

IV. NARRATIVE¹

I am requesting a summer scholar award for “seed money” to allow me to conduct a pilot study this late spring and summer. I will incorporate the results of this pilot study into a future grant re-application to the National Science Foundation (NSF). In July 2002, I submitted an NSF grant application to the *Career* program, which is a program for scholars of any discipline who are early in their careers and show outstanding promise to be leaders in their fields of study. All NSF grants, especially this one, are highly competitive. Consequently, I was not successful on my first application (I should note that three out of six reviewers recommended funding, and two of the reviewers who rated it “fair” also “strongly recommended resubmission”). The research that I propose to undertake in this summer’s pilot study will make my re-application for the NSF *Career* grant **significantly** more competitive.

Significance

Throughout the United States, some citizens and politicians have been calling for renewed emphasis on political participation in our communities. This emphasis includes, as an important component, discussion about serious political problems. However, not just any type of discussion will serve as a panacea for political problems. Instead, scholars and ordinary citizens support a special type of political discussion called “deliberation.”

While theorists do not agree on all aspects of deliberation, **I define deliberation, overall, as a special type of political discussion between citizens that involves diverse opinions, that is *not* dominated, and that emphasizes cooperation rather than the conflict found in the competitive electoral arena of politics.** The most typical example deliberation is the town hall

¹ This is my second application for the summer 2003 scholars award, and I would like to note that I am grateful to the comments provided by initial reviewers and have incorporated those comments to improve the following narrative.

meeting. However, recently scholars have also begun to note the emergence of political groups in the U.S. whose main purpose is to promote political discussion and deliberation between citizens, much like the town hall meeting.

In the past five years, scholars have only just begun to examine the consequences of deliberation for democracy in the United States, and most research has not yet been published. However, even before examining the consequences, research also needs to address the criticism by scholars that deliberation among ordinary citizens does not really occur in the United States. Consequently, my research agenda, which began with my dissertation research, is to provide a comprehensive, empirical investigation of deliberation in the United States today, including an analysis of its consequences.

NSF Career Grant Proposal

In this section, I would like to present a brief overview of my NSF *Career* Grant Proposal. I present this overview in order to provide the context for the connection between the “seed money” for which I am currently applying—and the larger NSF grant proposal that I plan to re-submit to the NSF at the end of summer 2003, if I am awarded the “seed money.”

The research I proposed for the NSF *Career* grant last July 2002 is a continuation of the my above research agenda that I began with my dissertation research. In this (5-year) NSF grant, the research I propose represents the first comprehensive and multiple method empirical investigation of deliberation in the United States. In order to accomplish this goal, the project would involve survey research, case studies, and integration of the proposed research into coursework. First, I propose to collect survey data from 300-500 groups in the United States that include promoting political discussion between citizens as one of their main purposes. This survey data will allow me to document and examine their purported deliberative practices.

Utilizing information from this group-level survey, my research would then include a panel survey of two populations of individuals for the purposes of comparison in a survey-experiment.

Approximately 1500 individuals involved in deliberative groups and 1500 individuals from the mass public would be surveyed at two points in time. To supplement the quantitative survey data, this research would also provide three qualitative case studies of “deliberative” community groups. Data from the survey and insights gleaned from the case studies will provide an important foundation for this newly emerging area of research. Consequently, this research would present the results in a book and make the data available on a website. Moreover, a significant portion of the grant’s budget goes to involving student research assistants and incorporating my “political research methods” course into the conduct of this research.

Relationship of Summer 2003 Pilot Study to NSF Career Grant Proposal

For the pilot study this summer 2003, **I propose to interview leaders from at least 5 potential “deliberative” groups.** I already have two group leaders who have agreed to interviews. These interviews will assist me in the identifying and clarifying my sample of “deliberative” groups. For example, one recommendation of the NSF reviewers was to develop a typology of political groups that exist to promote discussion. Interviews with numerous groups leaders in depth about the practices, goals, and objectives of this new type of “deliberative” group would assist me greatly in developing a typology, since at this time not much is known about such groups. In fact, as the NSF reviewers noted, there is only one published article about these groups, which just came out the month that I submitted my NSF grant last summer. Below are just a couple examples of these “deliberative” types of groups.

- **“Balancing Justice in New York”** first took shape at a meeting of ten people at a church in Albany in 1998. Paddy Lane, a longtime activist on criminal justice issues, was

frustrated with the way the state Legislature was handling corrections issues. Two years later, about 2,500 people were taking part in almost 200 study circles in 71 communities throughout the state. ‘We have demonstrated that small-group dialogue among people of diverse opinions is energizing and empowering, and moves people to action,’ said Lane. . . . With assistance from the Study Circles Resource Center, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization in Pomfret, Connecticut, study circles in the last 10 years have taken hold in more than 200 communities across the country” (www.studycircles.org).

- “**e.thePeople** is a public forum for a new democracy conversation. Our technology promotes intelligent, diverse and deliberative discussions, both here and among a network of sites around the Internet” (www.e-thepeople.org).

The other major component of my proposed NSF research agenda involves a large-scale survey of deliberative groups. In order to develop a group survey of 300-500 “deliberative” groups, it is important to develop a deeper familiarity with those groups. Preliminary interviews of several groups will allow me not only to identify additional groups to identify a snowball sample for the proposed NSF survey, but will also assist in the development of a survey instrument. For future research, I plan to attend some events sponsored by these groups as a participant observer, but I first need to begin a working relationship with the group leaders. The interviews for this pilot study will allow me to begin this process.

2. Proposed Activities and Timeline

Pending human subjects approval, I will begin the proposed interviews in mid-May 2003 and complete them in June 2003. In July 2003, I will incorporate the results into my second NSF grant application, due at the end of July. In spring 2004, I and a student co-author will present the results in a paper for presentation at an academic conference

3. Additional Benefits

On a practical level, the proposed pilot study and the preliminary results it generates will provide a *considerable* advantage for my future grant application at the National Science Foundation. The National Science Foundation states that preliminary results strengthen proposed research. Moreover, preliminary results are particularly important for my research, since it is part of a newly emerging field that is just beginning to examine the real-world implications of deliberative democratic theory. An NSF grant of this size would bring significant prestige and money to CSUC, all while allowing me to incorporate students as paid research assistants in the project and provide a “hands-on” example for my research methods courses.

Regardless of the success of my NSF grant, and most important to me, however, is that the research I will be able to undertake with “seed money” for this pilot study will enhance my ability to teach my courses on research methods and on public opinion. I have already used a variety of quantitative methods in my previous research. The proposed pilot study will allow me to add qualitative research methods. Not only will this research provide useful real-world examples for instruction in research methods – an otherwise very “abstract” topic, but it will also provide me with the experience needed to assist my students with qualitative methods in their own research. I have already mentored two students who did interviewing for project that received a summer 2001 CSU Research and Creativity Award for undergraduates. Moreover, I am currently assisting a student who did both interviews and participant observations for the same award last year. Last, but not least, I plan to use the money for a student assistant and co-author. In my three and one-half years at CSUC, I have already brought 4 students to 4 academic conferences, and co-published with 2 of my students. I hope to continue this rewarding practice.

V. Qualifications

My qualifications include the following educational and professional training:

August 2001	Ph.D., Political Science, University of Colorado, Boulder
Summer 1997	ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods for Social Science Research, University of Michigan: Intermediate LISREL
Summer 1996	ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods for Social Science Research, University of Michigan: Introduction to LISREL
1993	M.A., Political Science, Mankato State University, MN
1991	B.A., Political Science, B.A., Economics, and B.S., International Relations, Mankato State University, MN

I have presented three conference papers (listed below) that involve research on testing deliberative theory, which contribute to my ability to complete this project. In addition, I have authored and co-authored several publications (listed below) on deliberation and on political participation—including co-authoring with my students. Finally, I am currently serving as “senior project personnel” on an NSF grant project based at Carnegie Mellon University, which investigates deliberation in an “online” experiment, with a diverse body of citizens from the city of Pittsburgh as subjects. Finally, I teach courses in research methodology and have taught both undergraduate and graduate courses in public opinion.

Related Conference Papers

- “Democratic Deliberation and Political Tolerance: A Descriptive Analysis of the Words of the Participants of a Deliberative Experiment.” Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 1-5, 1999, Atlanta, GA.
- “The Effect of Democratic Deliberation on Political Tolerance: Experimental Results.” At the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 1-4, 1998, Boston, Massachusetts.

- “Rugged Individuals and Social Butterflies: The Dimensions of Political Participation.” At the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, March 13-15, 1997 Tucson, Arizona.

Related Publications

- **Weber, Lori M.** 2003. “Rugged Individuals and Social Butterflies: The Consequences of Social and Individual Political Participation for Political Tolerance. *Social Science Journal* (a scholarly, refereed journal) 40 (2): 1-8.
- **Weber, Lori M.**, Alysha Loumakis (**CSUC graduate student**), and James Bergman (**CSUC undergraduate student**). 2003. “Who Participates and Why? An Analysis of Citizens on the Internet and the Mass Public.” *Social Science Computer Review* (a scholarly, refereed journal) 21 (1): 26-42.
- **Weber, Lori M.** “The Effects of Democratic Deliberation on Political Tolerance. 2001. Ph.D. Dissertation. Boulder: University of Colorado.
- Rapoport, Ronald B., Walter J. Stone, **Lori M. Weber** and Patricia Jaramillo. 1998. “The Activist Base of the Reform Party in 1996: Problems and Prospects.” In John C. Green and Daniel M. Shea, eds. *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, 3rd edition. Rowman and Littlefield.
- Partin, Randall, **Lori M. Weber**, Ronald B. Rapoport, and Walter J. Stone. 1996. “Perot Activists in 1992 and 1994: Sources of Activism.” In John C. Green and Daniel M. Shea, eds. *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, 2nd edition. Rowman and Littlefield. Revised and updated version of 1st edition chapter (below).
- Partin, Randall, **Lori M. Weber**, Ronald B. Rapoport, and Walter J. Stone. 1994. “Sources of Activism in the 1992 Perot Campaign.” In Daniel M. Shea and John C. Green, eds. *The State of the Parties: The Changing Role of Contemporary American Parties*, 1st edition. Rowman and Littlefield. 147-162.

V. Results of Previous Support

1. In spring 2002, I received a Behavioral and Social Sciences/Sponsored Programs award (\$5480) for .2 release time and student assistance to write the NSF *Career* grant. I submitted the grant application—“CAREER: A Quantitative and Qualitative Examination of Deliberation and Citizen Engagement”—in July 2002. It is increasing the competitiveness of this grant application for which I am (primarily) applying for a 2003 Summer Scholar award.

2. In fall 2001, I received an American Political Science Association Small Research Grant (\$810). This modest sum allowed me to hire one of our outstanding graduate students as a research assistant and incorporate her as a co-author in the paper below which is now being published in a scholarly, refereed journal.

- **Weber, Lori M.**, Alysha Loumakis, and **James Bergman**. *Forthcoming 2003*. "Who Participates and Why? An Analysis of Citizens on the Internet and the Mass Public." *Social Science Computer Review* (a scholarly, refereed journal).

3. I received a spring 2001 CSU Research Award for .2 assigned time and student assistance (\$5000). My assigned time culminated in the publication of the following:

- **Weber, Lori M.** *Forthcoming 2003*. "Rugged Individuals and Social Butterflies: The Consequences of Social and Individual Political Participation for Political Tolerance." *Social Science Journal* (a scholarly, refereed journal).

Moreover, the funding for a student assistant allowed me to co-author with an outstanding undergraduate, James Bergman, and to bring him to the conference below. This paper (also, below) is now being published in a scholarly, refereed journal.

- "Who Participates and How? A Comparison of Citizens "Online" and the Mass Public." With James Bergman (CSUC undergraduate student). Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, March 15-17, 2001, Las Vegas, Nevada.
- **Weber, Lori M.**, Alysha Loumakis, and **James Bergman**. *Forthcoming 2003*. "Who Participates and Why? An Analysis of Citizens on the Internet and the Mass Public." *Social Science Computer Review* (a scholarly, refereed journal).

4. As aforementioned, in 1998 I received a National Science Foundation Dissertation Grant (\$5,750) for a deliberative experiment, as part of my dissertation research. The results of this support are three conference papers and my dissertation (see above "qualifications" section).

5. Finally, each year since I have been at CSUC (1999/2000 thru 2001/2002), I have received travel money from the Political Science Department and the College of Behavioral and

Social Science (approximately \$500 and \$750 per year, respectively) to travel and participate in the following conferences:

- Discussant for Panel: “Economic and Political Influences on Comparative Political Attitudes and Behavior.” At the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 29-September 2, 2001, San Francisco, California.
- “Who Participates and How? A Comparison of Citizens ‘Online’ and the Mass Public.” With James Bergman (CSUC undergraduate student). Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, March 15-17, 2001, Las Vegas, Nevada.
- “Face-to-Face or Cyberspace? A Proposed Deliberative Experiment on the Potential Differences between Deliberation and On-line Political Communication.” With Peter Muhlberger, Carnegie Mellon University. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, April 27-30, 2000, Chicago, IL.
- “Democratic Deliberation and Political Tolerance: A Descriptive Analysis of the Words of the Participants of a Deliberative Experiment.” Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 1-5, 1999, Atlanta, GA.

VII. Current and Pending Support

I currently have .4 assigned time for an NSF grant subcontract, “Creating and Testing a High Telepresence Virtual Agora for Broad Political Participation.” This spring, I am serving as “senior project personnel” on this grant project that is now being undertaken by principal investigators at Carnegie Mellon University. The work I am doing this spring 2003 (and this fall 2002, in my spare time) for this project is closely related and, hence, provides a complement to the work I propose to undertake this summer. Both this project and my proposed project empirically investigate deliberative democratic theory. The collaborative project with Carnegie Mellon is a quantitative investigation involving surveys and an experiment—while my proposed pilot study extends this with qualitative research (interviewing).

VIII. Attachments

None.