned with the aggregation of pre-existing, fixed preferences” but rather is “a process in which political actors listen to each other, reasonably justify their positions, show mutual respect, and are willing to re-evaluate and eventually revise their initial preferences” (Steenbergen, Bächtiger, Spörndli, and Steiner 2003: 21).

In short, deliberative democracy sees preference formation as a public, interpersonal activity at the core of democracy rather than an exogenous and private process that precedes political choice. Furthermore, others point out that deliberation requires “autonomy” and “recognition” such that each citizen is given fair opportunity to air their preferences and defenses of those preferences in the course of deliberation (Calvert and Warren, N.d.). So citizens come into deliberation with political positions and explanations but are also expected to hear and update in the face of the arguments presented by others. In the course of deliberation, an ideal “rational discourse” occurs, in which “actors tell the truth, justify their positions extensively, and are willing to yield to the force of the better argument” (Bächtiger, Niemeyer, Neblo, Steenbergen, and Steiner 2010: 33). Meyers and Mendelberg (2013) write that “deliberation is the free, open-minded dialogue about a matter of public concern among anyone affected by the issue” (701). Deliberation requires both motivated engagement in the decision to be made, an open mind, and an honest engagement with others (Meyers and Mendelberg 2013: 701).

Underlying all of this procedural guidance is an unrelenting faith in the power of arguments. According to Habermas (1982), “We can imagine questions receiving a virtually unlimited amount of time so that, in the end, the only force leading to a resolution of any question is the ‘force of the better argument’” (218). Deliberation is about the testing of competing arguments and the collective recognition of the most compelling. If not consensus, this strongest argument leads to collective agreement (Habermas 1997; Gutmann and Thompson 1996).

Although demanding, deliberation in this way is thought to “produce decisions that are epistemically better, more ethically robust, and politically more legitimate than decisions made without the benefit of deliberation” (Calvert and Warren, N.d.: 1). Both individual preferences and collective choices are thought to improve under deliberation (Fishkin 1997; Gutmann and Thompson 2004). Rather than a mere mathematical aggregation or quantification of citizens’ individual preferences, deliberation is thought to produce not only different collective choices but choices that are also *better*. At its core, then, deliberation asks us to consider whether there is value in a politics that lacks the small-scale, interactive, talk-centered characteristics of deliberation. In short, is there value in a mass politics wherein citizens do not collectively deliberate but instead arrive at their preferences largely through intrapersonal deliberations acted out atomically, partly in response to mass communication from political elites, within a shared political context?

### **Elite Competition and Citizen Preference Formation**

Politics in most democratic societies today is not typically deliberative. Indeed, most countries characterized as “democracies” actually deviate quite substantially from direct decision-making and full political competition (Dahl 1971). Citizens instead learn about politics from mass media and social media (see Iyengar and Simon 2000; Bennett and Iyengar 2008), and from direct observations of politics, parties, politicians, and policies (Soss 1999; Druckman, Kifer, and Parkin 2009; Broockman and Butler 2014).<sup>1</sup> From these inputs, the human tendency for evaluative appraisal produces attitudes and preferential rankings of political alternatives. Citizens then, sometimes infrequently, express those opinions through polls, voting, informal conversation, and other forms of participation (Zukin et al. 2006). There is some evidence that political elites then respond to these expressed preferences but much of that representation is indirect and unevenly reflective of public views (Druckman and Jacobs 2009; Jacobs and Page 2005; Gilens and Page 2014; Soroka and Wlezien 2010; Lax and Philips 2011). This looks very little like the deliberative ideals outlined above. But what do we know of how citizens form political preferences? And what of the quality of that preference formation?

There is one thing that is certain: conditional on citizens’ long-standing predispositions (such as ideology and personality), much of what citizens think about politics results from consideration of information communicated via the mass media (Zaller 1992). This influence has most actively been studied around the concept of *framing* with the accumulated evidence suggesting that elites can powerfully shape when citizens think about particular political issues (Iyengar and Kinder 1987), how they think and reason (Nelson et al. 1997; Brewer and Gross 2005), and what opinions, decisions, and choices the public eventually settles upon (Chong and Druckman 2007b).

Framing—understood to mean a communicator’s selective presentation and interpretation of political realities—can have a sizeable impact on citizens’ opinions.<sup>2</sup> For example, if a hate

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<sup>1</sup> While media exposure can involve dialogue or conversation – in article comment sections and social media posts – such activity is relatively infrequent and practiced by only a few.

<sup>2</sup> Another conceptual definition of framing relates to so-called “equivalency frames” exemplified by Kahneman and Tversky’s famous “Asian disease problem.” In equivalency framing, mathematically equivalent alternatives are described in slightly different terms – how many people will die from a disease under a given policy versus how many people be saved under the same policy – and Kahneman and Tversky’s work (and that of others) shows these modified wordings can alter individuals’ preferences over policy alternatives. We think these types of problems are relatively distinct from the broader class of framing dynamics that we examine here.

group rally is framed by emphasizing the idea of free speech, most citizens hearing that framed message will tend to base their opinion on this consideration and support allowing the rally to be held. In contrast, if the rally is framed by emphasizing the threat to public order, those citizens will tend to, instead, base their opinion on this consideration and oppose allowing the rally (Nelson, Clawson, and Oxley 1997). Kinder (2003: 359) summarizes the framing concept clearly: “frames supply no new information. Rather, by offering a particular perspective, frames *organize*—or better, *reorganize*—information that citizens already have in mind. Frames suggest how politics should be thought about, encouraging citizens to understand events and issues in particular ways.”

Given that others have provided comprehensive summaries of the expansive framing literature (Chong and Druckman 2007b; de Vreese and Lecheler 2012), we focus our attention on two issues: first, whether framing poses a threat to deliberation and citizen competence and, second, whether framing offers some virtue for preference formation and to democratic well-being.

### *Elite Framing as a Threat to Deliberation?*

Framing would seem to present an obvious threat to the ideals of deliberation. By actively attempting to influence citizens and doing so for the often selfish purpose of electoral success (Disch 2011), political elites propagandize without an obvious opportunity for group deliberation. In one sense, then, it is elites who make framing problematic. By serving an agenda-setting function and steering public discourse, framing limits citizens’ capacity for expression and voice. In another sense, however, framing also highlights the finite capacity of citizens for political thinking and their tendency to engage in self-serving cognitive processes. We address each of these downsides in turn.

By definition, framing implies the selective provision of political attention to a limited set of considerations, arguments, facts, and perspectives. Framing extracts potent dimensions from the political cacophony. As such, not all arguments and perspectives of an issue are voiced. When one or perhaps a few related frames dominate a debate, elites quash rare voices and the perspectives of those not already in the elite. Content analyses of political debates generally shows the presence of competing frames in most debates but often only a few perspectives are emphasized, and sometimes just a single frame dominates alone (Chong and Druckman 2011; Hänggli and Kriesi 2010). This potentially threatens the deliberative ideal that in political discourse all relevant arguments should be considered.

Perhaps more problematic than the necessary limiting of the number of considerations and arguments is the strategic incentive of political actors to favor certain frames over others. Their contributions to political discourse are self-serving to the extent that politicians tend to be office-seeking (Mayhew 1974) at the expense of political honesty. In its worst forms, elite influence comes in the form of pandering and the intentional promulgation of misinformation (Druckman and Jacobs 2015; Jacobs and Shapiro 2000). In these cases, framing not only reduces the opportunity for public deliberation but actively competes against the ideal of free, open, and truthful exchange of viewpoints. The reality is that the “strongest” frame may not be one that provides majority support for the “highest quality” policy. The ideal of enlightened political choice can therefore be undermined by careful political manipulation (Riker 1996).

Yet elites are not the only worry when one considers the relationship between framing and the democratic ideals motivating deliberative theories. Citizens, too, can contribute to the negatives of framing. Indeed, framing studies can be read as illuminating the limited capacity of citizens to respond critically to elite communications. That is, framing reveals that citizens may not have coherent preferences and are easily swayed by frames and arguments. While taking a more optimistic view themselves, Sniderman and Theriault (2004, pp. 133-134) describe a dominant interpretation of the repeated demonstrations of framing effects by noting that it is “widely agreed that citizens in large numbers can be readily blown from one side of an issue to the very opposite depending on how the issue is specifically framed.” Thus, citizens appear to be too open to competing arguments.

On the other hand, and perhaps ironically, others have been concerned by citizens’ limited responsiveness to framing. Citizens often have pre-existing opinions and views on which considerations are most important on a given issue (i.e., they have pre-existing “frames in thought”). Such opinions and beliefs might have been shaped by elites’ frames in the first place but, once formed, existing opinions and frames in thought tend to limit the openness of citizens to arguments and frames they might later encounter. As argued by Lakoff (2004), people think in frames and if an argument or fact does not fit the frame in thought, this information is ignored or rejected. Thus, “[t]o be accepted, the truth must fit people’s frames. If the facts do not fit a frame, the frame stays and the facts bounce off” (Lakoff 2004: 17). Druckman, Fein, and Leeper (2012) showed in an experiment how frame-induced policy opinion biased subsequent information search and assessment of new arguments or frames. When study participants were allowed to choose which information and arguments they wanted to learn during a debate, they tended to select arguments they would expect to support their pre-existing opinion, resulting in “dogmatic adherence to opinions formed in response to the first frame to which participants were exposed” (430). Such behavior obviously violates the deliberative requirement of assessing other actors’ arguments with an open mind and to seek a rational consensus.<sup>3</sup>

Citizens’ limited responsiveness to framing can also be seen as problematic in a different sense. Frames are typically sponsored by specific political actors and citizens tend to assess the quality of the frames based on the source of the frame rather than its content (Druckman 2001; Hartman and Weber 2009; Slothuus and de Vreese 2010). This means that if the source is a visible political group such as a political party or the messenger bears an ideological label, citizens might assess the frame based on whether they like or agree with the source rather than assessing the substantive content of the argument. This is particularly the case if partisan elites are ideologically polarized (Druckman, Peterson, Slothuus 2013), which they often are on the issues that matter the most to the political process. Such source effects again violate the deliberative requirement of assessing arguments based on quality alone.

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<sup>3</sup> Here, however, lies another interesting link between framing and deliberation. A small body of research shows that deliberation and elite framing can usefully interact. Druckman and Nelson (2003), for example, show that small-group conversations can reduce the influence of one-sided framing when others’ with whom one interacts have been exposed to alternative frames. This implies, again, that competition – be it directly at the elite level or secondarily in the form of interpersonal discussions – makes framing a largely positive contribution to opinion formation (see also Barabas 2004; Klar 2014). This reflects the evidence that deliberative encounters tend to change opinions through framing or persuasion rather than the mere exchange of information (Westwood 2015). More perversely, a separate body of evidence suggests that deliberation actually exacerbates disagreement (Wojcieszak 2011; Sunstein 2009), but more work is needed to understand precisely how framing influences this form of “group polarization.”

In sum, there is both a risk that the frames supplied by elites are manipulative or cover only a narrow range of perspectives, and a risk that citizens have a finite capacity to process frames such that they are either susceptible to whatever frame is pushed early in a debate or invites an overreliance on pre-existing political orientations. But this does not mean that framing has nothing to offer. Quite far from it.

### *Virtues of Framing for Preference Formation*

Most political issues are complex and citizen reasoning about political choices is cognitively taxing. As Leeper and Slothuus (2014, 131) explain, “[w]hile humans are born with and socialized into predispositions, they are not born with the political information necessary to apply these predispositions to the specific tasks citizens are expected to perform in a democracy: forming policy opinions and candidate preferences.” Therefore, political elites such as politicians, party organizations, and interest groups play a key role in structuring political issues in such a way that allows citizens to participate in democratic decision making (for an elaboration of this perspective, see Leeper and Slothuus 2014, 130-138). Framing is a primary means for offering structure of and providing information for political debate.

Elite argumentation through framing offers citizens the opportunity to hear about issues they otherwise would not be exposed to, and to reckon with an array of arguments about those issues. In many cases, framing also means a simplification of the complexity of political problems. Framing can make policy issues easier to comprehend and understand; hence framing might be a precondition for citizens’ ability to take part in deliberation of policy issues. As Nelson and Kinder (1996) argue, frames provide “recipes” for how to form opinions based on the ingredients that elites think will be broadly important to large swaths of the electorate. This way, exposure to elite frames can stimulate citizens to even form an opinion (Kinder and Nelson 2005).

Moreover, by dividing a policy space along clear dimensions, political elites facilitate citizens’ use of their values and predispositions in the formation of views on specific policies (see Riker 1996). Sniderman and Theriault (2004), for example, show that when multiple frames are present in a debate, citizens better connect their own values to specific policy preferences than when fewer arguments are present. Specifically, they argue that “citizens not only can stand up and hold to their values in the face of political argument (...) the voicing of opposing arguments may even assist them in translating their political attitudes into positions on specific issues” (Sniderman and Theriault 2004: 151).

While elite framing per se has much to offer citizens, many further virtues come from *competitive* framing (Chong and Druckman 2007a). Specifically, competitive framing allows alternative dimensions to be considered in an effort by elites to find majority supported positions. Because frames divide the public along salient issue dimensions, some frames create widespread support while others do not (see Riker 1996). While some frames may be known to be stronger a priori (i.e., to capture a large share public support), this is not necessarily the case. As such, the iterative nature of competitive framing brings new arguments into the debate. Content analyses of real world framing show that this competition between elites begins with a wide-ranging set of arguments but typically narrows down to a few key frames on each side of the issue (Chong and Druckman 2011; Hänggli and Kriesi 2010). This process of focusing of debate reflects the public appeal of the various arguments and reflects citizens’ need for limited (rather than expansive) argumentation. Where deliberation theorists see citizens’ active discussion of these arguments as essential to the

quality of their own opinions and the collective good, framing research would seem to suggest that airing of a wide array of arguments is a precursor to rather than core element of collective choice.

A further virtue of competing frames is the tendency for such competition to stimulate citizens' *elaboration* upon those alternative frames and, in turn, more well-considered opinions (Chong and Druckman 2007a). The capacity of citizens to assess the substantive arguments put forward in a debate with opposing sides is further supported by evidence for the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion, a theory closely linked to framing theory. Studies of the ELM show that when citizens are presented with compelling arguments, they rely less on "source cues" such as the likability of the speaker when forming opinions (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Instead, when citizens elaborate they focus on the reasons for particular positions and tend to favor the one for which there is strongest evidence and arguments. The ELM thus provides a psychological microfoundation whereby citizens can use elite-provisioned frames to develop opinions on complex political questions and develop argument-backed justifications for those views.

Media framing of course involves not only the communication of arguments, but also endorsements, facts (and misinformation), and cues about the relevance of values, self-interest, and other priorities. Broadly defined, framing thus provides citizens with a wealth of stimulus to evaluate when forming political opinions. And this use of elite messaging and arguments is not simply blind followership. Indeed, Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus (2013) show that Americans formed opinions on several important issues that went against the position of their preferred political party when the other side had a more compelling argument. at least as long as the partisan elites were not overly polarized. Similarly, Leeper and Slothuus (N.d.) find that citizens in a Danish referendum campaign follow the position of their preferred political party, but only to the extent that forming an opinion is in-line with the citizens' general orientations toward Europe.

In a more elaborate investigation, Baumgartner, De Boef, and Boydston (2008) investigated public opinion toward the death penalty in the United States. The issue of capital punishment is complex and often moralized. Facts can be hard to come by as evidenced by a 2012 National Academy of Science report that found ambiguous – at best – evidence of the deterrent effect of the death penalty (Nagin and Pepper 2012). How, then, does framing shape citizens' views? Baumgartner et al. show that over the past half-century the American media have communicated countless distinct arguments – ranging from those emphasizing fairness, constitutionality, morality, mode of execution, cost, efficacy, and international standing – each of these arguments in turn encompassing a vast number of specific claims.

This competition over alternative understandings of and positions on the death penalty has resulted in the emergence of a single strong frame: *innocence*. Far from the manipulative frames that some democratic theorists worry about, the innocence frame is a just frame. It argues that the death penalty punishes too many people who are in fact innocent of the crimes for which they were sentenced. Baumgartner et al. (2008) find that the victory of the innocence frame over rival arguments has led to a shift in opinion (declining support for capital punishment), in policy (more and more state-level bans on execution), and in practice (fewer of those sentenced to die are being executed and more innocents are being exonerated). Framing, as an elite- and media-driven process, entailed a protracted airing of alternative views and what can almost universally be seen as a morally defensible collective judgment in opposition to the death penalty.

## **Improving Opinions with Framing and Deliberation: Obligations and Responsibility of Political Elites**

Despite the appeal of Dahl's notion of "enlightened preferences," it is impossible to establish an uncontroversial definition of a "better" and "worse" opinion. Indeed even Dahl's call to leave such decisions to the citizen herself are unsatisfying. Yet deliberative democracy is appealing precisely because its proponents believe that the opinions and collective choice resulting from a deliberative process are better. We shy away from such normative judgments but we can rely upon the available literature to understand how elite framing and citizen deliberation interact.

We have taken a pro-framing stance, which implicitly means we think that elites should take a positive role in shaping public debate, informing citizens' views, and offering the mass public reasonable and varied alternatives to choose between. We see the reliance on elite framing as a way of addressing the concern that the ideals of deliberative democracy, while normatively appealing, might be too demanding to realize in real-world settings (Bächtiger et al. 2010: 33) and a pressing question is whether ordinary citizens are willing or capable to engage in political deliberation. As Mendelberg (2002, 173) asks, "[p]erhaps [...] citizens cannot deliberate adequately, and should not be expected to do so." We see potential in the interaction between elite framing and citizen deliberation: Framing by political elites can structure policy issues in ways that enable citizens to grasp the meaning of them and elites voice competing arguments that can fuel citizen deliberation.

Yet we acknowledge, as Bendor and Bullock (2008) do, that "voters aren't the risky links in large democracies. Officials are" (17). To the extent that framing is influential in citizens' thinking and the formation of collective choices, the risks of framing lie not in citizens' use of available arguments communicated by elites but instead in the possibility that elites will not compete effectively and the reality that certain institutional arrangements make such competition less likely to occur.

Framing is a virtue to the extent that frames are numerous, informed, and competitive. Frames structure debates, organize ideas and values, and cast attention onto aspects of issues that are most important to the citizenry at large. When democratic systems are structured to enable competition, framing is a natural product and natural means for citizens' to reduce the complexity of the daunting task of political decision making (see Downs 1957). When media are numerous, well-funded, and free, they provide a check on elite discourse and a filter through which to communicate and find meaning political debate (Feldman, Huddy, and Marcus 2015). Yet even within favorable institutions, politicians, parties, and even media can still manipulate and mislead. The greatest check on this is competition. If framing research of the last decade has taught us anything, it is that competitive but non-polarized information environments inform and persuade citizens through reasoned argumentation (see Chong and Druckman 2007a; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013).

Political scientists are often quick to dismiss elites. The political theory canon is often characterized as anti-partisan (see Madison 1787; Rosenblum 2010). Deliberative theorists, in particular "hold out for an ideal of independence from partisanship that puts their work out of synch with the findings on preference context dependency" (Disch 2011, 103). Yet democracy is essentially unthinkable without parties as an organizing force for elite



competition (Schattschneider 1942, 1), which in turn drives the framing dynamics we see as vital to mass preference formation.

Effect preference formation at the mass level and the meaningful collective choice of citizens depends on this elite-level activity. Regardless of whether deliberation serves as a fundamental or tangential element of democratic practice, what citizens bring to democratic decisions are the frames in thought formed earlier in politics in response to the largely partisan competition over political issues. We see citizens' preferences as unthinkable without elite, partisan framing, so we do not see any reason why deliberation should be thought of as something that can be isolated from these processes. In short, "issue framing need not indicate a pathology" (Disch 2011, 110). Instead, the concerns with framing should have sights fixed on the elites rather than the citizens who benefit from those communications.

## **Conclusion**

At the core of our chapter are two competing perspectives. The first is that framing poses a threat to the normative ideals of deliberative democracy by creating a democracy of followership, with political elites using framing to structure debate and indeed create the public support needed to rationalize their implementation of their a priori preferred policies. The second view is that the complexity and importance of politics merits a justifiable outsourcing by many citizens of their responsibility for participation in collective deliberation. High demands for political engagement can come at the expense of citizens' other interests and obligations. If we are to believe Downs (1957), citizens rationally satisfice, relying on heuristics and expert peers to help them arrive at the views they otherwise would. In this way, framing helps to analyze and structure political questions and provide citizens with answers they can easily make sense of. In this view, framing provides a shortcut by which citizens have access to the conclusions of others' deliberations, thus enabling them to rely more narrowly on elaboration alone to meaningfully take part in the political process and form reasoned preferences (cf. Schattschneider). In this view, competitive, elite framing of politics is necessary and provides a route to the desirable outcomes espoused by advocates of collective deliberation. Of course, this puts great responsibility on political elites.

In the end, we lean toward the latter position. While deliberative democracy shows promise, we believe a form of mass democracy centered on elite provision of information, arguments, and reasons for particular political choices, which citizens may use for largely intrapersonal deliberation, is more viable. Indeed, it may be the only feasible form of democratic government. While a growing body of empirical work demonstrates that citizens can and do engage in political deliberation (e.g., Jacobs, Cook, and Delli Carpini 2009; Mutz 2006; Walsh 2004; Fishkin 1997), there is far more evidence that citizens use media- and partisan-provisioned information to form and express meaningful opinions on a wide array of issues.

An elite-centered view has several important implications for research on deliberation. First, it invites a more critical look at the preferences that citizens bring into the deliberation context from their own lived experience. A useful distinction in the framing literature is between "frames in communication" and "frames in thought." The former are those expressed in mass or interpersonal communications. The latter are cognitive representations within citizens' minds. If deliberation involves an airing of arguments and a structured deliberation over political alternatives, then the arguments brought to the table should be

understood as expressions of these frames in thought. Where, then, do they come from? What implications does it have for deliberative practice that these reasons – which are essential to the deliberation process – originate in messages sent by media and politicians?

Second, we ask whether deliberation is a fair expectation of citizens overburdened with everyday life. If framing provides citizens with arguments, allows them to elaborate upon reasons for holding alternative opinions, and indeed invites them to make political choices, what are the added costs of deliberation worth? What more is deliberation offering beyond a purely elite-driven discourse, when weighed against the costs of deliberative participation?

Third, if framing is a largely elite-driven activity and this constitutes the modal democratic experience for most citizens, what role if any should elites play in deliberative spaces? Are they excluded? If so, at what cost the quality of the collective choices? If no, with what consequence for the essential deliberative characteristic of universal and autonomous expression of arguments.

One potentially fruitful avenue of thinking might be for scholars of deliberative democracy to consider how to ensure that elites will provide the information necessary for citizens' to engage in meaningful collective deliberation and intrapersonal elaboration. Urbinati and Warren (2008) argue that:

we should think of representative democracy not as a pragmatic alternative to something we modern citizens can no longer have, namely direct democracy, but as an intrinsically modern way of intertwining participation, political judgment, and the constitution of *demoi* capable of self-rule. Understood in this way, elections are not an alternative to deliberation and participation, but rather structure and constitute both (402).

In this way, we see framing as an integral part of contemporary partisan competition. Robust party competition in elections ensures that citizens are presented with an array of credible alternatives and those alternatives are structured and organized through competitive debate and argumentation over the best policies. But framing also goes further than the deliberative goal of “may the best argument prevail” to instead call upon citizens to consider and recognize the core question at stake in a debate. In other words, framing asks not only to judge which alternative is best, but also choose which dimension, lens, value, or frame should be used in making that decision.

Strong frames typically appeal to core values and ideals. A public debate about a proposed hate group rally is not simply a weighing of arguments in favour and against the rally. Instead, frames ask citizens to judge what politics is fundamentally about – should we as a society give more weight to civil liberties or public safety? Deliberation sees argumentation as a route to a credible, enlightened decision on a particular question. Competitive framing achieves this and potentially more. It clarifies and facilitates the aggregation of preferences by profoundly allowing citizens to organize and prioritize the values that should underlie governance generally. It is because of its power and its appeal to citizens' core values that we see competitive framing as an inevitable and indeed essential aspect of politics.

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