When Deliberation Divides: Processes Underlying Mobilization to Collective Action

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. Perceived disagreement also evokes the sense of a collective action frame among those participants, and – through the evoked collective action frame – further mobilizes them to both communicative as well as to public and 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 Ilnicka, 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 (see 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 oppositional 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 as 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, and moderated groups. These data test whether disagreement during deliberation mobilizes strongly opinionated participants to political actions, evokes a 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 polarized public debate on this issue. On the one hand, minority voices are increasingly visible. Clubs, publications, film festivals, non-governmental organizations, and queer studies at universities have proliferated. This, along with media initiatives that promote

"coming out" and billboard campaigns "Let them see us" that exhibit same-sex couples

has lead to "a certain de-exoticisation of the topic" (Zablocki, 2007, p. 2) 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 far right organizations

violently breaking up demonstrations and with some news media 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. 13). 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 governance by the Kaczyńscy twin brothers (*Diagnoza

Społeczna*, 2007), who introduced divisive rhetoric aiming to deepen cleavages, "not

economic but moral," 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 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 and will also promote "representative thinking" or the capacity to form an opinion "by considering a given issue from different viewpoints" (Arendt, 1968, p. 241). Ultimately, "people in conflict will set aside their adversarial, win-lose approach and understand that their fate is linked with the fate of the other" (Mendelberg, 2002, pp. 153–54).

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, 2002). 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. 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 by evoking a sense of a collective action frame.

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 issue involvement, opinion intensity or candidate commitment affect individual reactions to dissimilar views and to oppositional opinion climate. Specifically, although perceived opinion climate influences participation, this influence is lower among those with firm views and strong candidate preferences (Kaplowitz, et al., 1983; Lasorsa, 1991; Noelle-Neumann, 1993). Also, people with strong views are willing to publicly voice their preferences in unfavorable circumstances (Horner, et al., 1998; Moy, Domke & Stamm, 2001), perhaps

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 people with firm views. 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 politics (Scheufele & Eveland, 2001). This review suggests that encountering disagreement during deliberation 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). Disagreement during 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," and social identification, which refers to "identification with a group that consensually considers an attitude to be important" (Krosnick, 1990, pp. 72-73). As a result, a connection between individual and group interests is established. Disagreement 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 (see 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). Deliberating contentious issues with opposing people, a situation that entails first-hand experience, fulfills these conditions. It may produce a sense that individual values or group interests are unjustly attacked, evoke moral indignation, and present an opportunity to connect abstract unfairness with concrete individuals (see Gamson, 1992b).

Finally, the agency component is related to efficacy. Just as efficacy refers to citizens' belief that they have influence over public policy (see McCluskey, et al., 2004), agency describes individual or group recognition that collective action can remedy an injust situation. 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, especially when people need to defend their positions on an issue (Kim, Wyatt, & Katz, 1999; McLeod, et al., 1999; Walsh, 2003). In a similar vein, disagreement during deliberation may evoke agency by making a given cause or group interests more salient. Also, feeling that one belongs to a community and seeing this community as integrated enhances efficacy (see McCluskey, et al., 2004). By extension, disagreement may augment agency because it may promote collective identity and accentuate the in-group and out-group differences. All in all, disagreement during deliberation should 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 heterogeneous groups. 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). To create heterogeneous groups, 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, 31 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.

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

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[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, four 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. Second, a solid majority of individuals who were successfully contacted did participate. Third, discussions took part outside the city center and some individuals were not willing to commute, especially given the weather in October/November and the relatively low compensation. Finally, more people indicated their interest. Because the Principal Investigator's stay in Poland was relatively short, potential participants were thanked for their interest.

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, 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. Value 1 indicated supporters and was assigned to those above the midpoint and value 0

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

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 political and civic participation in issue-specific collective actions. 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 acts related to sexual minorities. Because these items loaded on two factors two final pre- and post-test measures were created.

Pre-Test Intended Communicative Participation ($r = .54$, $p < .000$, $M = 6.83$, $SD = 2.57$) and *Post-Test Communicative Participation* ($r = .79$, $p < .000$, $M = 6.61$, $SD = 2.80$) averaged intention to talk with friends, family and acquaintances about sexual minorities and to attempt to persuade others to participants' own views. In turn, *Pre-Test Intended Active Participation* ($\alpha = .91$, $M = 3.44$, $SD = 2.40$) and *Post-Test 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 a political organization.

Although classically collective action is one in which many engage, certain individual acts can also be considered collective. Such acts as persuading others or contacting the media fall under collective action when they "serve a collective purpose in the struggle between different groups" and aim to achieve a "collective outcome" (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002, p. 527). Also, although the analyzed items may not speak to acts that necessarily intensify conflicts, it is important to account for the context in which political acts are undertaken. Protesting or disseminating information might be

disruptive when related to sexual minority rights in Poland, in that every equality parade is met by a counter-demonstration and necessitates police interventions, and forwarding information may entail calls to violence. In addition, the *Active Participation* scale encompasses acts that entail public expression and confrontation with opposing groups (Scheufele & Eveland, 2001; Ulbig & Funk, 1999). Further, discussing, persuading and disseminating the sometimes radical agenda might attract additional adherents and further polarize public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1974).

 Collective Action Frame. The pre- and post-test questionnaires also contained seven items that tapped collective action frames. Participants indicated, on 10-point scales ranging from 1 ("*Strongly disagree*") to 10 ("*Strongly agree*") their agreement with seven statements. Two referred to collective identity, i.e. defining the "we" in opposition to "they" (Gamson, 1992a) and identifying with a super-ordinate group (Huo, et al., 1996): "I feel connected with people whose views on sexual minorities are similar" (M_{pre} = 7.20, SD_{pre} = 2.23; M_{post} = 7.17, SD_{pre} = 2.29) and "Those people are just like me" (M_{pre} = 5.36, SD_{pre} = 2.47; M_{post} = 5.51, SD_{pre} = 2.43). Two items tapped injustice, i.e. perceived lack of public acceptance for what an individual and his or her group represent (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992): "People whose views on sexual minorities are similar to mine are alienated in our society" (M_{pre} = 4.32, SD_{pre} = 2.46; M_{post} = 4.50, SD_{pre} = 2.75) and "Our society does not accept views on sexual minorities that are similar to mine" (M_{pre} = 5.58, SD_{pre} = 2.77; M_{post} = 4.75, SD_{pre} = 2.77). Finally, three items referred to agency, i.e. awareness that collective action can alter the conditions that are unfavorable to an individual and his or her group (Gamson, 1992a): "Through action I can influence the situation of sexual minorities" (M_{pre} = 5.98, SD_{pre} = 2.47; M_{post} = 5.33, SD_{pre} = 2.81),

"People who have similar opinions can influence the situation" (M_{pre} = 7.27, SD_{pre} = 2.19; M_{post} = 6.76, SD_{pre} = 2.48), and "If more people who think like me unite, we will succeed in convincing others to our views" (M_{pre} = 6.63, SD_{pre} = 2.12; M_{post} = 6.30, SD_{pre} = 2.32). These items were averaged to create two reliable scales: *Pre-Test Collective Action Frame* (α = .65; *M* = 5.95, *SD* = 1.36) and *Post-Test Collective Action Frame* (α = .74; *M* = 5.70, *SD* = 1.58). These items were also analyzed separately.

Perceived Disagreement. Political mobilization and the evoked collective action frames are expected to result from disagreement perceived during deliberation. The post-test questionnaire thus 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 also found that – on average – intended active participation was stable ($t_{(181)}$ = .55, *ns*) and intended communicative participation decreased ($t_{(181)}$ = 2.00, *p* < .05). One-way ANOVA also found that whereas active participation decreased among moderates, it increased among

strongly opinionated participants ($F_{(1, 180)}$ = 3.30, p = .07). Both groups, however, became similarly less willing to discuss sexual minority rights ($F_{(1, 180)}$ = .00, ns).

[Table 1 here]

Did deliberations affect a sense of a collective action frame and its individual components? On average, collective action frame became less salient (M_{pre} = 5.95, M_{post} = 5.70, $t_{(1, 181)}$ = 3.05, p < .01). Specifically, participants emerged from deliberations with a lower sense that the Polish society does not accept their views on sexual minorities (M_{pre} = 5.58, M_{post} = 4.75, $t_{(1, 181)}$ = 3.99, p < .000) and also feeling less efficacious that their own actions can influence sexual minority rights in Poland (M_{pre} = 5.98, M_{post} = 5.33, $t_{(1, 181)}$ = 4.11, p < .000), that like-minded people can exert influence (M_{pre} = 7.27, M_{post} = 6.76, $t_{(1, 181)}$ = 3.47, p < .01), and that, if united, people with similar views on sexual minorities can convince others (M_{pre} = 6.63, M_{post} = 6.30, $t_{(1, 181)}$ = 1.85, p < .10).

Did these patterns differ among moderates and strongly opinionated deliberators? One-way ANOVA model found that the two groups demonstrated a parallel decrease on the aggregate collective action frame measure ($F_{(1, 180)}$ =.02, ns). ANOVA models that scrutinized the individual measures revealed that – relative to moderates – strongly opinionated participants emerged from deliberations feeling *lower* sense that like-minded people can influence sexual minority rights ($F_{(1, 180)}$ = 6.28, p < .05), *lower* identification with those people ($F_{(1, 180)}$ = 10.70, p < .001), and a *greater* sense that people who think like them are currently alienated in society ($F_{(1, 180)}$ = 5.30, p < .05) (see Table 2).

[Table 2 here]

These findings point to the main effects that deliberating sexual minority rights had on mobilization to action and on a collective action frame. Did perceived

disagreement and conflict influence these effects and the *process* underlying

mobilization? Structural Equation Models tested the hypotheses. Although SEM

integrates both the measurement model (i.e. confirmatory factor analysis) and path

analysis (Bollen, 1989), only the path-analysis approach was taken in testing the models.

The models tested the relationships between observed and not latent variables, focusing

on estimating the direct and the indirect effects to evaluate the processes underlying

mobilization among strongly opinionated individuals (see Pan et al., 2006).

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). The models

simultaneously predicted *Intended Active Participation* and *Intended Communicative

Participation* as the outcome endogenous variables.[4]

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model for mobilization to action. The causal paths

were specified between the two pre- and post-test intended participation measures. Pre-

test *Intended Communicative Participation* was also linked to the post-test *Intended

Active Participation* and vice versa because the model without these paths demonstrated a

substantially worse model's fit, and also because those participants who planned to

engage in certain political acts were likely to be active in other political realms. A causal

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[4] Note that both pre-test *Intended Participation* measures and also the pre-test *Collective Action Frame* are
included as endogenous. Because these measures are intercorrelated (between $r = .47$ and $r = .54$),
multicollinearity could be a problem. However, collinearity diagnostics found that the variance inflation
factor, VIF, did not exceed 1.9, indicating that multicollinearity does not present threats to the results'
reliability. Further, recent Monte Carlo simulation experiments find that multicollinearity causes problems
in SEM when it is extreme, when the correlations between the predictors are around .80, when explained
variance is low, and the sample size is small (Grewal, Cote & Baumgartner, 2004; see Leahy, 2000).
Because this analysis only meets the last condition, the threat that the estimates are unreliable is minimal.

path was also specified from pre- to post-test collective action frame. These paths addressed the potential confounding, minimizing the threat that the tested relationships are due to the fact that strongly opinionated participants – at the outset – have a more salient collective action frame and greater intentions to be active.

Two causal paths led from the pre-test intended participation to a collective action frame, not only because the model without these paths fit the data less well, but also because those who intended to be active before the discussion were already likely to feel greater identification with like-minded others, perceive a given situation as unjust and feel that their actions can make a difference. Also, causal paths from opinion strength to both post-test intended participation measures were specified. These paths tested *Hypothesis 1*. Further, opinion strength was linked to a collective action frame. This path is in accordance with *Hypothesis 2*. Moreover, a collective action frame led to both participation measures. These paths are consistent with the reviewed literature on collective action and social movements. The model included support for sexual minorities as an exogenous variable. Because preliminary analyses found that support for sexual minorities predicted a collective action frame but not participation, there was a direct path to a collective action frame only. Correlations were specified between the exogenous variables. To account for the interdependence of the two outcome measures, the model also correlated their error terms.

[Figure 1 here]

To directly test the hypotheses, multiple group analysis was conducted for low and high perceived disagreement.[5] *Hypothesis 1* was considered supported when the

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[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

direct path from opinion strength to intended participation was greater when

disagreement was high. In a similar vein, *Hypothesis 2* would be supported when the

path from opinion strength to a collective action frame was stronger in high relative to

low disagreement. To provide a stringent hypotheses test, t-tests on the coefficients

assessed whether these paths were significantly different. Finally, *Hypothesis 3* was

considered supported when the indirect path from opinion strength to intended

participation *through* a collective action frame was significant and stronger in high than

in low disagreement. Two complimentary methods tested this hypothesis. Bootstrap

approximation, an increasingly popular method used to calculate standard errors, tested

whether the indirect effect was significant in low and in high perceived disagreement

(Shrout & Bolger, 2002). Secondly, nested model comparisons were applied. Because

model comparisons work by imposing a constraint or multiple constraints on a model, the

path from opinion strength to a collective action frame was constrained to 0 in low and

high perceived disagreement group and the model's goodness-of-fit was estimated. The

changes in χ^2 in each group were then tested for significance. A significant change

denoted significant indirect effect. Because done in a multigroup analysis, this method

allowed assessing whether eliminating the indirect path differently affected the model in

low versus in high disagreement group (see Arbuckle, 2007).

     The model was first tested in the entire sample and without accounting for

disagreement. The model fit the data well (χ^2 = 2.35, *df* = 4, *p* = .67; RMSEA = .000, TLI

= 1.01, CFI = 1.00). The structural parameters suggest that that – across the sample –

opinion strength affected individual willingness to rally, petition or distribute information

(*Active Participation*) only directly ($\underline{b}$ = .31, *p* < .05) and not through a collective action

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estimates than would be obtained from two separate single-group analyses (see Arbuckle, 2007).

frame (indirect effect: b_{active} = .02, *ns*, $b_{communicative}$ = .03, *ns*), and that it did not have any effect on intentions to discuss sexual minority rights or persuade others (*Communicative Participation*) (*b* = -.12, *ns*). To test whether these associations were moderated by disagreement, multigroup analysis was conducted. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the estimates for low and high perceived disagreement groups (see also Appendix Table 1). Note that the figures only show significant paths; the paths that are significantly different in the two disagreement levels are illustrated with continuous lines, whereas the paths that are significant but do not depend on disagreement are illustrated with dotted lines.

[Figure 2 and 3 here]

The figures demonstrate that strongly opinionated participants were no more likely than moderates to intend to discuss sexual minority rights or to persuade someone to their position, and this direct effect was insignificant in both disagreement levels. Other paths differ in some distinct ways. Whereas strongly opinionated deliberators were slightly less likely than moderates to report a collective action frame when perceiving low disagreement, this reversed when perceived disagreement was high. It was also high disagreement that mobilized those participants to such public and confrontational acts as rallying or protesting, and low disagreement did not exert a similar direct effect. Can we be confident that these differences are significant? T-tests on the coefficients found that the path from opinion strength to intended active participation (*t* = 1.92, *p* < .05) as well as the one from opinion strength to a collective action frame (*t* = 2.80, *p* < .001) indeed depended on disagreement.

Further, the indirect effects exerted by opinion strength on intended active participation (*b* = .16, *p* < .05) *as well as* on communicative participation (*b* = .23, *p* < .

05) were positive and significant in high disagreement and negative and marginally significant in low disagreement (b_{active} = -.03, $p < .10$; $b_{communicative}$ = -.07, $p < .10$). Constraining the indirect path to 0 worsened the model's fit in high disagreement group (χ^2_{change} = 5.04, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). Due to the negative indirect effects, the model's fit also slightly worsened in the low disagreement group (χ^2_{change} = 2.61, $df = 1$, $p = .11$).

Discussion

Whether the conservative right in Poland mobilized in response to the growing gay/lesbian movement or the other way around is less central than the resulting polarization. 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. According to many scholars, deliberation that exposes participants to oppositional perspectives should effectively ameliorate such a conflict. Other scholars, however, fear that deliberation might just as easily exacerbate this and similar 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. Perhaps encountering people who expressed similar views made those participants feel that their own position is more prevalent than they had previously thought. Those deliberators who are invested in the issue may have more closely attended to the opinions expressed by others, contrasted these opinions with their own position, and ultimately concluded that the position thy hold is marginalized. 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, 2002), 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 a sense of a 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* a 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 actions, 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 a greater sense of a 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 (Noelle-Neuman, 1993).

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 (see e.g., Brunsting & Postmes, 2002).

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 confound the relationships, relying on perceived disagreement had 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 on negative outcomes produced by deliberations (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 disagreement during deliberation

mobilizes citizens who are deeply invested in a contentious issue to more vehement

political activity. This study also addresses the processes whereby mobilization occurs,

showing 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. 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). In some contexts, however, 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,

such as groups promoting hatred, bigotry or xenophobia. 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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Table 1. Intended Participation by Opinion Strength

	Communicative Participation				Active Participation			
	Pre	Post	Δ	$t_{(df)}$	Pre	Post	Δ	$t_{(df)}$
Opinion Strength								

|	Pre	Post	Δ		Pre	Post	Δ	
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: *** $p \le .001$, ** $p \le .01$, * $p \le .05$, † $p \le .10$; N = 181; Greater values represent greater intended participation; results of paired-sample t-tests within each opinion strength category are shown.

Table 2. Collective Action Frame by Opinion Strength

|	Moderate				Strong			
	Pre	Post	Δ	$t_{(df)}$	Pre	Post	Δ	$t_{(df)}$
Collective Action Frame	5.68	5.42	-0.26	3.03$_{(110)}$**	6.39	6.15	-0.24	1.51$_{(69)}$
People with similar views are like me	5.10	5.24	0.14	0.64$_{(110)}$	5.76	5.93	0.17	0.66$_{(69)}$
Connected to those with similar views	6.77	7.10	0.33	1.84$_{(110)}$†	7.91	7.31	-0.60	2.78$_{(69)}$**
People like me are alienated in society	4.20	4.01	-0.19	0.81$_{(110)}$	4.54	5.28	0.74	2.12$_{(69)}$*
Society does not accept my views	5.41	4.43	-0.98	4.02$_{(110)}$***	5.81	5.24	-0.57	1.53$_{(69)}$
I can influence the situation	5.55	4.83	-0.72	3.51$_{(110)}$**	6.67	6.11	-0.56	2.17$_{(69)}$*
If united, we will convince others	6.51	6.11	-0.40	1.85$_{(110)}$†	6.80	6.59	-0.21	0.67$_{(69)}$
We can influence the situation	6.86	6.64	-0.22	1.22$_{(110)}$	7.94	6.96	-0.98	4.11$_{(69)}$***

Note: *** $p \le 0.001$, ** $p \le .01$, * $p \le .05$, † $p \le .10$; N = 181; Greater values represent greater agreement; results of paired-sample t-tests within each opinion strength category are shown.

Figure 1. Generic Model of Mobilization to Action through Collective Action Frame
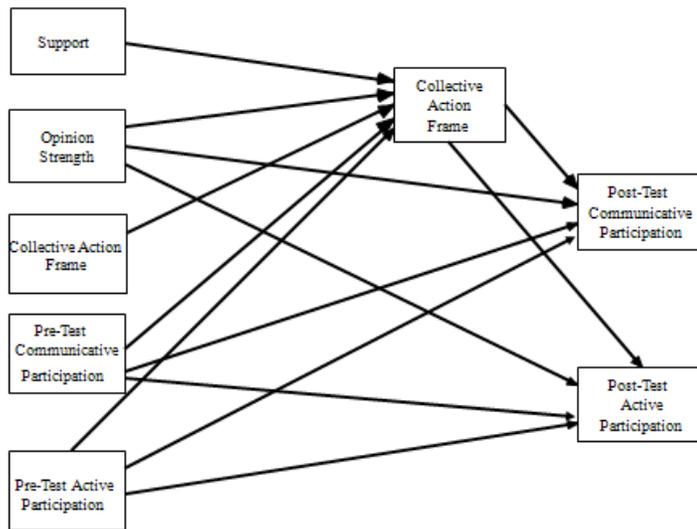
Note: Generic structural model for *Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3*: influence of opinion strength and support for sexual minorities on intended participation through collective action frame.

Figure 2 and 3. Mobilization to Action by Perceived Disagreement
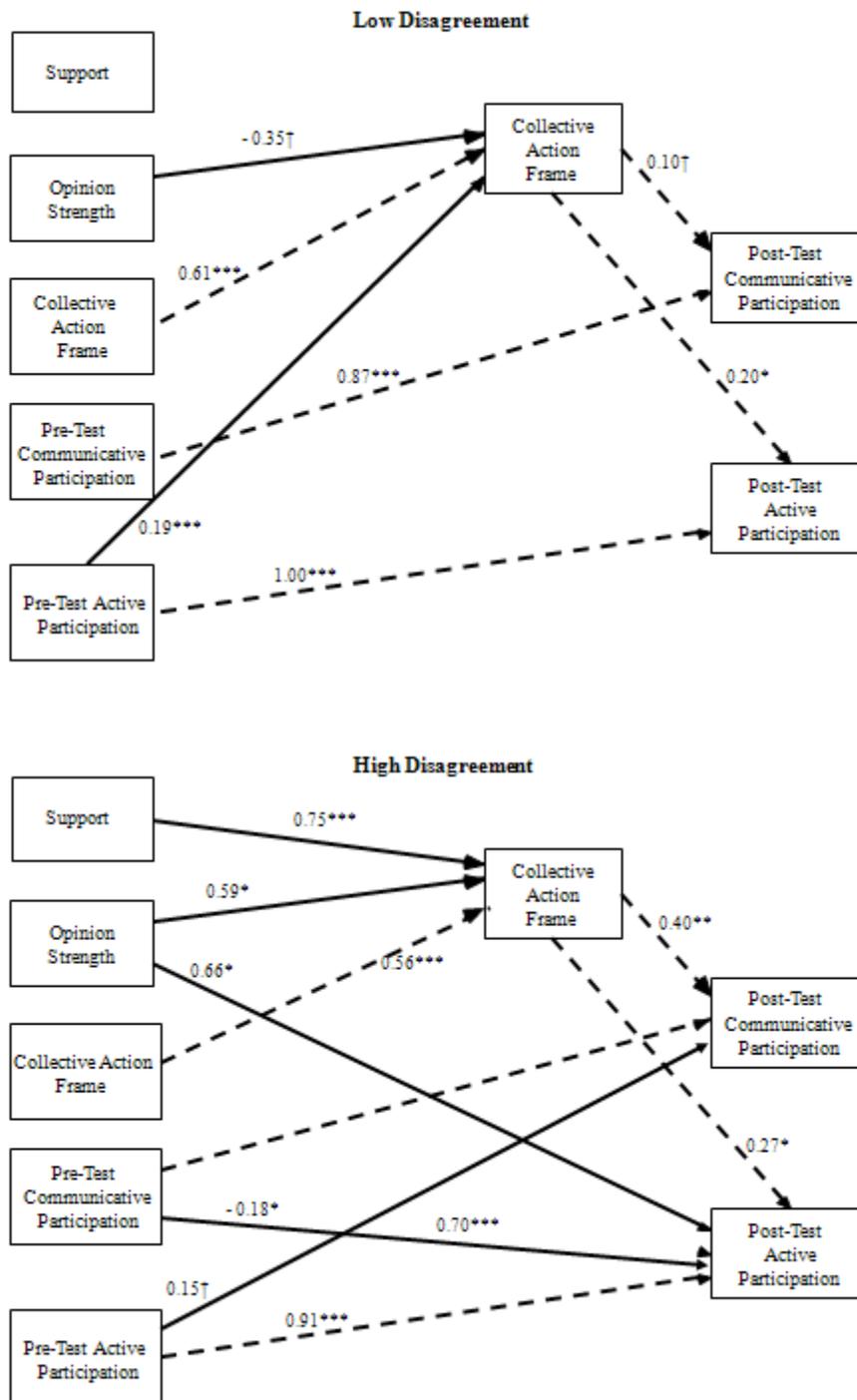
Note: Unstandardized parameter estimates are shown; Correlations between exogenous variables are not shown. Only significant paths are shown. Paths that are significantly different depending on disagreement are illustrated with continuous lines; paths that are not different depending on disagreement are illustrated with dotted lines.

Appendix Table 1. *Parameter Estimates testing the mediating role of Collective Action Frame on Mobilization to Action by Disagreement*

	Low Disagreement (n = 107)					High Disagreement (n = 74)				
	Post-Test Collective Action Frame	Post-test Active Participation		Post-test Communicative Participation		Post-Test Collective Action Frame	Post-test Active Participation		Post-test Communicative Participation	
		Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect		Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect
Pre-Test Active Participation	.19**	1.00***	.02†	.06	.04**	.07	.91***	.02†	.15†	.03
Pre-Test Communicative Participation	.06	-.01	.01	.87***	.01	.04	-.18*	.01	.70***	.02
Pre-Test Action Frame	.61***	--	.06†	--	.12*	.56***	--	.15*	--	.22*
Opinion Strength	-.35†	-.01	-.03†	-.10	-.07†	.59*	.66*	.16*	-.09	.23*
Issue Support	.19	--	.02	--	.04	.75**	--	.20*	--	.30*
Post-Test Action Frame	--	.10†	--	.20*	--	--	.27*	--	.40**	--
R²(%)	64%	92%		81%		57%	79%		69%	
Overall Fit Statistics	χ² = 7.15, df = 8, p = .52; RMSEA=.000, TLI = 1.01, CFI = 1.00									

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