

When Deliberation Divides: Processes Underlying Mobilization to Collective Action

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May deliberation on a contentious political issue increase polarization or intensify conflicts between oppositional factions? Drawing on quasi experimental data from participants in structured, moderated and heterogeneous face-to-face deliberations on sexual minority rights in Poland ($n = 182$) and using Structural Equation Modeling, this study shows that disagreement perceived during deliberations mobilizes strongly opinionated participants to public and potentially confrontational political actions around sexual minority rights in Poland. Perceived disagreement also evokes the sense of collective action frame among those participants, and – through evoked collective action frame – further mobilizes them to both communicative and public and potentially confrontational actions. Theoretical and practical implications for deliberation, social movements and ideologically polarized societies are discussed.

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Sexual minority rights have divided both elites and the general public in Poland. Proponents have emphasized equal rights and liberal values, assuring that sexual minorities can “love each other and support each other” (see, Inicka, 2008). Opponents, on the other hand, have framed homosexuality as “contrary to nature” (former Prime Minister, Marcinkiewicz, 2005), associating it with pedophilia and issuing rallying cries “faggots to the gas” or “labor camps for lesbians” (see, Graff, 2006, p. 7). The gay/lesbian movement has triggered resistance from conservative forces, leading to violent clashes between activists from both sides.

How might such a political divide be bridged? Deliberative theorists hope that moral and ideological conflicts can be resolved through deliberation. They argue that deliberation promotes understanding and tolerance (Arendt, 1968; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004), and may transform disparate citizens into a collective body characterized by “public interests (and) common goods” (Barber, 1984, p. 179). Other scholars caution against promoting deliberation where opposing factions debate contentious issues (Dryzek & Niemeyer, 2005). Those scholars note that “[t]here hasn’t been enough disagreement about deliberation” (Walzer, 2005, p. 91) and worry that when citizens debate, their strong predilections might alter deliberative process and its effects. When exposed to dissimilar views, people might emerge from deliberation with polarized attitudes (Nickerson, 1998) and with antagonistic attitudes towards the out-group (e.g. Sinclair & Kunda 2000).

Addressing these two perspectives on the role deliberation and exposure to disagreement play in moderating or exacerbating divisions is crucial. This is not only

because social polarization has been rising (DiMaggio et al. 1996; Evans 2003), but also because deliberation is increasingly promoted as viable to bridging cleavages and advancing understanding among opposing factions (Fishkin, et al., 2007). If deliberative settings further consensus-building, we might continue to promote them. If, on the other hand, such settings exacerbate predilections and mobilize people to more vehement action, deliberation may increase social polarization and incite conflicts between opposing values, ideologies, and worldviews. Despite deliberative efforts by academics and practitioners alike and despite the generous grants allotted to these efforts, evidence that speaks to these concerns is mixed (see, Mutz, 2008; Thompson, 2008).

Addressing these concerns, however, requires a design that creates citizen-to-citizen deliberations on a contentious issue, converges people with dissimilar views, exposes participants to disagreement, and assesses intended political participation as well the factors that underlie mobilization. Toward this end, this study draws on a quasi experimental data from 182 young Poles who deliberated sexual minority rights in face-to-face, heterogeneous, moderated groups. These data test whether disagreeable deliberation mobilizes strongly opinionated participants to political actions, evokes collective action frame, and influences the processes underlying mobilization.

Divisive Issue

A recent shift in Polish public discourse has moved sexual minority rights “from complete silence (...) to almost daily headline news” (Graff, 2006, p. 1), underscoring the increasingly polarized public debate on this issue. On the one hand, minority voices are increasingly visible. Clubs, publications, film festivals, queer studies at universities, and non-governmental organizations have proliferated. This, along with media initiatives that

promote “coming out” and billboard campaigns “Let them see us” that exhibit same-sex couples has led to “a certain de-exoticisation of the topic” (Zablocki, 2007, p.) and to an increase in the number of people willing to “tolerate” homosexuality, even though they see it as “abnormal” (from 47% in 2001 to 55% in 2005) (see, Graff, 2006).

Concurrently, conservative forces have also grown, with some news media and far right organizations violently breaking up peaceful demonstrations and promoting attitudes that “it’s okay to be a homophobe” as a response to the activists’ slogan “it’s okay to be gay” (Graff, 2006, p.). In addition, the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people are often challenged in Poland. In 2007 the government proposed legislation to censor all discussion about homosexuality in academic institutions and officials have repeatedly intended to ban the annual Equality March. Right-wing political rhetoric underscores the intolerance, with some public officials threatening with “propaganda about homosexuality” (Giertych, former Minister of Education), stating: “If deviants start to demonstrate, they should be bashed with a baton” (Wierzejski, *League of Polish Families*) or claiming: “If that kind of approach to sexual life were to be promoted on a grand scale, the human race would disappear” (Kaczyński, President, see *Human Rights Watch*, March 19, 2007).

These conflicts illustrate a rising tension between liberal values and moral traditionalism in Poland. Polarization along progressive versus conservative lines has increased especially during the conservative governance by the Kaczyńscy twin brothers (*Diagnoza Społeczna*, 2007). They introduced divisive rhetoric aiming to deepen cleavages, “not economic but moral” (Czapiński, 9/11/2007), which has exacerbated “conservative egalitarianism” described as a tendency to “divide people and social groups

into ‘us,’ who deserve respect, and ‘them,’ who do not (...). You don’t deserve respect, because you don’t share my value system and you don’t belong to my community” (Czapiński, 9/11/2007).

Bridging the Divide

Deliberative theorists hope that such moral and ideological conflicts can be resolved through deliberation (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1991). Deliberation that exposes participants to dissimilar views, the theory goes, will encourage people to take those views into account in reconsidering their predilections, promote “representative thinking” or the capacity to form an opinion “by considering a given issue from different viewpoints” (Arendt, 1968, p. 241), and ultimately “people in conflict will set aside their adversarial, win-lose approach” (Mendelberg, 2002, pp. 153–54).

Some research indeed shows that deliberation may bring about some contributions that make it applicable to mitigating conflicts. Political talk with dissimilar friends, family and acquaintances may increase tolerance by imparting new information and encouraging people to appreciate diverse views (Mutz, 2002a). Deliberation may also increase participants’ connectedness to others and respect for dissimilar perspectives (McCombs & Reynolds 1999), and also promote consensual decision making while attenuating inter-group bias (Gaertner et al., 1999).

Intensifying the Conflict

Deliberative theory and research, however, tell us relatively little about what might happen when people with strong predilections encounter disagreement on issues related to values, identity or religion. Some research suggests that – in those situations – deliberation may have negative outcomes, and rather than promoting understanding, it

may deepen cleavages between opposing groups. School district debates on racial desegregation increased conflict, entailed in-group preference, and thwarted understanding between people with dissimilar interests (Mendelberg & Oleske, 2000). Similarly, small group deliberations about ethnic and race relations in America divided participants along racial lines (Merelman, Streich, & Martin, 1998) and discussions on race in local communities, although leading to more inclusive attitudes, also heightened intergroup conflict among some respondents (Walsh, 2003). Even deliberations on less contentious issues failed to produce civic-mindedness and sometimes generated overt conflict (Mansbridge, 1983). How would diverse deliberative settings intensify conflicts? In addition to such outcomes as polarized attitudes (Wojcieszak & Price, 2008) or increased out-group bias (Mandelberg & Oleske, 2000), deliberation may mobilize oppositional activists to more vehement political actions, especially through evoked collective action frames.

Disagreeable Deliberation Mobilizing to Action

Political disagreement, although pulling some citizens away from the democratic process (Mutz, 2006), may be inconsequential for those who are strongly invested in a given issue. Opinion strength and such closely related factors as involvement in an issue influence reactions to dissimilar views and to oppositional opinion climate: although perceiving the public to be against individual own position attenuates political engagement, this influence is lower among people with firm views (Kaplowitz et al., 1983; Krassa, 1988; Lasorsa, 1991; Noelle-Neumann, 1993). Those people are also willing to publicly voice their preferences in unfavorable circumstances (Horner et al.,

1999; Moy, Domke & Stamm, 2001), likely because partisanship strength and political interest are negatively related to conflict avoidance (Ulbig & Funk, 1999).

In fact, perceiving opinion climate to be unfavorable or, by extension, encountering political disagreement, can be mobilizing for strongly opinionated individuals. Voters with strong candidate preference increase financial contributions when public support for their candidate declines, while those with weak preferences decrease the contributions (Mutz, 1998). In a similar vein, whereas those who are involved in a campaign intensify their commitment to a preferred candidate when the candidate is losing ground, voters with weak commitments follow majority opinion (Mutz, 1995). Further, when perceiving their views to be in the minority, voters with strong candidate preferences express their views publicly while those not strongly committed to any candidate withdraw from political activities (Scheufele & Eveland, 2001). This review suggests that encountering disagreeable opinions on a personally important issue will encourage strongly opinionated deliberators to increased political activity around the discussed issue (*Hypothesis 1*).

Disagreeable Deliberation Evoking Collective Action Frames

Through what processes might this mobilization occur? Scholarship on social movements suggests that what especially instigates action are the beliefs that form collective action frames (Gamson, 1992a). Collective action frames develop when people identify with a group, perceive injustices done to that group, and believe that those injustices can be diminished through collective actions (Groch, 2001; Mansbridge, 2001; Morris, 1990, 1992). All these components may be exacerbated during deliberation that exposes strongly opinionated people to disagreement.

Collective identity refers to defining “we” in opposition to “they.” It emerges from self-identification with one’s own group and from recognition that other groups have different interests or values (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Disagreeable deliberation may intensify both in-group identity and the adversarial component. Defending the values that are relevant to a person and his or her group may induce self-interest, which develops “when an individual perceives that an attitude object is likely to have clear and direct impact upon his or her rights, privileges, or lifestyle” (Krosnick, 1990, p. 72-3), and social identification, which refers to “identification with a group that consensually considers an attitude to be important” (Krosnick, 1990, p. 73). As a result, a connection between individual and group interests is established. Disagreeable deliberations might also intensify the differentiation between the in-group and the out-group by increasing familiarity with the characteristics on which groups differ and leading to pro-social attitudes towards individual own group and hostility towards out-groups (Krebs & Miller, 1985, in Conover, 1988).

The injustice component, in turn, requires that a situation is perceived as unfair and that the originator is known or presumed (McAdam, 1982; Turner & Killan, 1987). Deliberations with oppositional people, which entails first-hand experience, may produce a sense that individual values or group interests are unjustly attacked, evoke moral indignation among those who are strongly invested in a discussed issue, while at the same time presenting an opportunity to connect abstract unfairness with concrete individuals (see, Gamson, 1992b).

Finally, the agency component is related to efficacy within the scholarship on traditional participation. Just as efficacy refers to citizens’ belief that they have some

influence over public policy (see, McCluskey et al., 2004), agency describes individual or group recognition that collective action can remedy the situation perceived as unjust. Just as efficacy influences traditional engagement (McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999), agency mobilizes groups to collective actions (Mansbridge, 2001). Scholarship on efficacy may thus directly relate to agency. Deliberation may enhance efficacy by making politics relevant to citizens' private lives (Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999; McLeod et al., 1999; Walsh, 2004). In a similar vein, disagreeable deliberation may evoke agency by making a given cause or group interests more salient to an individual. Also, feeling that one belongs to a community and seeing this community as integrated also enhances efficacy (McLeod et al., 2001). By extension, disagreeable deliberations may augment agency because they may promote collective identity and accentuate the in-group and out-group differences. All in all, disagreeable deliberation can be expected to evoke a sense of collective action frame among strongly opinionated individuals (*Hypothesis 2*), which in turn, will mobilize them to issue-specific sociopolitical actions (*Hypothesis 3*).

Method

The data for this study come from a *Polish Dialogue Project*, a quasi-experimental study organized in Warsaw, Poland in 2007. The study involved structured and moderated face-to-face deliberations on sexual minority rights. The goal was to recruit participants whose views on sexual minorities were both strong and moderate, in order to assemble groups each with 2 strong opponents, 2 strong proponents and 2 moderates. The recruitment process had two stages: recruitment questionnaire used to

create databases with contact information and prior opinions on sexual minorities and random assignment to group discussions.

Recruitment centered on universities and non-governmental organizations to assure variance in the independent variable (preexisting opinion). Participants were recruited from organizations working towards sexual minority rights (e.g., *LAMBDA*, *Equality Foundation*, *Amnesty International's* LGBTQ section, *Polish Campaign against Homophobia*), from conservative, religious, and far-right organizations (e.g., *Young Conservatives*, *All-Polish Youth*, *Catholic Intelligentsia Club*), as well as from three universities in Warsaw. The paper questionnaire was distributed to students during lectures and to non-governmental organizations during meetings. The survey was also placed on an online server and disseminated in the online environment, targeting issue-specific organizations, online forums and message boards *a priori* known as favorable or unfavorable toward sexual minorities.

Recruitment Questionnaire

Recruitment questionnaire contained the Heterosexual Attitudes toward Homosexuality (HATH) Scale (Larsen, Reed, & Hoffman, 1980), tested as valid and reliable (Munro & Ditto, 1997). Respondents rated 20 items (e.g. “Homosexuality is a sin” or “Homosexuality is a mental disorder”) on 5-point scales ranging from 1 (“*Strongly disagree*”) to 5 (“*Strongly agree*”). The questionnaire also included information about deliberations, asking respondents to leave their contact information. A database was created and was updated by adding new respondents who completed the questionnaire. Overall, 273 respondents to the online survey and 576 respondents to the paper survey left an email or a telephone number (total $n = 849$).

Group Assignment

Group assignment used the data from the recruitment survey. Responses provided by the individuals who left their contact information were summed, after reverse scoring when necessary, so that scores on the HATH scale ranged from 20 (unfavorable) to 100 (favorable). Respondents were categorized as proponents, opponents and moderates based on their scores, such that opponents were in the lower 25% of the distribution (range = 20 - 47, $n = 132$), proponents were in the upper 25% (range = 73-100, $n = 439$), and moderates were in the middle 50% (range = 48-72, $n = 278$). Three separate databases were created, from which supporters, opponents and moderates were contacted.

Overall, 599 individuals were contacted. Those who agreed to take part in the study were randomly assigned to participate in discussion groups based on the HATH scale distribution, so as to assemble 6-person groups with 2 strong proponents, 2 strong opponents, and 2 moderates.¹ Overall, 30 groups were organized and 182 individuals participated in the discussions, organized in a focus-group laboratory at the Warsaw School of Social Psychology.² Age ranged between 18 and 34, all participants were white, from Warsaw, and a majority had at least some college/university education.

¹ Due to logistic difficulties, e.g. assembling 6 unacquainted individuals in one space outside the city center, some groups had 4 or 5 participants. Also, several participants, who arrived after others had already started filling out the pre-test questionnaire, were asked to schedule another time for the discussion, so as not to delay the group.

² Using AAPOR calculation RR1, the participation rate for people initially recruited is 31% (AAPOR, 2006). Although the response rate is pretty low, three things need to be kept in mind. For one, of the 599 contacted respondents, for numerous cases no response was received, the email was returned as undeliverable, the phone number was not in service, or the recipient was not based in or around Warsaw (e.g. at least 107 contacts involved a number or an email address that were not in service). Unfortunately, the number of these cases was not tracked and the above calculation classifies these cases as unknown eligibility. However, when calculating the response rate these cases should be treated as illegible. Treating them as illegible and excluding from the calculations would have increased the response rate by decreasing the number of cases in the denominator. It needs to be mentioned that a solid majority of individuals who were successfully contacted did participate. Secondly, discussions took part outside the city center and some individuals were not willing to commute, especially given the weather in October/November and the

Procedure and Materials

This study met the theoretical requirements for deliberation. Following a pre-test questionnaire, moderators introduced the procedures, stating that the discussions did not aim at confrontation and asking participants to keep an open mind, listen to others' views, and refrain from uncivil behavior. Moderators were also instructed to intervene when one person spoke for over 2.5 minutes and to address a participant who did not voice his or her opinion.

Deliberations were structured around 5 topics that had been introduced for parliamentary review by a right-wing political party, the *League of Polish Families*. The party proposed (1) banning homosexuals from teaching profession, (2) barring parades organized by sexual minorities, (3) imposing restrictions on organizations that promote sexual minority rights, (4) imposing restrictions on bars, clubs and other places in which sexual minorities meet, and (5) introducing psychological treatment for homosexuals. A moderator introduced these issues for each group to discuss roughly every 6 minutes. Discussions lasted 40 minutes. At the end, participants were handed a post-test questionnaire and received financial compensation (10PLN or \$5).

Measures

Opinion Strength. At the pre-test, respondents expressed their feelings towards sexual minorities on a *Feeling Thermometer* measure that ranged from 0 to 100, where 0 indicated "Very unfavorable," 100 "Very favorable," and 50 represented "Neutral" ($M = 63$, $SD = 33$). To identify deliberators with strong attitudes and create *Opinion Strength*

relatively low compensation. Third, more people indicated their interest. Because my stay in Poland was relatively short, potential participants were thanked for their interest.

measure, cases from the bottom 20% and the top 20% of the distribution were assigned value 1 ($n = 70$) and the remainder was assigned value 0 ($n = 111$) ($M = .39$ $SD = .49$).³

Issue Support. To control for prior position, favorable or unfavorable towards sexual minorities, the *Feeling Thermometer* measure was also split at the midpoint to. Value 1 indicated supporters and was assigned to those above the midpoint and value 0 represented opponents and was assigned to respondents whose attitudes fell below the midpoint ($M = .61$, $SD = .49$).

Intended Participation. Pre- and post-test questionnaires contained nine items each that tapped issue-specific political and civic participation. On a scale from 1 (“*Very unlikely*”) to 10 (“*Very likely*”) participants assessed the likelihood that, in the next year, they will engage in various actions related to sexual minorities. Factor analysis found that the pre- and post-test items loaded on two factors and thus two final pre- and post-test measures were created.

Prior Intended Communicative Participation ($r = .54$, $p < .000$, $M = 6.83$, $SD = 2.57$) and *Post-Deliberation Communicative Participation* ($r = .79$, $p < .000$, $M = 6.61$, $SD = 2.80$) were averaged intention to talk with friends, family and acquaintances about sexual minorities and to attempt to persuade others to participants’ own views. In turn, *Prior Intended Active Participation* ($\alpha = .91$, $M = 3.44$, $SD = 2.40$) and *Post-Deliberation Active Participation* ($\alpha = .92$, $M = 3.40$, $SD = 2.59$) averaged protesting, contacting media, contacting politicians, petitioning, distributing information, taking part in organized actions, and joining an political organization.

³ Because one respondent did not complete the feeling thermometer measure, one case is missing on the *Opinion Strength* and *Issue Support* measures.

Collective Action Frame. The questionnaires also contained seven items that tapped collective action frames. These were averaged to create two aggregate measures: *Prior Collective Action Frame* ($\alpha = .65$; $M = 5.95$, $SD = 1.36$) and *Post-Deliberation Collective Action Frame* ($\alpha = .74$; $M = 5.70$, $SD = 1.58$). These items were also combined into the three collective frame components.

Identity. This concept refers to defining the “we,” typically in opposition to “they” (Gamson, 1992a) and to individual identification with a super-ordinate group (Huo, et al., 1996). Before and after deliberations, participants indicated, on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (“*Strongly disagree*”) to 10 (“*Strongly agree*”) their agreement with two statements: feeling connected with people whose views on sexual minorities are similar and thinking that those people “are just like me”. The final measures averaged these two items: *Prior Identity* ($r = .40$, $p < .000$, $M = 6.28$, $SD = 1.97$); *Post-Deliberation Identity* ($r = .52$, $p < .000$, $M = 6.34$, $SD = 2.06$, greater values indicate greater collective identity).

Injustice. This construct refers to perceived lack of public acceptance for what an individual and his or her group represent (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). On 10-point scales, respondents indicated their agreement with the following statements: “People whose views on sexual minorities are similar to mine are currently alienated in our society” and “Our society does not accept views on sexual minorities that are similar to mine.” These items were averaged to create the final measures, *Prior Injustice* ($r = .43$, $p < .000$, $M = 4.96$, $SD = 2.22$) and *Post-Deliberation Injustice* ($r = .43$, $p < .000$, $M = 4.73$, $SD = 2.91$; greater values greater injustice).

Agency. Agency refers to awareness that collective action can alter the conditions that are unfavorable to an individual and his or her group (Gamson, 1992a). At the pre-test and the post-test, respondents indicated their agreement with three items on 10-point scales. The items stated that (1) through individual action a respondent can influence the situation of sexual minorities in Poland, (2) people who have similar opinions can influence this situation, and also that (3) if more people who “think like me” unite, “we will succeed in convincing others to our views.” The final measures averaged these items: *Prior Agency* ($\alpha = .61, M = 6.63, SD = 1.69$) and *Post-Deliberation Agency* ($\alpha = .78, M = 6.13, SD = 2.12$; greater values greater agency).

Perceived Disagreement. The hypothesized mobilization and evoked collective action frames are expected to result from disagreement perceived during deliberation. The post-test questionnaire asked respondents to estimate the frequency with which they disagreed with the views expressed by other group members, with responses ranging from 1 (“*Never*”) to 10 (“*Always*”) ($M = 5.02, SD = 2.36$).

Results

Before testing the hypotheses it is of some interest to assess participants’ intentions to take part in the political process related to sexual minority rights. Relative to the Polish population that has not yet developed vibrant civil society, deliberators intended to be quite active (see bottom row in Table 1). They were likely to talk about sexual minority rights and to try to persuade others to their own position (*Communicative Participation*) and were somehow likely to petition or take part in protests related to sexual minorities (*Active Participation*). Paired sample t-tests find that – on average –

intended active participation was stable ($t_{(181)} = .55, ns$) and intended communicative participation decreased ($t_{(181)} = 2.00, p < .05$). Parallel tests find that whereas deliberations did not mobilize strongly opinionated participants, both active and communicative participation decreased among moderates (see Table 1).⁴

Table 1. Intended Participation by Opinion Strength

| Opinion Strength | Communicative Participation | | | | Active Participation | | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|------|----------|-------------------------|----------------------|------|----------|-------------------------|
| | Pre | Post | Δ | $t_{(df)}$ | Pre | Post | Δ | $t_{(df)}$ |
| Moderate | 6.46 | 6.24 | -.22 | 1.65 ₍₁₁₀₎ † | 2.90 | 2.74 | -.15 | 2.29 ₍₁₁₀₎ * |
| Strong | 7.45 | 7.24 | -.21 | 1.07 ₍₆₉₎ | 4.33 | 4.46 | .13 | .79 ₍₆₉₎ |
| Overall | 6.83 | 6.61 | -.22 | 2.00 ₍₁₈₁₎ * | 3.44 | 3.40 | .04 | .55 ₍₁₈₁₎ |

Note: *** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, † $p \leq .10$; Greater values represent greater intended participation; negative values on the change measure represent decreased intended participation.

Did deliberations affect collective action frame and its three components: identity, injustice and agency? Collective action frame became less salient among all participants ($M_{pre} = 5.95, M_{post} = 5.70, t_{(1, 181)} = 3.05, p < .01$). Whereas the extent to which they identified with like-minded people did not change ($M_{pre} = 6.28, M_{post} = 6.34, t_{(1, 181)} = .05, ns$), participants emerged from deliberations with a lower sense of injustice ($M_{pre} = 4.96, M_{post} = 4.62, t_{(1, 181)} = 2.22, p < .05$) and also feeling less efficacious about their influence on sexual minority rights in Poland ($M_{pre} = 6.63, M_{post} = 6.13, t_{(1, 181)} = 4.51, p < .000$). Was the sense of collective action frame altered among strongly opinionated deliberators? Table 2 details that among strongly opinionated participants, the sense of collective action frame as well as identity and injustice, did not change, while they emerged from deliberations feeling less efficacious about their role in addressing sexual minority rights in Poland. Moderates, in turn, experienced decreased collective action frame, feeling lower injustice and lower agency.

⁴ Note, however, that the mean changes are similar in magnitude and the fact that they are significant among moderates may be due to greater cell size.

Table 2. *Collective Action Frame by Opinion Strength*

| | Moderate | | | | Strong | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------|------|----------|-------------------------|--------|------|----------|------------------------|
| | Pre | Post | Δ | $t_{(df)}$ | Pre | Post | Δ | $t_{(df)}$ |
| <i>Collective Action Frame</i> | 5.68 | 5.42 | -0.26 | 3.03 _{(110)**} | 6.39 | 6.15 | -0.24 | 1.51 ₍₆₉₎ |
| Identity | 5.93 | 6.17 | 0.24 | 1.49 ₍₁₁₀₎ | 6.83 | 6.62 | -0.21 | 1.13 ₍₆₉₎ |
| Injustice | 4.81 | 4.22 | 0.58 | 3.53 _{(110)**} | 5.19 | 5.25 | 0.06 | 0.20 ₍₆₉₎ |
| Agency | 6.31 | 5.86 | -0.45 | 3.31 _{(110)**} | 7.14 | 6.57 | -0.57 | 2.99 _{(69)**} |

Note: *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, † $p \leq .10$; N = 182; Higher Values represent greater agreement with the presented items

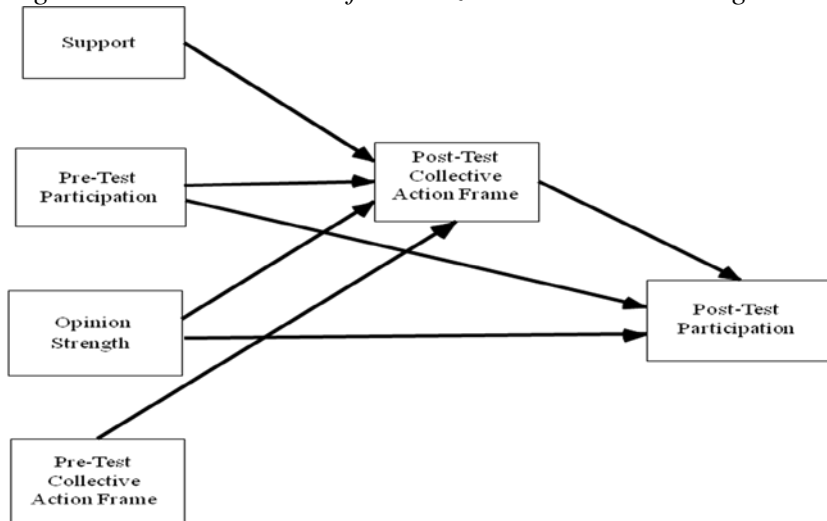
Thus far, the results indicate that deliberations *per se* neither mobilized strongly opinionated participants nor did they particularly change the sense of collective action frame. Did disagreement affect these outcomes, influencing the *process* underlying mobilization around sexual minority rights? The analyses now bring all these factors together.

Structural Equation Models tested the hypotheses. Opinion strength, support for sexual minorities, pre-test intended participation and pre-test collective action frame were considered exogenous (not influenced by other variables in the model). Because “the *simplest* model is the best model” (Buhi et al., 2007, p. 82), the models tested the aggregate *Collective Action Frame* as the mediating endogenous variable (influenced by some and influencing other variables). They first tested *Intended Active Participation* and then *Intended Communicative Participation* as outcome endogenous variables.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model. The causal path from pre- to post-test intended participation was specified and also from pre- to post-test collective action frame. These two paths minimized the threat that the tested relationships are due to the fact that strongly opinionated people – at the outset – have more salient collective action frames and greater intentions to be active. Thus, confounding was minimized. Another causal path led from pre-test intended participation to collective action frame because

collective action frame may be more salient among those who are already active and because the model without this path had a worse model's fit. Also, a causal path from opinion strength to post-test intended participation was specified. This path tests *Hypothesis 1*. Further, opinion strength was linked to collective action frame. This path is in accordance with *Hypothesis 2*. Moreover, collective action frame led to participation. Finally, the model included support for sexual minorities as an exogenous variable. Because preliminary analyses found that support for sexual minorities predicted collective action frame but not participation, there was a direct path to collective action frame only. Correlations were specified between the exogenous variables.

Figure 1. Generic Model of Mobilization to Action through Collective Action Frame



Note: Generic structural model for *Hypothesis 2, 3 and 4*: influence of opinion strength and support for sexual minorities on intended participation through collective action frame. The model estimated covariances of exogenous variables.

To directly test the hypotheses, multiple group analysis was conducted for low and high disagreement.⁵ *Hypothesis 1* was supported when the path from opinion strength to intended participation was greater in magnitude in high disagreement. In a

⁵ This had two advantages over doing separate analyses for the two groups. First, it provided a test for the significance of any differences between these two groups. Second, if there were no differences or if the differences concerned only a few model parameters, the simultaneous analysis provided more accurate estimates than would be obtained from two separate single-group analyses (see, Arbuckle, 2007).

similar vein, *Hypothesis 1* was supported when the path from opinion strength to collective action frame was stronger in high relative to low disagreement. To provide a stringent hypotheses test, t-tests on the coefficients assessed whether the paths were significantly different. Finally, *Hypothesis 3* was supported when the indirect path leading from opinion strength to intended participation *through* collective action frame was significant and when it was stronger in high than in low disagreement. Two methods tested this hypothesis. Bootstrap approximation, an increasingly popular method used to calculate standard errors (Shrout & Bolger, 2002), tested whether the indirect effect was significant. Secondly, nested comparisons were applied. Because model comparisons work by imposing constraints on a model, the path from opinion strength to collective action frame was constrained to 0 and the model's goodness-of-fit was estimated. The change in χ^2 was then tested for significance, with a significant change denoting significant indirect effect. Because done in a multigroup analysis, this also revealed whether the model's fit change depended on disagreement (see, Arbuckle, 2007).

Did Collective Action Frame Mobilize to Active Participation?

First, the model predicted *Post-Test Intended Active Participation* for the entire sample and without accounting for disagreement. The model fit the data well ($\chi^2 = .95$; $df=2$, $p = .62$; RMSEA = .000; TLI = 1.01; CFI = 1.00). Unsurprisingly, reporting collective action frame before deliberations led to similar reports afterwards ($b = .66$, $p < .000$) and prior intention to be active predicted such an intention after deliberations ($b = .91$, $p < .000$) and also led to collective action frame ($b = .14$, $p < .000$). Support for sexual minorities ($b = .41$, $p < .05$) had a direct path to collective action frame. There

was also a direct link from opinion strength ($b = .30, p = .06$) and from collective action frame ($b = .17, p < .000$) to intended active participation. Across the sample, the path from opinion strength to collective action frame was insignificant ($b = .12, ns$). Thus, bootstrap approximation obtained by constructing two-sided bias-corrected confidence intervals revealed that the indirect effect exerted by opinion strength on intended active participation was insignificant ($b = .02, ns$), and constraining the path from opinion strength to collective action frame to 0 also did not change the model's fit ($\chi^2 = .45, df = 1, ns$). This indicates that – across the sample – opinion strength affected individual willingness to rally, petition or distribute information only directly.

Did Mobilization Depend on Perceived Disagreement? Did disagreement mobilize strongly opinionated deliberators to action and did it activate collective action frame? To test the hypotheses, multigroup analysis was conducted for low and high perceived disagreement. Table 4 and figures 2 and 3 detail the estimates. Note that the figures only show significant paths; the paths that are significantly different in the two disagreement categories are illustrated with continuous lines, whereas paths that are significant in a given model but do not depend on disagreement are illustrated with dotted lines. In both disagreement categories, pre-test intended participation led to post-test intended participation and also to collective action frame. Those who reported collective action frame at the pre-test also reported it after deliberations. Collective action frame, in turn, led to intended participation in both categories.

Table 4. Parameter Estimates for the model testing the mediating role of Collective Action Frame on Active Participation by Disagreement

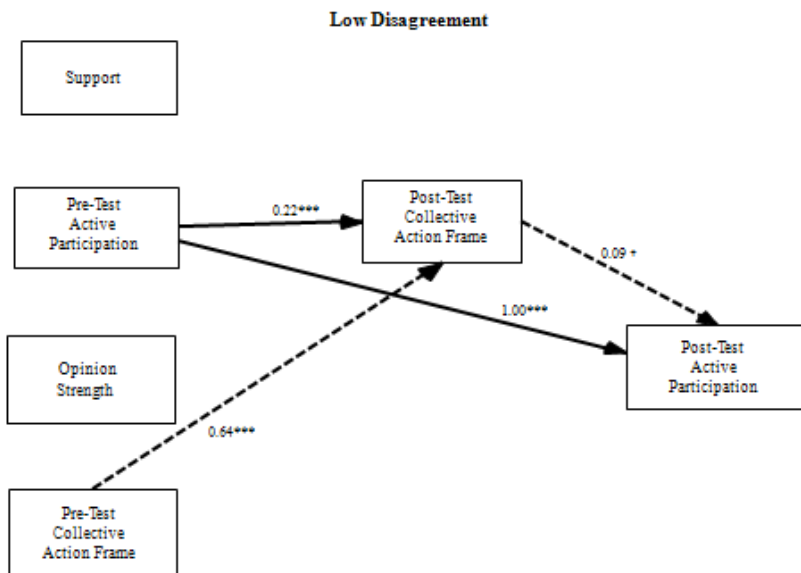
| | Low Disagreement (n = 107) | | | High Disagreement (n = 74) | | |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| | Post-Test Collective Action Frame | Post-test Active Participation | | Post-Test Collective Action Frame | Post-test Active Participation | |
| | | Direct | Indirect | | Direct | Indirect |
| Pre-Test Intended Participation | .22*** | 1.00*** | .02† | .08† | .85*** | .02† |
| Pre-Test Action Frame | .64*** | -- | .06† | .57*** | -- | .11* |
| Opinion Strength | -.33 | -.01 | -.03 | .60* | .68* | .12† |
| Issue Support | .22 | -- | .02 | .78** | -- | .15† |
| Post-Test Action Frame | -- | .09† | -- | -- | .19† | -- |
| <i>R</i> ² (%) | 63% | | 92% | 57% | | 77% |
| <i>Overall Fit Statistics</i> | $\chi^2 = 3.55, df = 4, p = .47; RMSEA = .000, TLI = 1.00, CFI = 1.00$ | | | | | |

Note: *** $p \leq .001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, † $p \leq .10$; Note: RMSEA= root mean square error of approximation; TLI = Tucker Lewis Index, CFI = Comparative Fit Index

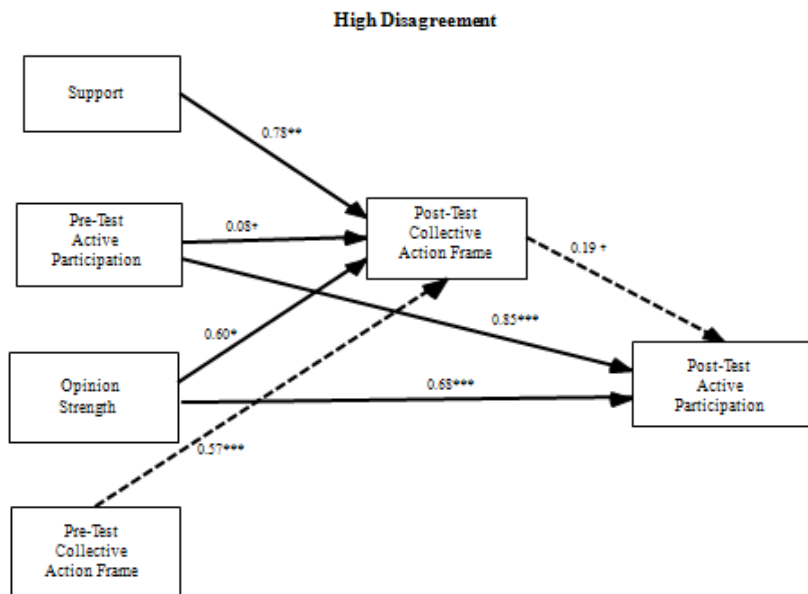
Four notable differences between the two categories emerge. Relative to opponents, sexual minority supporters felt greater collective action frame in high, but not in low, disagreement. More importantly, whereas strongly opinionated participants were not more likely than moderates to intend to rally, protest, or petition when disagreement was low, high disagreement mobilized them to action. In addition, it was high disagreement only that evoked their collective action frame. These differences are consistent with the hypotheses. Can we be confident that these differences and the indirect effect are significant? T-tests on the coefficients found that the path from opinion strength to intended active participation indeed depends on disagreement ($t = 1.90, p < .05$) and so does the path between opinion strength and collective action frame

($t = 2.76, p < .005$).⁶ Further, bootstrap approximation revealed that the indirect effect exerted by opinion strength on intended participation was positive and marginally significant in high ($b = .12, p = .06$) and negative in low disagreement ($b = -.03, p = .11$). Accordingly, nested model comparisons found that constraining the indirect effect to 0 worsened the model's fit in high ($\chi^2_{\text{change}} = 5.15, df = 1, p < .002$) but not in the low disagreement category ($\chi^2_{\text{change}} = 2.35, df = 1, ns$), indicating that disagreement mobilized strongly opinionated deliberators to action through evoked collective action frame.

Figure 2 and.3. Mobilization to Active Participation by Perceived Disagreement



⁶ Indirectly confirming the notion that opinion strength becomes an especially important factor influencing mobilization when disagreement is high, t-tests also found that pre-test intentions became *less* salient in influencing post-test intentions to be active in high relative to low disagreement ($t = 1.91, df = 1, p < .05$).



Note: Unstandardized parameter estimates are shown; Correlations between exogenous variables are not shown. Only significant paths are shown. Paths that are significantly different depending on disagreement are illustrated with continuous lines; paths that are not different depending on disagreement are illustrated with dotted lines.

Did Collective Action Frame Mobilize to Communicative Participation?

Parallel model tested the hypotheses for *Post-Test Intended Communicative Participation*. The model fit the data well ($\chi^2=1.71$, $df=2$, $p=.42$, RMSEA = .00, TLI = 1.00, CFI = 1.00). Pre-test measures again led to post-test measures (collective action frame $b = .70$, intended participation $b = .84$, both at $p < .000$). Pre-test intended participation also led to collective action frame ($b = .09$, $p < .05$), and so did support for sexual minorities ($b = .41$, $p < .05$). Collective action frame, in turn, led to intended participation ($b = .31$, $p < .000$). The *direct* effects exerted by opinion strength on collective action frame ($b = .21$, *ns*) and on intended participation ($b = -.05$, *ns*) were insignificant. Bootstrap approximation also found that opinion strength did not exert an indirect effect ($b = .07$, *ns*), and the constrained model fit the data only slightly worse (χ^2 change = 1.58, $df=1$, *ns*). All in all, across the total sample, strongly opinionated

deliberators were not more likely than moderates to intend to discuss sexual minority rights, experience collective action frame, and be mobilized to action through collective action frame.

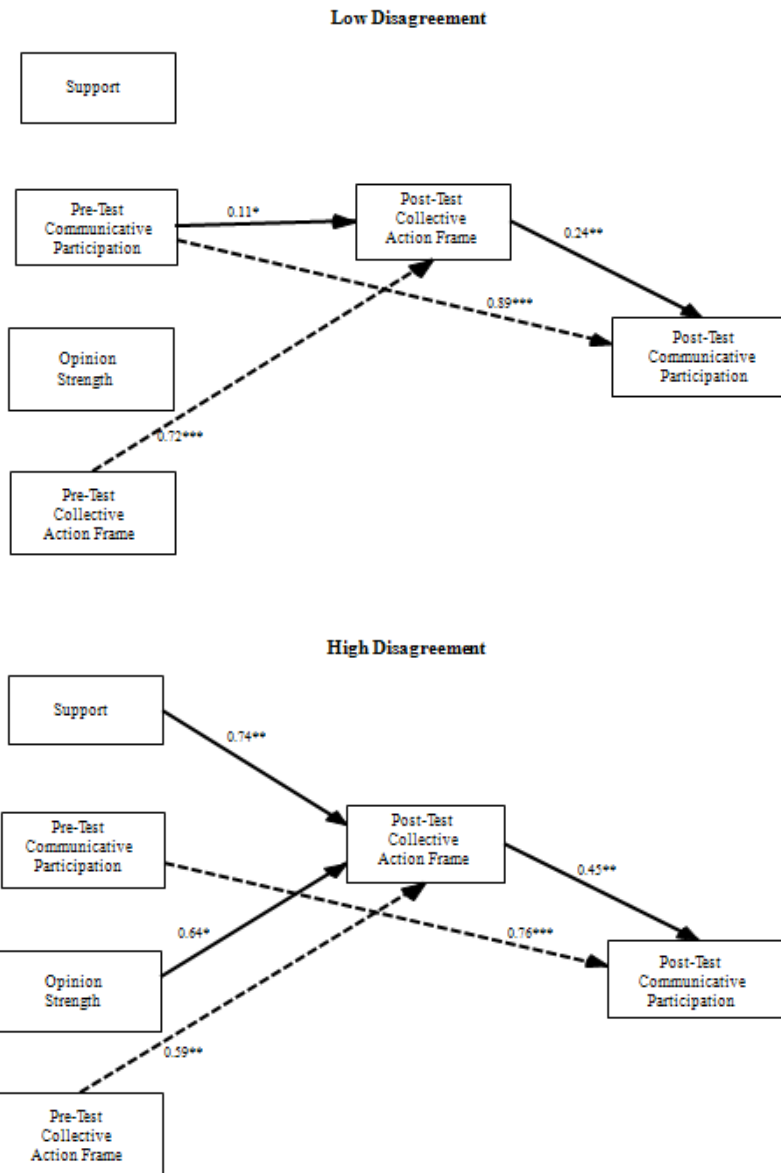
Did Mobilization Depend on Perceived Disagreement? Did disagreement moderate these relationships? To test the hypotheses, multigroup analysis for low and high disagreement was conducted. Figures 4 and 5 show the differences between the two disagreement levels (see also Table 5). Again, pre-test measures led to post-test measures and pre-test intended participation led to collective action frame, which in turn influenced intended participation. These effects emerged in both disagreement levels.

When disagreement was low, sexual minority supporters were not more likely than opponents to experience collective action frame, and strongly opinionated deliberators were no more likely than moderates to intend to discuss sexual minority rights. Because they also did not experience greater collective action frame, the indirect effect exerted by opinion strength was insignificant ($b = -.05, ns$). Accordingly, the model's fit without the indirect effect did not change ($\chi^2_{\text{change}} = .08, df = 1, ns$).

High disagreement, in contrast, evoked collective action frame among supporters and also among strongly opinionated deliberators, and the difference in the paths was significant ($t = 2.47, p < .01$). Because post-test collective action frame had stronger effect on intended communicative participation when disagreement was high ($t = 1.29, p < .10$), opinion strength exerted a substantial indirect effect ($b = .29, p < .05$). Thus, constraining the parameter to 0 worsened the model's fit in high ($\chi^2_{\text{change}} = 5.94, df = 1, p < .02$) but not in low disagreement ($\chi^2_{\text{change}} = .78, df = 1, ns$). This indicates that although

opinion strength did not have direct effects, disagreement mobilized strongly opinionated deliberators to communicative engagement by evoked collective action frame.

Figure 4 and 5. Mobilization to Communicative Participation by Disagreement



Note: Unstandardized parameter estimates are shown; Correlations between exogenous variables are not shown. Only significant paths are shown. Paths that are significantly different depending on disagreement are illustrated with continuous lines; paths that are not different depending on disagreement are illustrated with dotted lines.

Table 5. Parameter Estimates for the model testing the mediating role of Collective Action Frame on Communicative Participation by Disagreement

| | Low Disagreement (n = 108) | | | High Disagreement (n = 74) | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---|----------|--|---|----------|
| | Post-Test Collective Action Frame | Post-Test Communicative Participation | | Post-Test Collective Action Frame | Post-Test Communicative Participation | |
| | | Direct | Indirect | | Direct | Indirect |
| Pre-Test Intended Participation | .11* | .89*** | .02** | .07 | .76*** | .03 |
| Pre-Test Action Frame | .72*** | -- | .17* | .59*** | -- | .27** |
| Opinion Strength | -.20 | -.04 | -.05 | .64* | .01 | .29* |
| Issue Support | .33 | -- | .08 | .74** | -- | .33** |
| Post-Test Action Frame | -- | .24** | -- | -- | .45** | -- |
| <i>R</i> ² (%) | 60% | | 81% | 57% | | 68% |
| <i>Overall Fit Statistics</i> | $\chi^2 = 2.20, df = 4, p = .70; RMSEA = .000, TLI = 1.03, CFI = 1.00$ | | | | | |

Note: *** $p \leq 0.001$, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, † $p \leq .10$; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; TLI = Tucker Lewis Index, CFI = Comparative Fit Index

Discussion

Whether the mobilization among the conservative right in Poland has developed in response to the growing gay/lesbian movement or the other way around is less central than the resulting polarization and the violent clashes between the opposing factions. Inflammatory rhetoric comparing homosexuals to pedophiles and zoophiles has been countered by civil law suits and appeals to the *European Court of Human Rights*, further polarizing the public debate (see, Graff, 2006).

While deliberation that exposes participants to dissimilar perspectives is viewed by many as effectively ameliorating such conflicts, others fear that it might just as easily exacerbate divisions. The present study contributed to this debate, examining how

participants who hold strong views on sexual minority rights respond to disagreement during structured, moderated, face-to-face deliberations about this issue.

The results show that deliberations discouraged participants – moderates and strongly opinionated ones alike – from engaging in such communicative actions as discussing sexual minority rights and pulled moderates away from such public and more confrontational actions as rallying or petitioning. If long and civil discussions among educated young people turn those people away from political talk in more private settings and – to some extent – from fully taking part in the political process, how do we reconcile deliberative and participatory democracy (see, Mutz, 2006)? Accounting for additional factors, however, shows that deliberation and participation are not mutually exclusive.

Also, deliberations did not evoke a sense of collective action frame among strongly opinionated participants and decreased it among moderates. Specifically, although by design every participant encountered someone who shares his or her views, participants did not emerge from deliberations feeling more connected to like-minded others. Inasmuch as collective identity is a prerequisite for action and inasmuch as deliberations among young, educated and metropolitan Poles do not create such a sense, the trigger that would encourage those Poles to engage around sexual minority rights might be missing. Deliberations also decreased a sense of injustice, but only among moderates. Further, agency plummeted among all participants, indicating that deliberations on a controversial issue may make people feel less efficacious. This could occur through induced ambivalence, whereby people may start questioning their own positions (Mutz, 2002b), perceived issue complexity, in that people may realize that the

issue is too complicated to be addressed (Walsh, 2003), or from exposure to disagreement that creates a sense that an opposing faction would interfere with an undertaken action.

Structural Equation Models complemented these results by accounting for disagreement and *simultaneously* testing the hypotheses. As expected, disagreement motivated strongly opinionated deliberators to rally, petition or distribute information and also evoked collective action frame, which – in turn – further mobilized them to engage around sexual minority rights. Ultimately, although intended communicative participation was not greater among strongly opinionated deliberators than among moderates, opinion strength *did* exert substantial influences on intended communicative participation, *through* collective action frame. That is, when strong opinions were challenged people started identifying with like-minded others, perceiving a situation as unjust and feeling efficacious about their role in affecting the situation. Through these attitudes, strongly opinionated deliberators became mobilized to communicative action, even though they were not directly mobilized by the sole fact that they held strong views.

Indirectly speaking to the broader opinion climate, the results also find that sexual minority supporters experienced greater collective action frame than opponents, especially following disagreeable deliberations. Because citizens in Warsaw and – to some extent – in Poland are increasingly favorable towards sexual minorities, opponents may have felt that they were a dispersed minority that was losing ground.

Although these analyses reveal important relationships, the *Polish Dialogue Project* has limitations that need to be kept in mind when drawing conclusions from the presented results. With regard to the method used, it needs to be remembered that SEM does not establish causality. Although the models find that collective action frame

influences the links between opinion strength and political participation, causality cannot be inferred based on these findings. Also, using multigroup analysis tested the models in smaller sub-samples and may create unstable parameter estimates (see, Buhi et al., 2007). There are several different recommendations regarding the appropriate sample size in SEM. Some scholars state that at least 200 cases are needed for stable estimates (Chou & Bentler, 1999; Fan, Thompson, & Wang, 1999), whereas others note that the feasible rule for estimating sample size is 15 cases per measured variable (Stevens, 2002). Because the needed sample size depends on model complexity, in that models with multiple indirect effects may need more cases, the current sample size may be sufficient even if stratified by disagreement.

More generally, participants were not selected from a nationally representative sample, but were instead recruited from educational institutions and from non-governmental organizations in Warsaw. As with any other experimental design, it is thus unclear whether similar results would emerge among different samples. Nevertheless, the sample was more diverse than the typical college-sophomores relied upon in many experimental and quasi-experimental designs. Also, the purposive recruitment allowed over-sampling strongly opinionated individuals who would not have been effectively sampled from a nationally representative panel.

It also needs to be remembered that the disagreement measure captures perceived, not necessarily actual, disagreement occurring during deliberations. Validating this measure with discussion transcripts is a logical next step that would shed light not only on whether participants' perceptions are accurate but also on the potentially differential effects produced by perceived versus factual disagreement. This notwithstanding,

researchers often rely on self-reports because, in order for disagreement to have any effect, it has to be noticed by a person; and a political contention, even when objectively assessed as such, will not produce any changes unless those engaged in it are aware that dissimilar perspectives are voiced (see, Mutz, 2002a). Also, studies show that people are often influenced by the views they perceive others have not only by their actual views (see, Rimal & Real, 2003). Thus, although manipulating disagreement would minimize the threat that individual characteristics do not confound the tested relationships, relying on perceived disagreement has its benefits and ensured that group deliberations were realistic.

In a similar vein, this study lacks overtime observations and cannot determine whether participants followed-up on their expressed intentions with factual political engagement around sexual minority rights. Participants may have also over-reported their intended engagement, relative to their subsequent behaviors and true intentions to be politically active. Because attitudes and intentions predict behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and because social desirability biases would result in over-reports before and after deliberations, the detected patterns are telling in their own right. Finally, socio-demographics were not measured because group assignment was random, the sample was homogeneous with regard to age and education, and because the pre- and post-test questionnaires were extensive. The results could thus be altered had the controls for gender or income been included and/or additional interesting patterns could emerge.

Despite its limitations, this study offers findings with both theoretical and practical implications. It empirically assesses the factors through which deliberation among opposing groups may intensify conflict, such disagreement and collective identity,

injustice and agency. In so doing, this study complements the ethnographic studies that have revealed some negative outcomes that deliberations may entail without systematically measuring the underlying mechanisms (e.g., Mendelberg & Oleske, 2000). This study also shows that – in some contexts and among some individuals – political disagreement may mobilize people to action. This evidence adds to the scholarship on collective action that has generally focused on how interactions with *like-minded* individuals or *homogeneous* groups intensify collective action frame (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; McAdam, 1986; McPhail & Wohlstein, 1986). This evidence also speaks to the debate on deliberative versus participatory democracy (Mutz, 2006), showing that such individual factors as opinion strength affect the extent to which deliberation and exposure to disagreement increase or decrease political engagement.

Most prominently, this study shows that disagreeable deliberation mobilizes citizens who are deeply invested in a contentious issue to more vehement political activity. Drawing on social movement theory and addressing the processes whereby mobilization occurs, this study also shows that when strongly opinionated people encounter disagreement, they might experience a sense of collective identity, feeling greater identification with like-minded people; injustice, perceiving a situation as unfair; and agency, noting the necessity to undertake actions (Gamson, 1992a; Mansbridge & Morris, 2001). Collective action frame, in turn, further encourages mobilization to collective actions potentially aimed at counteracting the oppositional faction.

This study thus suggests that employing deliberation to solve deep differences, such as the one between the far right and the LGBTQ movement in Poland, may sometimes backfire, intensifying conflict between opposing groups. Certainly, ideal civil

society is not one in which citizens solely engage in institutionalized actions; nor is it always beneficial to lead groups towards a middle-ground compromise (see also, Dahlberg, 2007). Rallying or protesting may, however, entail violent confrontation. Mobilized groups may also refuse to accept diversity or aim to counter it with violence. In such contexts, mobilization may prove disadvantageous. Within old democracies, there are cases in which civil society contains elements that are an anathema to democratic values and whose activation may undermine those values. Within young democracies or unstable societies mobilization might be problematic when a given system lacks traditions that channel conflicts or has elites that are not committed to civil rights (see, Chambers & Kopstein, 2001).

Increasingly, societies are ethnically and ideologically diverse. Issues such as race, abortion, or minority rights divide liberal democracies, leading scholars to note that the most “formidable” challenge to those democracies is “moral disagreement” or “conflicts about fundamental values” (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996, p. 1). In addition to the intense conflict between the far right and the LGBTQ movement in Poland, other ideologically divided nations include Spain, where the relations with the Basque region create social tensions or the United States, where contentious debates have cropped up over issues ranging from immigration to same-sex marriage. According to the 2004 Conflict Barometer, there are 230 ethno-political conflicts worldwide, majority occurring within rather than between states (O’Flynn, 2006). Whether or not deliberation is a viable means of bridging such political divides remains to be seen. The findings offered here raise some questions, while also underscoring the importance to political communication of finding ways to mitigate the pitfalls that deliberation may entail.

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