KU LEUVEN

FACULTEIT SOCIALE WETENSCHAPPEN

# Reasoning Across the Divide

## Interpersonal Deliberation, Emotions and Reflective Political Thinking

**Lala MURADOVA**

Proefschrift aangeboden tot het verkrijgen van de graad van Doctor in de Sociale wetenschappen

Promotor: Prof. Dr. Sofie Marien

Onderzoekseenheid: Centrum voor Politicologie (CePo)

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Nr. 417

2021

Samenstelling van de examencommissie:

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Gepubliceerd door:
Faculteit Sociale Wetenschappen - Centrum voor Politicologie, KU Leuven, Parkstraat 45, 3000 Leuven, België.



D/2021/8978/1

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# PART I

# Chapter 1: Introduction

Citizens' refusal to listen, appreciate and consider opposing political views is one of democracy's biggest challenges today. This results in political polarization which has dire consequences not only for the quality of democratic institutions, but also for the fabric of society. Polarization leads to government shutdowns, a lower quality of civil discourse, and policy gridlocks. It also engenders feelings of deep hostility and animosity in individuals towards their issue opponents and results in increased levels of political alienation (Abramowitz 2011; Arceneaux and Wielen, 2017; Banda and Kirkland 2018; Barber and McCarty 2013; Huddy, Bankert, and Davies 2018; Iyengar, Sood, and Lelkes 2012; Levendusky 2013; Mason 2018).

Observers indicate that polarization is partly due to the failure of most citizens to *reason well* about politics. What constitutes 'reasoning well' varies from field to field, from scholar to scholar. At the minimum, the ideal models of political thinking presume that people are willing to reexamine their prior views and beliefs by considering diverse and opposing perspectives and then integrating them into their reasoning when they make political decisions (Arendt 1992; Dewey 1927, 1933; Habermas 1996; Mill 1974; Goodin 2003). I refer to this as *reflective reasoning* in this thesis[1].

Empirical research shows that most people do not engage in reflective political reasoning (see Achen and Bartels 2016 for a review of the literature). People rarely think about, let alone consider and appreciate the perspectives and viewpoints of those with whom they disagree (Catapano, Tormala, and Rucker 2019). When faced with opposing information, the findings show that people react to it defensively and cling to their existing attitudes (Taber and Lodge 2006; Leeper and Mullinix 2018). Although a large body of research has been dedicated to uncovering such flaws in individuals' political reasoning, what remains underexplored is the ways

[1] I counterpose 'reflective reasoning' with 'non-reflective reasoning', which encompasses different kinds of biased reasoning strategies people employ to arrive at conclusions that they prefer. For example directionally-motivated reasoning, that is, the tendency of individuals to seek out and use information and arguments that are consistent with their previous beliefs while ignoring anything contradictory (Leeper and Mullinix 2018), can be categorized as non-reflective reasoning. I discuss this further in Chapter 2.

in which they can be offset or attenuated. The question thus arises as to *whether, and if so, under what conditions,* individuals would engage in reflective political reasoning. This is the question at the heart of this doctoral thesis.

Studying this question is of vital importance, because the quality of democracy is contingent upon the reflectiveness of political choices. First, reflection minimizes partisan-motivated reasoning, reduces affective political polarization (Arceneaux and Vander Wielen 2017; Brader and Tucker 2018); and results in better and more sophisticated political input into policymaking (Fishkin 2009; Fournier et al. 2011; Luskin et al. 2002). Moreover, findings about the unreflective nature of citizens' political reasoning challenge the premise of *democratic responsiveness,* which is central to the scholarship on representation (Druckman 2014). Although democratic responsiveness can be defined in different ways, at its heart it requires that the public policies that governments pursue reflect and respond to the true preferences of the people (Dahl 1956; Page and Shapiro 1983; Page 1994; Page and Shapiro 1992). 'A key characteristic of a democracy', Robert Dahl once famously argued, 'is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens' (Dahl 1971, 1). Voting is a mechanism that should ensure this responsiveness. When elected officials implement policies that run counter to the public opinion, the argument goes, ordinary citizens should punish these officials by removing them from office (Ashworth 2012). Included in this idea is the assumption that people's political choices are the product of reflective reasoning (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Goodin and Niemeyer 2003; Dahl 1989; Mansbridge 2003; see Ferejohn 2018 for an overview of the literature). People should think 'long and hard what they want and why, and what really is the right way for the larger community to assist them in achieving these goals' (Goodin 2003, 1).

Reacting to the widespread concern that the public may not live up to these normative standards, Lavine, Johnson and Steenbergen (2012, 125) ask '[H]ow can an electorate possibly reward or punish an incumbent party if it holds grossly distorted views of political conditions? In addition, how can it elect leaders who will pursue desired policy reform in the face of widespread misperceptions about where leaders stand, what the policy status quo is, and what the central elements and likely consequences of proposed reform are?'. It is therefore, important to understand whether, and if so, under what conditions citizens in democracies would be encouraged to think reflectively; and how such conditions for higher-quality real world decision-making might be created.

The main argument of this thesis is that when motivated, most citizens are capable of engaging in reflective political reasoning. Thus, the question is, *How can citizens be motivated to reason*

*reflectively?* Proponents of *deliberative democratic theory* place talk at the heart of political decision-making and argue that interpersonal deliberative communication (i.e. deliberative discussion with others) is capable of inducing such motivation in individuals. Discussing the matters of public concern with other lay citizens from different backgrounds has the potential for enhancing the reflectiveness of citizens' political reasoning and engendering higher-quality political judgements (Bessette 1994; Farrell et al. 2019; Morrell 2014; Fishkin 1995, 2018). Empirical research shows some support for this argument, demonstrating that citizens' political decisions become more informed, enlightened and reflective after deliberative discussions (Luskin et al. 2002; Fishkin and Luskin 2005; Gastil 2008; Mendelberg 2002; Niemeyer 2011).

Two major and crucial issues, however, remain unanswered. First, little is known about why, and how interpersonal deliberation increases the reflectiveness of people's political reasoning. In other words, under what conditions and by what processes does the relationship between the two materialize? Second, there is a dearth of theoretical and empirical research on how to scale up the observed deliberative effects to the wider public. To put it differently, how can the benefits of deliberation be transferred into the spaces that are not pre-defined as deliberative, for example, everyday political talk and voting, among others? I elaborate more on these questions in what follows.

First, interpersonal deliberation, in particular, its formal and structured type (e.g. deliberative polling, citizen assemblies, and other types of citizen forums), is a complex phenomenon. These forums for interpersonal deliberation are also called 'deliberative minipublics' in the extant literature. They are small-scale institutions in which a diverse group of randomly chosen citizens is convened to take evidence from both experts and witnesses, and discuss the policy issues of common concern before arriving at policy recommendations. Structured interpersonal deliberation comprises many different elements, such as expert communication, predeliberation informational handouts and discussion, as well as social interaction and numerous other necessary and sufficient conditions (e.g. equality of voice, respectfulness, civility). Up to now, empirical research on deliberation up to now has mostly treated it as one big 'black-box', mainly focusing on input and output factors (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019; Mutz 2008). There are very few studies that carefully studying the effects of its separate elements, and their interaction on citizens' reasoning processes during deliberative discussions. The few studies that have dedicated some efforts to investigating it indirectly have produced mixed and inconsistent results. For example, the central claim in deliberation research, which is that people arrive at reflective political decisions during deliberative encounters because they 'yield to the force of the better argument' (Habermas 1996; Bächtiger et al. 2010) has met with mixed empirical support

(Himmelroos and Christensen 2018; Caluwaerts and Reuchamps 2014; Baccaro, Bächtiger, and Deville 2016; but Esterling, Fung, and Lee 2019; Gerber et al. 2018; Westwood 2015). Hence, despite the so-called 'empirical turn' in deliberative democratic literature (Bächtiger et al. 2010, 32), there is a lack of systematic empirical evidence for the suggested mechanisms. Furthermore, there is also a scarcity of generalizable theories that link interpersonal deliberation to reflective reasoning in predictable, empirically testable ways. The gap, therefore, is both theoretical and empirical. I call this a '*micro-deliberation* gap'[2] (see Figure 1). The first aim of this thesis is to understand how deliberation operates at the micro level and help unpack the black-box of interpersonal deliberation. Thus, the first main research question that guides this endeavor reads as follows:

**RQ1: How does interpersonal deliberation prompt more reflective political reasoning?**

Second, cross-cutting political conversations, whether structured or not, are rare in contemporary democracies (Huckfeldt, Mendez, and Osborn 2004; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Mutz 2006; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1944; Morey, Eveland Jr, and Hutchens 2012). It is also practically impossible to get all citizens to come together in deliberative forums to undertake interpersonal deliberation, particularly in large-scale democracies (Goodin 2000, 2003). To have democratic legitimacy, structured interpersonal deliberation should be able to induce public deliberation in the population at large - the *macro* deliberation (Lafont 2020). However, we know little about how this could function in practice. Research that advances empirically testifiable theories of the macro effects of structured interpersonal deliberation is underdeveloped (but see Warren and Gastil 2015; MacKenzie and Warren 2012), and the empirical research in the field is still inchoate (but see Boulianne 2018; Ingham and Levin 2018; Knobloch, Barthel, and Gastil 2019). I call this a '*macro-deliberation* gap' (see Figure 1). Thus, the second objective of this thesis is to investigate how the reflection-inducing effects of interpersonal deliberation can be transferred to a larger population and, thereby, contribute to our understanding of deliberative democracy at the macro level. The second main research question that leads this part of the thesis is as follows:

**RQ2: How can the reflection-inducing effects of interpersonal deliberation be scaled up to other parts of the democratic system?**

[2] Because of their small scale, structured deliberative forums are considered *micro spaces* of deliberation. *Macro deliberation* is deliberation that takes place among the wider public.

# Theory

To address the 'micro-deliberation gap', in this thesis, I propose a theory of *emotional engagement* for interpersonal deliberation, which I discuss in depth in Chapter 2. I draw upon the theoretical, conceptual and empirical resources of emotion research across different disciplines (e.g. cognitive psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, political psychology, social psychology, and sociology) that accentuate the role of emotions for information processing, decision-making and learning. I argue that interpersonal deliberation has the potential for encouraging people to reflect on their political decisions by engaging their emotions. In building my theory, I focus on structured deliberative forums, because these approximate the ideals of deliberative democracy through their design (Fung 2003). Emotional engagement in this thesis is conceptualized as people's positive affective reactions to each other, each other's arguments, and perspectives, and to the information received during interpersonal deliberations. It incorporates feelings of emotional bonding, empathetic perspective-taking and 'a sense of shared fate and common identity' (Rosenberg 2007, 357).

My theoretical approach starts with an assumption that face-to-face deliberation[3] is first and foremost a social event that, unavoidably, engages human emotions. Meeting strangers in a room, facing unfamiliar circumstances, getting to know each other, starting small talk, and sharing food and drink, in addition to other more important elements of deliberation, such as deliberating with others, learning and listening, are social interactive elements that contribute to and facilitate the processes of forming bonds and building trust. Spending more time with each other under conditions of respect and equality also motivates people to open up about their own personal lives, and connect the expressed arguments and perspectives to their daily lives and the lives of those they know.

A key to understanding interpersonal deliberation, I argue, is to recognize that reason-giving, listening, learning and reflecting during deliberation cannot be detached from interpersonal deliberation's emotional bonding, empathy-inducing and trust-building effects. Emotional engagement is a precursor to other effects of deliberation, such as learning and argumentative persuasion. It motivates people to learn, listen, respond and reflect.

Furthermore, I place one specific type of emotion – empathy – at the heart of these processes. I argue that interpersonal deliberation provides a fertile environment that facilitates the kind of

[3] I further extend this theory to the kind of deliberation that is not face to face, and can be induced by people's imagination.

empathetic engagement that enables deliberating citizens to connect with each other, and with each other's perspectives and experiences (see also Mansbridge 1983, 1999, Morrell 2007, 2010). Structured deliberation brings together people with diverse life experiences, and gives them an opportunity to discuss the issues of common concern via forms of communication they feel comfortable with, whether rational argumentation or personal stories. I argue that deliberation induces the processes of empathetic perspective-taking in citizens who are engaging in deliberation. Imagining the world from someone else's vantage point, in return, decreases egocentric thinking in people's judgements and decisions and prompts more self-critical reflective reasoning (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000; Todd, Bodenhausen, and Galinsky 2012; but see Simas, Clifford, and Kirkland 2019).

I highlight two institutional features of deliberative forums that according to my argument, are necessary conditions for the processes of empathetic perspective-taking: the presence of a diversity of viewpoints, and the interplay between fact-based rational argumentation and storytelling. First, for individuals to be able to imagine the thoughts and feelings of another person, they need to have accurate information about these thoughts and feelings. In the absence of such information, their imaginations becomes either inaccurate or stereotypical, which could result in erroneous inferences about the other person's thoughts and feelings and lead to biased, rather than reflective reasoning. Therefore, the diversity of viewpoints and worldviews during deliberations is crucial for its success. Second, this information should be transmitted to the perspective taker via ways that can activate the process of perspective-taking. Previous literature has emphasized *storytelling* and *narratives* as important communication tools that are capable of encouraging perspective-taking and the feelings of empathy. Although the factual information could serve as a basis for individuals' understanding of the issue under discussion, and provide them with the necessary background, stories and narratives can engage their emotions in relation to the issue and facilitate the processes of empathetic concern and perspective-taking.

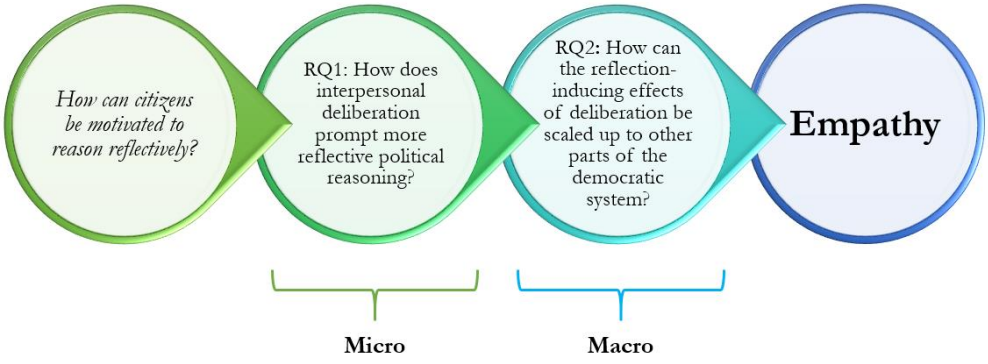


*Figure 1. Micro and Macro Parts of the Theoretical Frame*

The second part of the theoretical framework, that is, the macro part grapples with the question of how to scale up the reflection-inducing effects of interpersonal deliberation to the wider public. In other words, how can the benefits of deliberation be transferred into spaces that are not pre-defined as deliberative, spaces such as everyday talk, voting at elections, and referendums, and so on? Although interpersonal deliberation is beneficial for the reflectiveness of individuals' political reasoning, it is practically impossible to convene hundreds and thousands of democratic deliberation sessions in every country before important political decisions are made. What could be the alternative? In this thesis, I argue that a careful empirical study of experiments in structured interpersonal deliberation can inform us of potential conditions and/or elements that could either in isolation or in conjunction lead to more reflective political reasoning. Embedding these elements and recreating the conditions in different parts of the democratic system to obtain similar positive effects on individuals' political reasoning could be one feasible mechanism. Based on the micro part of my theory (and the evidence from my empirical studies), I posit that the suggested mechanism underlying the reflection-inducing effect of interpersonal deliberation – empathetic perspective-taking (i.e. actively imagining the feelings, thoughts and other mental states of someone with whom we disagree) – can be scaled up to the wider population.

I argue that information about the feelings and viewpoints of someone with whom we disagree combined with explicit instructions to imagine the world from that person's perspective could create conditions akin to interpersonal deliberation. Taking the perspective of someone we disagree with, in the presence of accurate information about the target, could have the potential for encouraging people to communicate more imaginatively with others, and consequently, lead to more reflective political reasoning. Cognitive psychologists have demonstrated that people are capable of engaging in such an imaginative endeavor (see Goldman 2006 for an impressive review of psychological, philosophical and neuroscientific literature). In this thesis, first, I elaborate on the ways in which people's imagination could be fired; and, second, I test these mechanisms empirically.

## Empirical Approach

To test the theoretical expectations of this thesis, I marshal a set of original qualitative, survey, quasi-experimental and experimental data; and four different kinds of proxy measures for capturing reflective reasoning. These data constitute the empirical basis of six self-contained articles. In Figure 2, I present an overview of how each article contributes to different parts of my theoretical chain (Figure 2).

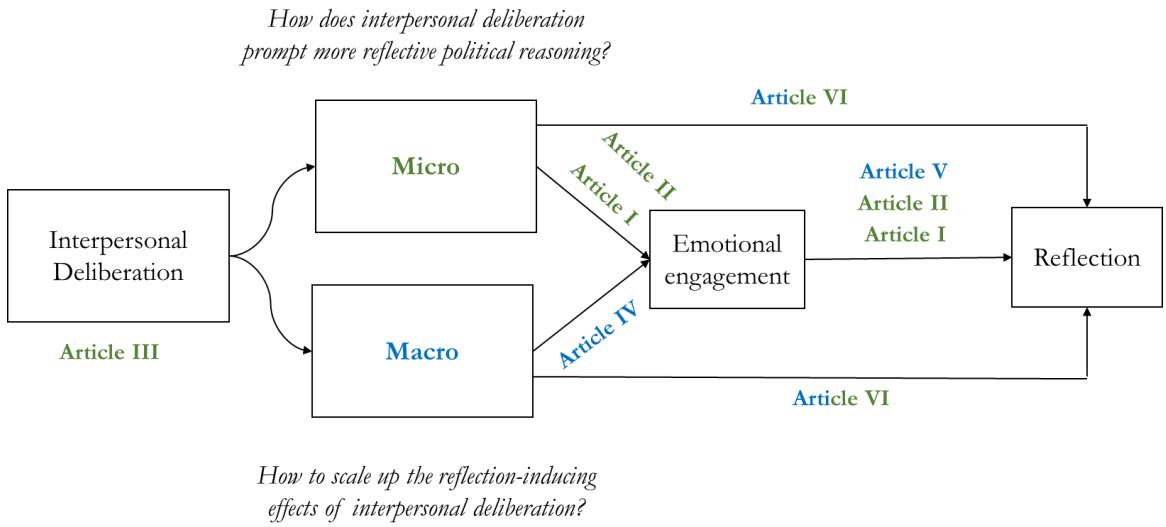


*Figure 2. Overview of the Articles and Where They Fit In With the Theoretical Chain of the Thesis.*
*Note: Green-coloured articles pertain to the micro aspect of this thesis and the blue-coloured ones belonging to the macro aspect of the thesis. Article VI contains both micro and macro elements in it.*

In Article I, I argue that under the right conditions, structured interpersonal deliberation facilitates the process of emotional engagement, in which people are prompted to take the perspective of someone with whom they disagree, and subsequently, are motivated to engage in the consideration and integration of diverse perspectives on the issue before they make political decisions. I use three kinds of data to investigate this question. First, I show (with in-depth interview data and survey data) in the case of an influential deliberative forum, the Irish Citizens' Assembly, that interpersonal deliberative communication engages citizens' minds, via engaging their hearts first. Second, I complement this finding with evidence from a laboratory experiment.

In Article II, together with my co-authors, I focus on expert communication on climate change in interpersonal deliberative settings. Climate change is a complex and highly technical policy issue. Hence, the role of experts in motivating the processes of learning and reflection during deliberations is crucial. In this article, I argue that the kind of expert communication that engages people emotionally, that is, the sort that resonates with citizens' day-to-day lives, and concerns, reflects people's values and beliefs and is expressed in an accessible manner and in a narrative format, is able to motivate individuals to reason more reflectively about ambitious climate change policies[4]. I examined these theoretical expectations with the data from the Irish Citizens' Assembly, using video content analyses of the speeches made by twenty-one climate policy speakers to capture the emotional engagement level of expert communication, and text analysis

[4] In the article, we call this *effective communication*. Notice that the article does not use the term 'reflection'. Instead we refer to *uptake of policy proposals*.

of the policy recommendation document to measure the level of policy uptake among the members of the assembly.

Article III, which is entitled 'The Challenges of Experimenting with Citizen Deliberation in Laboratory Settings', is a methodological case study paper. In this paper, I discuss extensively the advantages and challenges associated with manipulating interpersonal deliberation in a laboratory setting. I further make the case for combining controlled experimental studies with real-world deliberative forums in the study of citizen deliberation in order to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the phenomena.

In Article IV, along with my co-authors, I study the extent to which information provided about a citizen forum and a diverse set of arguments it considered when deliberating can assist voters in the wider public to become more empathetic towards people on the other side of a public policy debate. The objective is to test the first part of the theoretical chain, depicted in Figure 2 in this thesis, that is, the argument that interpersonal deliberation can evoke the feelings of empathic concern in citizens toward different others, at a macro level. Although participating in citizen deliberation has been found to generate more empathetic understanding towards others among participating citizens towards others, less is known about whether these effects also extend to non-participating individuals. To examine this question, we conducted a survey experiment with Irish citizens in the runup to the 2018 referendum on blasphemy. Findings show that exposure to the *pro and con arguments* that the deliberative forum considered during deliberations, exerted a positive and significant effect on the *empathetic concern* citizens in the wider public felt towards *others* with regard to a policy issue[5].

Article V is aimed at testing whether empathy can enhance people's reflectiveness in the absence of interpersonal deliberation, but in the presence of information about the target whose perspective is being taken. Although in previous articles (e.g. Article I and Article IV), I *measure* empathy, in this article, along with my co-author, I *manipulate* it *experimentally,* thus increasing the internal validity of my causal claim. A large survey experiment is conducted to examine the effect of perspective-taking on encouraging citizens to adopt a more reflective atttiudes. The main general finding of this study is that taking the perspective of someone with whom we disagree can enhance the reflectiveness of one's political reasoning and lead to a willingness to lay aside one's previous prior attitudes on the issue.

[5] Additionally, we also examined whether providing background information on the deliberative forum had an impact on individuals' knowledge gain.

Article VI provides a robustness test for the overall theoretical argument advanced in the thesis, by examining whether the mere exposure to counter-attitudinal views (without its emotional engagement component) could exert a similar positive effect on people's political reasoning. With the help of two studies (one experiment and one quasi experiment), I show empirically that without accounting for its emotional aspect, deliberation is unable to induce citizens to become more reflective in their political reasoning.

Overall, these articles demonstrate that interpersonal deliberation (whether conducted in face to face or in people's imagination) has the potential for motivating individuals to reflect more on their political attitudes.

## Contributions of the Thesis

First and foremost, the findings of this thesis contribute to both micro- and macro- studies of democratic deliberation. First, most of the micro-deliberation theories, and the empirical research on citizen deliberation has mainly focused on studying the external aspects of citizen deilberation (e.g. the quality of expressed arguments); and have largely neglected the question of how people form their attitudes on policy issues when they discuss them with different others in deliberative settings. Reflection has been at the center of theoretical debates about interpersonal deliberation (see Morrell, 2014 for a discussion of the literature), and constitutes one of the most desirable outcomes of structured deliberative forums (if not *the* most desirable one). Yet, theoretical and empirical scholarship on reflective reasoning remains inchoate; and largely tangential to the questions of under what conditions and by what processes interpersonal deliberation is able to induce people to become more reflective when making political decisions. To the best of my knowledge, my thesis is the first one that is exclusively dedicated to both the theoretical and the empirical study of the effect of interpersonal deliberation on the reflectiveness of people's political judgements. The only other studies are those by Tanasoca (2020) and Goodin (2003), both of which are theoretical in nature. My work builds on Robert Goodin's (2003) scholarship and expands on it *theoretically* by identifying a specific mechanism underlying reflection, and *empirically*, by investigating the proposed mechanism using a range of methodological approaches.

I put forward an empirically informed theoretical argument about the mechanism underlying the relationship between interpersonal deliberation and reflective judgements. I argue that deliberation prompts reflection in citizens' political thinking by engaging their emotions. This argument is categorically different from the major body of work on deliberation and deliberative democracy which has continuously focused on cognitive mechanisms, mainly the persuasive

power of arguments (reason-giving) as a potential pathway driving the reflection-inducing effect of interpersonal deliberation. Although I do not discount the role of reason-giving in my theory, I posit that all elements of deliberation, including reason-giving and learning, are permeated by the emotions citizen deliberators experience when engaging in interpersonal deliberation with different others. I place empathy and empathetic perspective-taking at the heart of these processes.

Second, although several empirical studies have mentioned reflection as a successful outcome of interpersonal deliberation either directly or tangentially, they have mainly focused on measuring 'attitude change' as a proxy for reflection (e.g. Fishkin 2009; but see, Colombo 2018). Recent scholarship has challenged this approach by arguing that opinion change *alone* cannot be relied upon when inferring reflection as a result of interpersonal deliberation (Baccaro, Bächtiger, and Deville 2016). In this thesis, I expand on these studies by using four different proxy measures to capture reflection as a result of interpersonal deliberation. Doing so allows me to shed a more nuanced light on the question of the relationship between interpersonal deliberation, reflection and attitude change from an empirical perspective.

Third, by building on cognitive and social psychology, I investigate the ways of scaling up the reflection-inducing effects of deliberation. I argue that in the absence of interpersonal deliberative encounters, empathetic perspective-taking may simulate imaginary and imaginative talk with different others in people's minds. In turn, this may exert a similar positive effect on the reflectiveness of their political thinking. I argue that if people could be fired with the imagination to employ this approach, it has the potential for being one of the most promising mechanisms for scaling up the reflection-inducing effects of deliberation. Further, I go beyond theorizing about this mechanism and test my predictions empirically. My empirical studies, with their unique research designs provide convincing support for my theoretical approach. Thereby, my work constitutes, to the best of my knowledge, the first scholarly work that bridges the micro and macro dimensions of reflection-inducing potential of deliberation under one coherent theoretical and empirical framework.

Fourth, the findings of this thesis offer valuable insights into the understanding of how democratic innovations, such as citizen forums, can improve the quality of contemporary democracies. There is currently an unprecedented rise in the number of citizen-centered democratic innovations are currently on an unprecedented rise (OECD 2020); governments and organizations are calling for and investing time and money in different national, regional and local deliberative forums to discuss and consider important policy issues, such as climate change,

abortion and COVID-19[6]. Shedding more light on how and via which channels deliberative forums influence the policy attitudes of citizen deliberators would strengthen our understanding of the advantages of citizen involvement in political decision-making. In a similar vein, we could isolate the elements of deliberation that are conducive to reflective political reasoning and embed them in other parts of the larger democratic system, such as referendums, media, education and electoral campaigns. Only after having sorted out the effects of different elements of deliberation in relation to its various deliberative goals/outcomes, '[could] empirical research […] enhance the capacity of deliberative theory to contribute to democratic society' (Mutz 2008, 531).

Fifth, this thesis speaks to the century-old scholarly discussion of what constitutes desirable political attitudes for democratic citizenry (Druckman 2012; Druckman, Peterson, and Slothuus 2013; Kuklinski and Quirk 2001). Prior literature has mainly focused on looking at the issues of consistency in attitudes, factual political knowledge and the use of heuristics when reasoning as proxies for capturing reflective citizenship (see Kuklinski and Quirk, 2001 for a review). In particular, political knowledge has been at the center of theoretical and empirical studies on good citizenship. More recently, however, scholars have questioned whether factual knowledge is a reliable indication of citizen competency (see for instance Druckman 2014); with some studies showing that the most informed citizens are actually the ones who are the most susceptible to biases in political reasoning (e.g. Bisgaard 2019). In this thesis, I show that one way of evaluating the quality of citizens' reasoning is to examine the extent to which they consider, and integrate the opposing perspectives in their political thinking processes. I further expand on this discussion by suggesting the ways of evoking such political reasoning in individuals. In doing so, this thesis follows the recommendation made by Druckman and colleagues (2013, 75) put forward a few years ago: '[I]f political scientists hope to play a role in promoting civic competence and coherent voting behavior, there needs to be […] increased conversations between empirical scholars and normative theorists'. This is exactly what I endeavored to do in this thesis: to make empirical scholarship talk to normative theories about political reasoning (see

[6] Among the most prominent and recent ones are the citizens' assemblies on climate change in the UK https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2020/september/climate-assembly-uk-new/, and France https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/10/citizens-panels-ready-help-macron-french-climate-policies, the citizens' assembly on COVID-19 recovery in Oregon https://healthydemocracy.org/ca/2020-oregon-covid/ and a US nation-wide Citizens' Panel on COVID-19 https://joinofbyfor.us/. See www.participedia.net for more information about deliberative forums taking place around the world.

also Colombo, 2018). More specifically, I integrate deliberative democratic theories, political science and social psychology to examine the effects of deliberative environments on reflectiveness of citizens' political judgements. My findings show that when the environment is fertile for engaging people's emotions, more specifically, empathy towards whom one disagrees with, most citizens are capable of engaging in more reflective political reasoning. This means that the tendency of citizens to think reflectively is dynamic, rather than static (see also Esterling, Neblo, and Lazer 2011; Druckman 2012); and when motivated, most citizens are capable of engaging in reflective political reasoning.

Finally, my empirical findings also speak to the latest scholarly debate on the positive versus negative effects of empathy for democratic citizenry (Morrell 2010; Bloom 2016; Simas, Clifford, and Kirkland 2019). A body of research in psychology and political science has shown that empathy, under optimal conditions, is conducive to positive intergroup relationships, such as a decrease in the level of intergroup prejudice and hostility and increased altruistic behavior (Batson 2017; Adida, Lo, and Platas 2018; Simonovitz, Kezdi, and Kardos 2018). Another strand of recent research, however, has argued that empathy is intrinsically partial and biased and can have far-reaching pernicious effects. Scudder (2016), for example, posits that the process of empathy is carried out 'selectively and unevenly depending on the relationship of the observer to the target' (531). Paul Bloom (2013, 2014, 2016) speculates that empathy stands in the way of human rationality. Due to its inherently biased nature, he argues, empathy clouds individuals' deliberative thinking. In a similar vein, Simas and colleagues (2019) have recently suggested that empathy leads to more, rather than less, affective polarisation. My thesis contributes to this debate with two main findings. First, I find that empathetic perspective-taking as the result of a deliberative environment has a strong motivational force for inducing more (not less) reflective political reasoning in individuals, that is, the type of reasoning that is normatively desirable. Second, I find that such an effect can be attained with the help of less demanding and simpler interventions – perspective-taking instructions.

## Scope Conditions

This section discusses the main scope conditions of this thesis. First, the micro part of the thesis is based on one type of deliberative forum, a citizens' assembly, and in one country context, Ireland. Although the core design features of deliberative forums are very similar (e.g. random or quasi-random choice of citizen deliberators, expert information followed by small-group and facilitated discussions), they also differ in some other design characteristics (e.g. the size of the forum, and its duration) (see Smith and Setälä 2018 for an excellent review). Ireland is a suitable

country context in which to explore the research questions posed, both because of its experience with seminal deliberative forums in recent years, and for a host of other reasons which I explore more in depth in Chapter 3 (Research Design). Yet, the country context and political consequentiality (or the lack thereof) of deliberative forums for real-world policy-making could interact with the design characteristics in influencing citizen deliberators' reasoning processes. I recognize, therefore, the limitations of focusing on a single country context to study micro deliberation, but understanding how the methods I use can be replicated to other contexts is a task for future research.

Second, the theory and the empirical studies in this thesis focus solely on the reflectiveness of *policy decisions*. They do not study political choices about *electoral candidates*. Focusing on policy decisions, however, does not imply that decisions about political candidates cannot be reflective. Nor does it mean that the theory advanced in this thesis is irrelevant to candidate choices. The reflectiveness of political decisions with regards to electoral candidates means that individuals are not automatically swayed by the candidate of their own party, but rather listen to and consider the policy proposals of the candidates from other parties, weigh up the pros and cons of not only preferred, but also unfamiliar and opposing information, before making up their minds. This also means that individuals are willing to override their previous candidate choice if the outcome of the reflection warrants it. In this thesis, it behooves us to focus on reasoning in relation to policy decisions mainly because the structured deliberative forums, from which the thesis takes its lead are convened to discuss policy issues, and not the electoral candidates[7].

Third, the ambition of this thesis is not to make an exhaustive list of and study all the potential ways in which citizens can be motivated to use reflection when making political judgements. Rather, I investigate the potential of interpersonal deliberation, be it within structured deliberative forums or in people's imaginations, for prompting citizens to be more reflective when making such judgements. In doing so, this thesis certainly does not discount the role of other kinds of conditions for inducing the normatively desired political reasoning in individuals (see, for example, Prior, Sood, and Khanna 2015; MacKuen et al. 2010a).

Fourth, none of the proxy measures I use to measure reflective reasoning is able to perfectly capture the cognitive and affective processes underlying individuals' political reasoning.

[7] An exception is a 2006 Greek deliberative polling, which was used by one of the Greece's major political parties, PASOK, with the objective of selecting the mayoral candidate for the Greek city of Marousi (https://participedia.net/case/40 ).

Therefore, as with any social science research, one should be careful in interpreting the results of this thesis as unquestionable evidence.

Moreover, there are several other conclusions that do *not* follow from the points I raise in this thesis. I do not argue that the mechanism I advance in the thesis – empathetic imagination – is the only mechanism underlying the relationship between interpersonal deliberation and reflective judgements. Instead, it is likely that different pathways function either in parallel, in conjunction or interact with each other during interpersonal deliberations. The systematic study of this falls well beyond the scope of this thesis.

In a similar vein, I do not claim that reflective reasoning is the only desired outcome of interpersonal deliberation. Bächtiger and Parkinson (2019, 28-36) provide a systematic overview of the end goals of deliberation and categorize them in five groups: epistemic (i.e. arriving at best possible answer) (Landemore 2013), ethical (i.e. generating mutual respect) (Gutmann and Thompson 1996), emancipatory (i.e. individuals creating their own spaces to participate) (Fraser 1992; Chambers 2009), transformative and clarifying (i.e. transformation of preferences and opinions, arriving at more reflective and democratically reasonable decisions) (Dryzek and List 2003), and legitimacy-oriented (i.e. deliberation having 'a clear connection to the rightful source of political authority' as well as 'decisions that have binding force' either directly or indirectly (Bächtiger and Parkinson, 2019, 35)) (Habermas 1996; Manin 1987)[8]. Reviewing each goal here is not the task at hand. My thesis is focused on *one* of these deliberative outcomes – reflective political judgements.

Finally, in my thesis I do not argue that empathy for the other side is a remedy for all kinds of biases in political reasoning. Nor do I posit that empathy is devoid of potential drawbacks. Granted, empathy is not perfect or always feasible. However, having understood its advantages and drawbacks, why not design institutions and interventions that could take advantage of the motivational force of empathy to prompt more reflection in people's political judgements whenever it is needed?

## Plan of the Thesis

This thesis is organized in two parts. Part I consists of five chapters (this introduction, theoretical framework, research design, the summary of six articles and conclusion), and Part II encompasses the articles that constitute the analytical core of this thesis.

[8] See Morrell (2014) for a slightly different categorisation of deliberative goals.

**Chapter 2** lays out the theory guiding this thesis. It begins by conceptualising reflective reasoning. In particular, I elaborate on the definition that is chosen for this thesis. Next, I situate my project in the existing literature within political psychology on individual and situational determinants of reflective reasoning, focusing in particular on motivational theories of reflection. Subsequently, I draw on deliberative democracy to develop my theory on the mechanism underlying the effect of deliberation on the reflectiveness of citizens' political judgements (micro aspect). I further discuss the scalability of this effect to the wider citizenry (macro aspect).

In **Chapter 3**, I elaborate on the methodological approach of the thesis. I start with a discussion on the mixed-methods research design, and the specific analytical approach chosen for this thesis. Additionally, I present an overview table of the articles, and the research questions, data and research designs guiding each article. Subsequently, the chapter concludes with a brief outline of each proxy measure for *reflective reasoning*, that was chosen for each article.

**Chapter 4** summarizes the six articles that test the theory empirically. It begins by focusing on the articles that address the micro aspect of the theory, and then moves on to the articles that test its macro aspect. Each summary outlines the main argument of the article, the method applied and the data used. Further, it briefly discusses the main findings. All six articles can be found in their entirety in Part II of the thesis.

**Chapter 5** is the conclusion and it discusses the main findings, suggesting new avenues for future research and proposing some applications in practice.

# Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

One of the favorite activities of scholars of public opinion has been to demonstrate over and over again that citizens in democracies lack the competence to form reflective judgements about politics (Druckman, 2012). People are misinformed about, and/or uninterested in politics (Kuklinski et al. 2000; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996); and their political reasoning is distorted by a range of cognitive biases and constraints (Kahneman 2011). When faced with opposing information, people neglect it and cling to their prior attitudes (Taber and Lodge 2006). People's emotional attachment to their favored political party makes them support their party and endorse party positions, irrespective of whether these positions reflect citizens' policy preferences or not (Mason 2018; Cohen 2003); and this effect is particularly acute among those who are best informed (Bisgaard 2019). It is aggravated further by the observation that people live in 'echo chambers': they socialize with people who share their political views; and are exposed to one-sided flows of information from the media, both of which contribute to reinforcing their prior opinions, rather than making them more reflective (Barberá et al. 2015).

Yet, these scholarly efforts to find flaws in people's political reasoning have not been paralleled with comparable efforts to understand *whether, and if so, under what conditions citizens are willing to engage in reflective political reasoning*, as opposed to non-reflective reasoning. This chapter develops a theoretical approach that endeavors to help fill in this gap in the literature. Before describing my theoretical argument, in the next section I discuss the definition of 'reflective reasoning' that is applied in this thesis.

## What is Reflection?

Reflective thinking happens when people utilize their thinking processes to consider and assimilate diverse and opposing perspectives on the issue in questionn, and weigh up the pros and cons before arriving at political decisions (Dewey 1933; Goodin 2003). This process also entails overriding one's prior attitudes *if* the outcome of the reflection warrants it (Stanovich 2011; Arceneaux and Vander Wielen 2017). In conceptualising reflection, I build upon democratic theory and the normative expectations about the ideal citizen (Dewey 1933; Habermas 1996; Mill 1974; Goodin and Niemeyer 2003). In particular, my definition encompasses the *collective* or *community* nature of democratic decisions. In the individual decision how to vote in an election or in a referendum, reflection entails individuals thinking hard about not only about what they wish for and for what reasons, but also 'what others want and why, and how those others' goals might articulate with their own' and 'tak[ing] due account of the

evidence and experience embodied in the beliefs of others' (Goodin 2000, 1). Because political choices affect not only the self but also the others (in some cases, more the latter than the former), the other-regarding element of reflection is essential in these processes. In Hannah Arendt's words, reflection[9] is about 'enlarg[ing] one's own thought so as to take into account the *thoughts of others*' (Arendt 1992, 42 emphasis is mine).

However, my use of the term 'reflection' is also distinct from the way in which some democratic theorists conceptualize it as strictly and exclusively 'non-private' and 'dialogical' (e.g. Mercier and Landemore 2012), failing to acknowledge and appreciate the monological nature of reflective reasoning processes.

My definition resembles to Robert Goodin's concept of 'deliberation within' and John Dewey's concept of 'moral deliberation', both of which emphasize the internal and 'imaginative' dimension of reflection. As far as John Dewey is concerned, reflection is a 'a dramatic rehearsal (in *imagination*) of various competing lines of action'; it is an '*experiment* in finding out what the various lines of possible action are really like' (Dewey 1922, 190; emphases are mine). In a similar vein, Robert Goodin posits that reflection is about making the others ' 'imaginatively present' in the minds of deliberators' (Goodin 2000, 83). In none of these accounts, however, is deliberation conceptualized as strictly private, and individual. The *imagination* dimension of reflection in both of these conceptualization makes reflection, in Shane Ralston's words (2010, 248), 'a shared monological-dialogical process[…]'.[10] Hannah Arendt's work on reflective judgements, when discussing Kant and his 'Critique of Judgement' is also akin to this type of conceptualization. In her opinion, reflective thinking, 'while still a solitary business, does not cut itself off from 'all others", although it 'till goes on in isolation', 'the force of imagination […] makes the others present and thus moves in a space that is potentially public' (1989, 43). Similar to these works, I conceptualize reflection as having both monological and dialogical components.[11]

Reflection is usually equated with other concepts across different disciplines, such as *critical thinking* and *rational reasoning*. Similar to critical thinking, reflection also requires a sceptical attitude when assessing information and viewpoints. However, reflection goes beyond scepticism

[9] Arendt calls it 'enlarged mentality'.

[10] I develop these thoughts more in the last section of this chapter.

[11] It is important to note that reflection does not require additional and complex sets of information or knowledge. It cannot be equated, for example, with political sophistication or political knowledge.

and entails systematically considering, incorporating and weighing up opposing perspectives on the issue in question. Rationality is 'the optimization of individual's goal fulfilment' (Stanovich 2011, 6). The concept of rationality in this account is individualistic and devoid of the collective component of decision-making, whereas reflection is more other-regarding.

I counter-pose 'reflective reasoning' with 'non-reflective reasoning'. Non-reflective reasoning occurs when individuals seek out and use information and arguments that are consistent with their prior beliefs and actively neglect those that contradict them (Leeper and Mullinix 2018). In other words, when thinking non-reflectively, individuals do *not* consider and integrate the viewpoints of those with whom they disagree into their reasoning processes. Nor are they willing to lay aside their previously-held views on a political matter.

## Individual Differences in Reflection

Is reflection possible? Who reflects and who does not? Previous research suggests that there are differences in individuals' ability and willingness to engage in reflective political reasoning. Lavine et al. (2012) demonstrate via different experimental and survey data that ambivalent partisans (as opposed to their univalent counterparts), e.g. those citizens who trust their party less, are less prone to engage in biased reasoning when making decisions about candidates, policy issues or political events. Instead, they are more motivated to engage in a kind of reasoning that 'approximate[s] the type of critical, systematic, and open-minded thought praised by democratic theorists' (Lavine et al. 2012, 6).

Another individual trait important for reflection is actively open-minded thinking (AOT), which endeavours to capture the tendency of individuals to be open to competing viewpoints and arguments (Baron 2018). The research finds that those individuals who score high on AOT, the research finds, are more prone to actively seek reasons contradicting their own thinking and yield to the evidence, for example, by shifting their attitudes on an issue.

Arceneaux and Van der Wielen (2017) have recently proposed another trait-level variable, *dispositional reflection*, which captures people's willingness to override their prior beliefs and attitudes. They define dispositional reflection as being at the intersection of two measures of cognitive style, need for affect (NFA) (i.e. differences in the tendency to avoid or embrace emotion-laden situations) and need for cognition (NFC) (differences in the inclination to enjoy effortful cognitive activities). Reflective citizens are those who score low in NFA and high in NFC, whereas those who are non-reflective score high in NFA and low in NFC. Arceneaux and

Van der Wielen (2017) find that reflection reduces partisan-motivated reasoning and contributes to democratic accountability.

These studies have advanced the scholarship on political reasoning substantially, most importantly, by showing that people do not make political decisions in a uniform way and by offering new insights into the question of why some people have a tendency to make more reflective political judgements than others. Nonetheless, we still know remarkably little about *whether* and *if so, under what conditions* citizens can be prompted to be more reflective in their judgements, irrespective of their individual dispositions.

## Motivational Theories of Reflection

Is it possible to get people to engage in reflective political reasoning? The so-called 'meliorists', the scholars who work under the assumption that people's reasoning in real life (descriptive reasoning) is not as good as normatively desired (normative reasoning), argue that this shortcoming can be fixed (prescriptive reasoning) (Stanovich 2011). Supporters suggest that 'the prescriptive, if not identical to the normative, is at least quite close' (Stanovich 1999, 7). Meliorists suggest two different ways via which people can be encouraged to become reflective in their reasoning: cognitive change and environmental change (Stanovich 2011). The first strategy relies on education. The argument is that people can, and indeed should, be taught how to think reflectively and how to make better decisions (Baron 2018; Dewey 1933). The possibility of learning how to think well builds on the assumption that people's thinking is 'influenced by [their] beliefs about how [they] ought to think' (Baron 1991, 184). Most people hold specific thinking standards, which diverge substantively from ideal standards of thinking (Baron 1991). These beliefs may include statements such as, 'changing one's mind is a sign of weakness', 'being open to alternatives leads to confusion and despair', or 'quick decision-making is a sign of wisdom or expertise'; and may hinder people's engagement in reflective thinking (Baron 1991, 176). Education, as the argument goes, can persuade individuals to modify these standards, and, thereby make them think more reflectively (Baron 2018; see also Dewey 1933).

The second strategy refers to the possibility of *motivating* citizens to think reflectively by changing their environment (Stanovich 2011; Kuklinski et al. 2001). It builds on the assumption that to be able to make higher-quality political judgements, citizens should 'possess the requisite motivation or tools' (Barker and Hansen 2005, 324). A motivation is 'an incentive, or a drive, to do something' (Ryfe 2005, 56). The focus on these studies thus is not on whether people have adequate or sufficient information to reason reflectively, but 'whether they are sufficiently motivated to analyse new information in an even-handed way' (Druckman 2012, 199; Kunda

1990). Taber and Lodge (2006) argue that people are motivated either by directional or accuracy goals. When a person is motivated by a directional goal, they behave with an objective of defending prior attitudes and thereby processes and integrate newly-acquired information in a biased, rather than a reflective manner. Within this literature, this type of reasoning is called motivated reasoning. When motivated by accuracy goals, on the other hand, the person engages in a more even-handed and reflective reasoning with an objective of forming a preference which is 'correct or otherwise best conclusion' (Taber and Lodge 2006, 756; Kunda 1990). Their empirical studies show that people mostly engage in directional goals and thus their political attitudes are biased and unreflective.

Counter to these pessimistic findings, another strand of literature shows that different environments (sometimes called *situational* or *contextual* factors) can have differential effects on citizens' motivation to reflect on their political judgements (Esterling, Neblo, and Lazer 2011; Bächtiger et al. 2018; Kuklinski et al. 2001; Colombo 2018). For instance, a number of experiments show that informing subjects that their justifications for their viewpoints will be made public (i.e. holding them accountable for the viewpoints) can make people process political information in a more self-critical and reflective way (Tetlock 1983; Tetlock and Kim 1987). Paying people to be accurate in their judgements can sometimes have a similar effect (Bullock et al. 2015; Prior, Sood, and Khanna 2015). Bolsen et al. (2014) find that motivated reasoning can be attenuated by instructing people to form 'accurate judgements', or cuing them with cross-partisan support for the policy. Exposure to cross-cutting views via neighbourhoods and workplaces can have a similar effect on the quality of citizens' political reasoning (e.g. Mutz and Mondak 2006). Even the mere fact of taking a survey can enhance considerateness of citizens' political judgements (Fournier et al. 2011). All these studies suggest that under adequate conditions people can be motivated to think reflectively.

Proponents of deliberative democracy argue that interpersonal deliberation provides precisely such a fertile condition. Deliberation is defined as an interpersonal political discussion about the matters of public concern, conducted in an environment of mutual respect and equal status (Bächtiger et al. 2018, 2). Deliberation with others have long been equated with accuracy motivation. David Ryfe argues that interpersonal deliberation provides 'a disturbance of everyday reasoning habits' for citizens, 'tak[es] people out of their comfort zones' and motivates them to 'overcome historical, structural and psychological impediments to intentional reflection' (2005, 56; see also Esterling, Neblo and Lazer 2011 for a similar argument).

Scholars argue that when citizens engage in interpersonal deliberation, be it during every-day talk (Mansbridge 1999; Mutz 2002), structured citizen assemblies (Suiter, Farrell, and O'Malley 2016; Warren and Pearse 2008), deliberative polls (Fishkin 2009; Luskin et al. 2002; Kim, Fishkin, and Luskin 2018), citizens' juries (Ward 1999; Smith and Wales 2000), citizens' initiative reviews (Gastil, Richards, and Knobloch 2014; Warren and Gastil 2015) or small group discussion experiments (Setälä, Grönlund, and Herne 2010; Christensen, Himmelroos, and Grönlund 2017; Caluwaerts and Deschouwer 2014) they reason and form their attitudes on the issue in more self-critical, and reflective ways. In John Gastil's (2008) words, 'When people deliberate, they carefully examine a problem and arrive at a well-reasoned solution after a period of inclusive, respectful consideration of diverse points of view' (p. 8).

The positive effect of deliberation on reflectiveness of political decisions is enabled, as some argue, by particular deliberative 'institutional designs […] [which] compensate for well-known cognitive and emotional biases' (Bächtiger, et al. 2018, 21) and 'interrupt some psychological tendencies, such as low levels of knowledge, lack of meaningful opinions or equivalence framing effects' (Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2018, 540). Empirical research provides some support for this claim (Luskin et al. 2002; Barabas 2004; Fishkin 2009; Fishkin and Luskin 2005; Niemeyer and Dryzek 2007; Farrar, Green, and Nickerson 2009). For instance, experiments on deliberative polling, organized by James Fishkin and colleagues, show that deliberation with others leads to substantive opinion transformation, the proxy which has been equated with reflective judgements in the extant literature[12]. Esterling, Neblo and Lazer (2011) conducted an online randomized field experiment in deliberation between some members of the US House of Representatives and the constituents. Their findings demonstrate that citizens who participated in online deliberative sessions with the representatives had a greater 'willingness and a capacity to become informed', thereby providing some empirical evidence for the motivating effect of deliberation (Esterling et al. 2011, 499). In a similar vein, other scholars show that citizens' political attitudes become more cognitively complex (Jennstål 2019; Colombo 2018) and better aligned with their values and beliefs (Niemeyer 2019) post-deliberation. There is, however, uncertainty as to why this effect comes about.

[12] The adequacy of using attitude change as a proxy for capturing reflective processes which citizen deliberators engage, however, has recently been challenged (Gerber et al. 2014).

## Interpersonal Deliberation as Reflection-Inducer

What is it about interpersonal deliberation that motivates people to engage in more demanding type of reasoning, reflection? Despite the observed 'empirical turn' within the scholarship of deliberative democracy, we have yet to learn more about the conditions that facilitate the processes of reflective judgements during deliberations. Most theories of deliberation tell us how and via which channels deliberation should motivate citizens and little on how it does in practice.

Deliberative democrats have so far treated deliberation as a black-box (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019). Deliberation, and in particular, its formal and structured type (e.g. Deliberative Polling, Experiments in Deliberation, Citizens' Assemblies), is one big complex 'treatment', comprising of many different elements, such as expert communication, pre-deliberation informational handouts, discussion, social interaction and so forth (Muradova 2020). Most empirical research has so far used it as an input, while being interested in such outputs as post-deliberation changes in attitudes. Many of these studies, do not specify and examine how and why each component of deliberation is necessary and how these components are linked to the outcome, such as reflective decisions. In Diana Mutz's (2008, 530) words, '[To] date, the 'black box' of deliberation has been […] a morass of necessary and sufficient conditions all thrown together, without specification of why each of these various components is necessary, nor theory that links each of them to a specified desirable outcome'. This brings us to one of the research questions leading this chapter: How does deliberation lead to reflection in citizens' political thinking? In other words, what are the causal mechanisms of the theorized relationship?

Two mutually non-exclusive mechanisms are predominant in theoretical accounts of deliberation: reason-giving and information acquisition.

## Reason-giving

The most prevalent theoretical explanation incorporates different versions of the famous Habermasian phrase of 'the unforced force of the better argument' (1996, 306; 1975, 108), which is commonly called - *reason-giving* - in the extant literature. Cohen defines reason-giving as 'stat[ing] reasons for advancing proposals, supporting them, or criticizing them' (Cohen 1997, 347). Under the right deliberative conditions, theorists predict, deliberating citizens should construct and express arguments which 'consist of carefully constructed links between premises and conclusions' (Bächtiger and Parkinson 2019, 5). In their strict versions, arguments and justifications for the claims should also be generalizable, that is, acceptable to others and address the common good (Bohman 1996; Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Habermas 1984; Chambers

1996; Dryzek and List 2003). This reason-giving process should in turn mediate the effect of deliberation on reflectiveness of citizens' political decisions (Dryzek 2000; Chambers 2018). Rational arguments that people share during deliberations should lead people to 'become aware of the conflicts inherent in their own desires' and make them see 'new perspectives not only with respect to possible solutions, but also with respect to their own preferences' (Manin 1987, 350). As a result, the argument goes, better arguments should drive reflection and opinion change in deliberation.

Empirical research, however, has been slow to catch up with these theoretical accounts, apart from a few studies. Working definitions of what *unforced force of the better argument* means and micro theories of how this process happens in practice are scarce. There is also a dearth of empirical research testing this claim. Measurement-wise, the only systematic work up to now is the discourse quality index (DQI), created by Steenbergen and colleagues (2003)[13]. The measure (partially) accounts for the justification and argumentation part of the deliberation and has been widely used in the extant literature. However, it has been subject to important critiques recently for its inability to account for important contextual factors and to capture important variance in the quality of reason giving during deliberations across different parts of the democratic system (see Bächtiger and Parkinson, 2019). In a similar vein, few studies that have made an effort to study the reason-giving dimension of deliberation empirically have yielded mixed and inconclusive results.

For example, atlhough Westwood (2015) finds that well-justified arguments are positively related to the opinion change observed, Gerber and colleagues (2014) show that the theorized relationship between the quality of arguments and post-deliberative attitudes holds true only in one of two policy issues. Whereas on the issue of irregular immigrants, people's attitudes are driven by the quality of arguments, on the issue of European involvement in immigration affairs, they are driven by non-deliberative persuasion, e.g. repetition of positions (Gerber et al. 2014, 412). Similarly, Caluwaerts and Reuchamps (2014), in the context of two experiments in

[13] DQI is a content analytical measure, which encompasses four important characteristics of normatively desirable discourse: level of justification, content of justification, respect and reciprocity.

deliberation in Belgium show that the composition of deliberating groups matters more than its deliberative quality[14].

Thus, whether the reason-giving is the responsible mechanism for reflective judgements has not been robustly corroborated in the extant empirical research. This, of course, could be due to different factors. First, the lack of effect may be the consequence of poor measurement. In other words, if DQI and other existing proxies for argument quality cannot capture the concept satisfactorily, any research applying these proxies may yield biased and incorrect findings. Second, deliberation examined in these studies may not be the near-perfect approximation of good deliberation and thereby, the inferences may be faulty.

## Informational Effects

As well as reason-giving, the second prevalent mechanism that has been widely theorized in the literature is called *informational effects*. Expert communication is an important part of the institutional format of structured interpersonal deliberative forums. Experts from different sides of the discussed issue present their viewpoints and arguments to deliberating citizens, who, in turn, are given the opportunity to ask clarifying questions. Expert presentations are usually followed by group deliberations, where citizens deliberate about the issue from different angles, and learn from each other. The assumption related to information effects is that people acquire factual and non-factual information either from experts or from other deliberating citizens during deliberative events, which feed into their reasoning processes and force them to reflect upon their previous views, by weighing up the arguments carefully.

This mechanism has affinities with the first mechanism. Information can be acquired by listening to convincing arguments. List (2018) argues that one of the ways in which people may come to change their attitudes on the issue post-deliberation is when they learn and realize that their prior beliefs 'have implications they had not previously noticed'. This realization, as the story goes, in turn, prompts a process akin to reflection, 'a reflective equilibrium', which involves participants either deciding 'to endorse these hitherto unrecognised implications', or 'revise some of their beliefs in order to avoid any unwanted implications' (List 2018, 481). Even though information can be connected to argument and reason-giving, I believe it is also sufficiently different from

[14] They measure the deliberative quality with DQI. The authors find that irrespective of deliberative quality of discussions, the group composition, operationalised as the presence of outgroup perspectives in a deliberating group has the largest effect on deliberating citizens' attitude formation.

the first mechanism to warrant treating it differently. While the first mechanism relies on persuasive power of arguments, the informational effect mechanism captures mere information gain about facts or different perspectives.

There is some empirical evidence in support of the claim that information acquisition may drive reflection inducing effects of deliberation. Barabas (2004) argues that interpersonal deliberation improves factual knowledge, which, in turn leads citizens to arrive at more enlightened attitudes (688). He uses Bayes' rule to demonstrate opinion transformation, motivated by deliberation. Prior opinions, according to the theory, is updated as a function of newly-acquired information, which refers to not only facts but also perspectives. Opinion revision is contingent on the 'precision of the information', for instance its clarity (Barabas 2004, 689). He finds some support for his theory, although his findings also show that transformation of attitudes depend on the procedural conditions of the deliberation. Similarly, in the context of a deliberative poll that took place in Britain, Luskin and colleagues (2002) show that post-deliberation opinion transformation is (at least partially) driven by knowledge acquisition. Other scholars, however, find no support for this claim (see, for example, Sanders 2012).

Yet, others show that when the different elements and stages of deliberation are carefully disentangled, it is possible to see that the information gain observed is not always acquired during deliberation. People may acquire new information in the anticipation of participating in a deliberative event (Esterling, Neblo, and Lazer 2011; Farrar, Green, and Nickerson 2009; Goodin and Niemeyer 2003). Esterling and colleagues (2011) show that the main source of knowledge gain among participants of deliberation is people's 'increased attention to policy outside the context of the experiment' (483). Similarly, in the context of a citizens' jury considering the environment in Australia, Goodin and Nimeyer (2003) find that information gains at the pre-discursive stage of a deliberative event were responsible for observed transformations. Muhlberger (2005) applies a unique design that tries to disentangle the effect of information from the effect of interpersonal deliberation on people's political attitudes and finds that it is the *reading materials part* (not the discussion element) that leads to changes in subjects' policy attitudes.

In sum, none of these predominantly theorized mechanisms have strong empirical support, which leaves the question of 'What drives reflective judgements in deliberation?' unanswered. In other words, *other dynamics* may be happening in deliberative settings, either in combination with reason-giving and informational gains, or separate from them. This PhD project aims to shed light on these dynamics.

# My Theoretical Approach: The Role of Emotional Engagement in Deliberation

'I've learned that people will forget what you said; people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. '
*Maya Angelou*

As described above, theories of deliberative democracy, particularly those of the 'first generation' (Bächtiger et al. 2010) have either explicitly or implicitly assume that deliberating citizens arrive at more reflective political choices by bowing to the force of the better argument, by gaining new information from the experts or each other, and thus via a conscious thought. The past few decades of neuroscience literature, however, challenges this assumption, by showing that much of the thinking and decision-making undertaken by humans occur through non-conscious means and are heavily influenced by experienced emotions (Bargh and Chartrand 1999; Arceneaux and Vander Wielen 2017).

Furthermore, most theories of deliberative democracy also 'fail to attend to the emotional dimension of interpersonal relations' (Rosenberg 2007), for example, largely neglecting the role of emotions in people's opinion formation during and beyond deliberative communications. This does not mean, of course, that the word 'emotion' has not featured in the scholarship. Quite the contrary. Some claim that we are experiencing the so-called 'affective turn' in deliberation (Johnson, Morrell, and Black 2019, 2169). Increasingly, deliberative democrats have started talking about the role of 'emotions' in their theories in response to the critiques emanating from difference, feminist and agonistic democrats, who have argued that deliberative theories have disadvantaged women, the working class and minorities because of their sole focus on the abstract and neutral language of reason giving (Fraser 1992; Mansbridge 1999; Sanders 1997; Young 2000)[15]. However, deliberative democracy has approached emotions from a purely discursive perspective: something that is expressed, rather than felt and experienced. When mentioning emotions, scholars have typically restricted themselves to discussing specific types of communicative argumentation, such as story-telling, narratives, rhetoric, greetings and testimonies (Neblo 2015; Bächtiger et al. 2010; Polletta and Gardner 2018; Steiner et al. 2017; Black 2008; Boswell 2013). Furthermore, even these accounts have almost always added a disclaimer that because of their potentially coercive nature, ultimately emotions should be restrained and subject to reason (Dryzek 2000, 52-53). Consider Parthasarathy and Rao's

[15] For example, in a simple Google Scholar search for the key words relating to 'deliberative democracy', 'deliberation' and 'emotion' yields around 27,900 results (12 October, 2020).

argument (2018, 813) that emotions 'can […] disrupt the ability of *gram sabhas* to make rational collective decisions'. Similarly, Curato (2019) has recently argued that despite their potential for enabling marginalized political claims to be expressed, emotions can have pernicious effect, for example, by engendering 'hierarchies of misery that renders some forms of suffering more deserving of compassion than others'. Consider as well, what Griffin (2012, 521–22) argues in relation to John Dryzek's account of emotions in deliberation.

> 'Dyzek's account […] represents a lingering concern about the authority of emotions in the deliberative process. He warns that 'emotion can be coercive, which is why in the end it must answer to reason' ([Dryzek, 2010], 52-53). It is important to him that reason is still called upon as a distinct faculty to keep these potentially immoral and destructive emotions in check.'

In a similar vein, in discussing the works by Young (1996) and Sanders (1997), Hall (2007) suggests that while explicitly advocating against the reason-emotion dichotomy in deliberation, Young and Sanders paradoxically enforce this contrast themselves, by drawing a clear distinction between deliberative and non-deliberative forms of communication. 'Rather than challenging existing rationalist norms of deliberation by arguing that deliberation is *already* a process that makes use of passion', Hall (2007) posits, 'Young and Sanders argue that in order to bring passion in the picture democracy must allow for other forms of communication than deliberation' (Hall 2007, 86). Thus the common pattern to much of these works is a very cautious incorporation of emotions in deliberation. Some of these views also either explicitly or implicitly purport that emotions are secondary to reasoning, as if the latter can be separated from the former in practice (Marcus 2000).

This is paradoxical, because a body of research across disciplines from psychology to neuroscience has demonstrated that emotions precede and influence the information processing, and the decision-making in human beings (Damasio 1994; Lerner et al. 2015; Loewenstein et al. 2001). However, there are some exceptions. Sharon Krause (2008), for instance, re-conceptualises deliberation by arguing that citizens deliberate fueled by passion. She further emphasizes the role of one specific emotion – sympathy – in moral sentiment of deliberating citizens by suggesting that sympathy can encourage the communication of sentiments and activate 'responsibility for others in the sense most relevant for moral evaluation' (135). Michael Morrell (2010) places empathy at the heart of deliberative democracy, and emphasizes its benefits for democratic citizenship.

None of these accounts, however, advance micro-theories of what kinds of emotions people experience during deliberation and the extent to which these emotions affect the ways in which people process information and apply reasoning to issues under discussion (Neblo 2020). In other words, we lack generalizable theories that link emotions to deliberation and reflection in predictable and empirically testable ways.

With the objective of contributing to this gap, in this thesis, I construct a theoretical approach positing that well-organized interpersonal deliberation prompts *emotional engagement* in citizens, which, in turn, motivates them to take part in a demanding process of reflection when making political decisions. All other elements of deliberation, such as reason-giving, learning and listening are permeated and shaped by deliberating citizens' emotional engagement[16].

Before I elucidate my theory on emotional engagement, and describe how it motivates reflective reasoning among citizens during interpersonal deliberation, I briefly define 'emotions' for the purpose of this thesis. Many different definitions of emotion exist within emotion research across a whole variety of disciplines. Emotions can be trait-level or state-level (i.e. situation-level). For instance, a person could be anxious by nature (trait-level), or they could be made anxious by circumstances (state-level). Here, I am interested in state-level emotions, more specifically, those induced by deliberative encounters. Yet, I am aware that trait-level emotions may have an effect on state-level experiences of emotions. For example, a given situation may activate empathic concern (state-level) in individuals, which could be experienced more strongly by someone who is by nature more empathetic (trait-level). Furthermore, emotions have several different components. A strong motivational component, that is, individuals' tendency to act according to their emotions, is one of them. Others include, a cognitive component (appraisal), a subjective feeling (the experience of the emotion), a motor expression component (facial and vocal expression) and a neurophysiological component (bodily symptoms) (Mulligan and Scherer 2012, 352). Motivational force of emotions induces 'states of action readiness […] to help organisms adapt [to] or to deal with important events in their lives' (Mulligan and Scherer 2012, 352). For instance, if we see someone crying, the felt sympathy urges us to approach them and

[16] An important disclaimer here is that the objective of this theory is not to explain a normative question of how deliberation should induce reflection, but rather an empirical question of how it does so in practice. To put it differently, I am not arguing that emotions should be a part of deliberation, but rather that they already are and neglecting them hinders our understanding of what happens when people deliberate with each other.

ask if they need help. Because of this motivational force, emotions have been found to be important drivers of political attitudes and behavior. In sum, consistent with Michael Neblo (2020,1), I define emotions as 'felt, situational evaluations that motivate action' .

In this thesis, I conceptualize emotional engagement *as deliberating people's affective reactions to the environment (i.e. deliberative setting), to each other, each other's arguments and perspectives and to the information received.* Emotional engagement as a result of deliberation incorporates emotional bonding, empathetic understanding, and the feelings of common purpose and collective identity (Rosenberg 2007; Felicetti et al. 2012; Hartz-Karp et al. 2010).

My theoretical approach starts with an assumption that face-to-face deliberation is first and foremost a social event, where human emotions take centre stage. Meeting strangers in one room, facing unfamiliar circumstances, getting to know each other, starting small talks, sharing food and beverages, in addition to other important elements of deliberation, such as deliberating with others, learning and listening, are all social interactive elements which contribute to, and facilitate, the processes of bond-making and trust-building. Spending more time with each other also motivates people to open up about their own personal lives, and connect the expressed arguments and perspectives to their daily lives and the lives of those they know. Good deliberation advances a positive atmosphere, where people feel enjoyment, enthusiasm and satisfaction (Johnson, Morrell, and Black 2019; Curato, Niemeyer, and Dryzek 2013, 2)[17], which may facilitate feelings of belonginess to a group and development of shared identity during deliberations (Mansbridge et al. 2006; Rosenberg 2007). Prior research finds that people experience a range of emotions 'on behalf of their group' (Groenendyk 2011, 456). Group emotions, Groenendyk (2011) argues, act as 'an override switch that breaks individuals out of self-interested behavior and promotes behaviour on behalf of a salient group.' (456) In other words, group emotions have a powerful potential to motivate collective action. Furthermore, forging a shared identity during deliberations is important when discussing divisive issues across a range of differences within a deliberating group (Barber 1984; Mansbridge 1983). Hartz-Karp

[17] Curato et al. (2013) question the value of this 'positive' or as it is otherwise called 'appreciative inquiry' approach to deliberation; and argue that although deliberation may need both positive and contestatory types of dialogue, it may need them at different stages of the deliberation. In fact, as the story goes, too much emphasis on maintaining a positive discursive environment during deliberations can have a pernicious effect on deliberative outcomes, if they are not used to prompt an honest, and critical discussion about contentious issues. Future research should study this claim empirically.

and colleagues (2010, 368), for example, find that constructing a 'shared identity may be vital to enhancing participants' understanding of the "common good"'.

I argue that a key to understanding interpersonal deliberation, is to recognize that all other elements of it, such as reason-giving, listening, learning and reflecting during deliberation, cannot be detached from the effects produced by emotional bonding, empathy and the building of trust, all three of which are engendered by interpersonal deliberation. Emotional engagement is the precursor to other elements of deliberation, such as learning and argumentative persuasion. It motivates people to learn, listen, respond and reflect.

A growing body of work within psychology and neuroscience shows that emotions affect how we process political information and how we reason about politics (Marcus, 2000). One of the most important findings is that emotions precede and influence information processing, and decision-making (Damasio 1994; Lerner et al. 2015; Loewenstein, O'Donoghue, and Bhatia 2015; Brader and Marcus 2013). Much of this research has confirmed the existence of the dual-process models of reasoning, where 'a person's behaviour is the joint product of a deliberative system that assesses options in a consequentialist fashion and an affective system that encompasses emotions' (Loewenstein et al. 2001, 56). Reasoning is seen as the product of two closely interlinked processes, the intuitive, automatic or system 1 and deliberative, rational or system 2, with emotions being involved in both of these systems (Haidt 2001; Arceneaux and Vander Wielen 2017). In these works, affect and reason are conceptualized 'as two complementary mental states in a delicate, interactive, highly functional dynamic balance' (Marcus et al., 2000, p. 8). Based on this framework, scholars argue that citizens usually rely on their habits when making political decisions (system 1), unless something novel intrudes their world (system 2). It is the degree of novelty, signaled by a heightened sense of emotions that makes the difference with regard to people's controlled reasoning (Marcus, Neuman, and MacKuen 2000). Building on this framework, previous literature found that emotions can provide information about an object, the environment, people or groups. For instance, if the object evokes positive emotions in an individual, their judgement about the object tends to be positive, and vice versa (Marcus, 2000 for a review). Emotions also affect political information processing, by regulating people's attentiveness to specific political information and their engagement. An increasing body of research shows that anxiety is linked to people's tendency to seek more information; rely less on party identification or ideology as a heuristic and consider characteristics of policy proposals and the candidates when making political decisions (MacKuen et al. 2010; Huddy, Mason, and Aarøe 2015). In other words, emotions are important for well-though-out political decisions. Prior research has identified in particular the role of anxiety and

enthusiasm for these processes, while the role of other emotions, such as empathy, joy, frustration, guilt or pride, has not been explored. What kind of emotions are important for reflection and how do these processes operate in deliberative settings?

## Empathy

> You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view…
> until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.
> Atticus Finch to his daughter in *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee

In this thesis, I argue that one key emotion that is activated by deliberation and is essential for reflective reasoning is empathy. Some scholars conceive of empathy as an emotional response 'that is identical, or very similar, to what the other person is feeling or might be expected to feel given the context – a response stemming from an understanding of another's emotional state or condition' (Eisenberg, Eggum, and Di Giunta 2010, 3), whereas others define it primarily as a cognitive concept, such as taking the other person's perspective or role, and trying to see the world how the other person sees it (Mead 1934; Nussbaum 2001; Todd and Galinsky 2014). The growing tendency among scholars, however, is to understand empathy as a multidimensional construct encompassing both affective and cognitive dimensions (Morrell 2010; Davis 1994). I distinguish between two types of empathy: *perspective-taking*, a cognitive dimension of empathy, which entails actively imagining the feelings, thoughts and lives of the other; and *empathic concern*, which encompass the feelings of warmth and concern felt toward the other. Whereas perspective-taking is conscious and voluntary, empathic concern is automatic and unconscious.

Although it may be literally impossible to 'climb into someone else's skin and walk around in it', as suggested in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, humans are capable of imagining the world from someone else's vantage point. Empathy is a valuable prosocial emotion for understanding others' lives and feelings. Its positive link to morality has long been argued by great philosophers, such as Hume (1978[1739]) and Smith (1759). Empirically, prior research finds that empathy reduces biases and prejudices at the individual level (e.g. Batson, Early, and Salvarani 1997); increases flexibility in negotiations (e.g. Ross 1993) and is highly beneficial for conflict management (see Todd and Galinsky 2014 for a review). Thus it is not difficult to conjecture about its potential benefits for deliberation and reflection. Although its effect on other individual and social outcomes, such as in-group biases, prejudices and altruism, has previously been studied, its effect on political thinking has been underexplored.

Empathy is also one of the emotions that has attracted the attention of deliberative democrats the most. For example, building on Habermas (1996), Simone Chambers suggests that interpersonal deliberation necessitates 'putting oneself in the position of the other and trying to see the situation from her perspective' (Chambers 1996, 100). In a similar vein, Mansbridge and colleagues (2010, 67) argue that mutual respect in deliberation necessitates 'extending toward the other participants an empathy that attends to commonalities and differences'. Deliberation requires not only 'recognise[ing] the integrity of the other', Shawn Rosenberg (2007) argues, but also 'car[ing] about that person,[…] empathis[ing] with her position and […] mak[ing] that other person's pains and pleasures one's own.' (see also Neblo 2020; Morrell 2010). This type of caring can provide a powerful motivational force for individuals to lay aside their individualistic and egoistic reasoning and engage in more reflective thinking, by incorporating others' perspectives and arguments into their decision-making processes.

In this thesis, I argue that interpersonal deliberation provides a fertile environment that facilitates the kind of empathetic engagement that enables deliberating citizens to connect with each other, with their perspectives and experiences. By bringing together people with diverse life experiences, and giving them an opportunity to discuss the issues of common concern via communicative types that they feel comfortable with, i.e. be it rational argumentation or personal stories, deliberation induces the processes of empathic perspective-taking in deliberating citizens.

Research in psychology shows that empathetic perspective-taking, that is, *imagining the world from someone else's vantage point*, decreases egocentric thinking in people's judgements and decisions and prompts more self-critical reflective reasoning (Batson et al. 2003; Batson, Early, and Salvarani 1997; Todd and Galinsky 2014). Several mechanisms have been proposed. Actively taking a someone else's perspective may result in discovering shared similarities between the perspective taker and the target, whose perspective is being taken. As a result one may perceive oneself as being more like the other, or perceive the other to be more like themselves (Erle and Topolinski 2017). The process of empathetic imaginings could also activate more positive explicit and implicit evaluations of others (i.e. more liking) (Galinsky and Ku 2004; Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000; Todd and Burgmer 2013; Erle and Topolinski 2017). Other scholars emphasize the potential of perspective-taking for prompting feelings of empathetic concern in individuals (Batson et al. 1997) and the motivational force of the empathic concern to prompt more reflective thinking. Whichever is the causal pathway, empathetic perspective-taking 'may create an increased awareness and understanding in citizen deliberators of others' lives and perspectives'; and 'in this dawning of this awareness, people may be motivated to engage in reflective reasoning' (Muradova 2020a, 5).

The subsequent question that arises is why deliberative forums are capable of prompting perspective-taking in citizens? I focus on one particular type of interpersonal deliberation in answering this question: deliberative forums, or otherwise called minipublics, precisely because they are considered to be the prototypes of the near-perfect deliberation, the deliberation that approximates the normative ideals. Deliberative minipublics are institutions that bring together a randomly chosen diverse group of people to talk about socio-political issues of common concern (Smith and Setälä 2018). Their design is governed by normative ideals of what a good deliberation should look like. Although there are several different types of minipublics (i.e. deliberative polling, citizens' assemblies, citizens' juries, consensus conferences) and they differ in their design features, their core characteristics remain the same: (a) a random or near-random group of citizens are convened to deliberate; (b) experts are invited to present evidence on the issue in question; (c) small group discussions are usually facilitated and moderated; and (d) participants are expected to express their viewpoints with justifications for their claims, and listen attentively to those put forth by others (Farrell et al. 2019; OECD 2020). In some of these minipublics, deliberating participants are also expected to vote at the end of the deliberations, and make specific policy recommendations to policy makers.

Going back to the research question of what makes deliberative forums very suitable for prompting perspective-taking in citizens, I argue that there are several institutional characteristics that provide a fertile environment for these processes.

First, perspective-taking requires having adequate information about the life, feelings and thoughts of the other, whose perspective is being taken. The lack of this information may hinder the perspective-taking process, by forcing the person to rely on 'stereotypes or other idiosyncratic information known about the target' (Epley and Caruso 2009, 300–305) and result in inaccurate perspective-taking, which could potentially backfire. Deliberative forums are specifically designed to embrace a diverse group of participants, with multiple and opposing perspectives, life styles and backgrounds. Deliberating participants are also encouraged not only to express their one viewpoints, but to listen and learn from others as well. The intensive experience of spending time together and discussing issues of common concern not only forges trust and facilitates bonding between participants, but, in addition, provides them with information about different others' perspectives, thoughts and feelings. Therefore, this experience should evoke the processes of perspective-taking in people.

The second institutional characteristic is the communication tools which deliberating citizens are encouraged to use when sharing their thoughts, arguments and feelings. Empathetic perspective-

taking is rarely automatic (Epley and Caruso 2009) and its activation may depend on environmental and situational factors. The ways by which participants learn about each other's arguments, perspectives and lives can either facilitate or fail to facilitate the processes of perspective-taking. Narratives, personal storytelling and testimonies may contribute to the activation of these imaginative processes, whereas dry and abstract language may fail to do so. Personal stories are particularly powerful in this respect; they have the potential for 'bring[ing] people's experiences and perspectives to the conversation in a powerful way that is qualitatively different from issue-oriented discussion' (Black 2008; Gastil and Black 2018). People can tell personal stories to share more personal parts of their lives and 'thereby introduce and find themselves in each other' (Rosenberg 2007). Stories can also be told to 'disclose harm and injustices', or 'politicize […] [the] situation' and advance the conscious-raising about those who are underprivileged within society (Maia et al. 2020, 118). In this light, stories, and testimonies, could be a powerful discursive method in enabling participants to 'imagine the real[ity] of the other' (Buber 1998, 71 in Black 2008, 96).

Nowadays, good deliberative forums encourage a diverse mix of methods of communication; participants listen to, and are encouraged to express, not only fact-based perspectives, but also stories, narratives, humor and testimonies. The combination of these two institutional features – presence of diversity of viewpoints and a mixture of rational argumentation and storytelling and narratives – promotes and nurtures the processes of perspective-taking in citizens who are engaging in deliberation. Thus, imagining the life, perspectives and feelings of the other person, thus increases understanding of the opposing side and motivates people to consider these arguments and perspectives when making political decisions .

## Scaling Up the Reflection-Inducing Effects of Deliberation

Well-designed deliberative forums provide ideal spaces for citizen deliberation because they reflect what authentic interpersonal deliberation should look like. However, to be of practical benefit, these forums must have impact an on the wider citizenry. If interpersonal deliberation has such a positive impact on the quality of citizens' political reasoning of the citizenry, why not to open up the political decision-making to numerous citizen deliberations all around the world? Although it sounds like an attractive ideal, in practice, there are a certain barriers that impede such an endeavor: (a) organizing citizen forums is expensive; (b) participating in these forums is demanding for citizens; (c) not everyone wants to participate in these events, bringing into play the issue of self-selection; and (d) most importantly, it is practically impossible for all or nearly all citizens to participate in such citizen forums (Goodin, 2003). Even Habermas, referring to face-

to-face deliberation, has acknowledged that 'at the level of direct and simple interactions, not all citizens can join in the shared exercise of such a practice' (1996, 170).

Deliberative democrats have suggested various means of scaling up the effects of citizen deliberation (Goodin and Dryzek 2006; Niemeyer 2014). A growing body of theoretical work suggests that the critiques about the limited effect of small-scale deliberative forums can be addressed by studying the deliberation from a systemic point of view. Although there is still some uncertainty as to what exactly constitutes a *deliberative system* and what its boundaries are, Jane Mansbridge and colleagues argue that a deliberative system, is a 'talk-based approach to political conflict and problem-solving', which can be achieved 'through arguing, demonstrating, expressing, and persuading' (Mansbridge et al. 2012, 4–5). The judgement of the democratic system, as the argument goes, should be done taking it as a whole. Instead of judging its separate components only, scholars argue, we should focus on the interaction and interdependence of its different components (Mansbridge et al. 2012). Although this approach has been useful in understanding the macro effects of small-scale deliberative forums conceptually and in an abstract form, scholars have not suggested the ways of how different components of the deliberative system could interact and affect each other positively in practice. For example, how can quasi-perfect spaces of deliberation extend their benefits to the wider citizenry?

One argument maintains that despite their small scale, deliberative forums can shape the public opinion on a range of complex policy issues. Learning about a citizen forum, whose members were randomly chosen to spend extended periods of time deliberating about a policy issue can serve as a proxy, that is, an informational proxy, for those citizens who are informed about the policy (Warren and Gastil 2015; MacKenzie and Warren 2012). According to this argument, two institutional characteristics of citizen forums – the random choice of its members and the competence that participants accrued via learning from the experts, from each other and deliberating – are said to evoke trust in nonparticipating citizens towards these forums. There is some recent empirical evidence to support this argument (see for example Ingham and Levin 2018; Suiter, Culloty, and Muradova 2020).

However, this line of thinking has recently met with harsh criticism from political theorists. Cristina Lafont (Lafont 2015) for example, argues that the *blind deference* to the recommendations made by citizen forums is not the most legitimate solution to the ailments of the democracy. In fact, using deliberative minipublics in this way, she argues, decreases democratic legitimacy, as it circumvents deliberation and reflection among the larger public. The main objective of citizen

forums, Lafont (2015, 2020) argues, should be to increase rather than decrease opportunities for citizens in the larger public to deliberate (see also Chambers 2009; Curato and Böker 2016)[18].

How to address these shortcomings? If well-organized interpersonal deliberation benefits reflective judgements, but it is practically impossible to convene hundreds or thousands of democratic deliberations in every country before important political decisions are made, what could be the alternative mechanism of scaling up the reflection-inducing effects? In this thesis, I argue that having understood the functioning of ideal spaces of interpersonal deliberation, we could isolate its different mechanisms and elements, study their effects in isolation and embed the elements that have motivating force for evoking reflection in different parts of the democratic system . I argue that one way forward is using the mechanism I propose in this thesis– empathic perspective-taking – to encourage individuals to use their imaginations to envisage different others and their perspectives.

## Empathy and Reflection beyond Interpersonal Deliberation

*Simulation theory of mind* in psychology and philosophy contends that people are capable of engaging in 'the exercise of conscious imagination'; and that empathy is at the heart of these processes (Zahavi and Overgaard 2012, 3; see also Goldman 2006). Empathy facilitates individuals' 'experiential access to other minds' (Zahavi and Overgaard 2012, 10) and enables us to understand the world from someone else's vantage point. I argue that we should take advantage of this human capacity to nurture and encourage this kind of imaginative communication, which can be potentially beneficial for the reflectiveness of political judgements,

[18] Bächtiger and Goldberg (2020) have recently argued that minipublics can play such a deliberation-promoting role in the wider public, provided that we reconceptualize the shortcut approach in its enhanced version. They argue that the uptake from deliberative minipublics are contingent upon different conditions and different types of citizenship. '[D]epending on these conditions', they argue, 'citizens should not only update their opinions on information shortcuts but also search for additional (and independent) sources and engage with arguments' (Bächtiger and Goldberg 2020, 35). They put forward four conditions: issue type, opinion strength, direction of a minipublic recommendation and level of consensus reached by the minipublic. The main thesis is that if we take into account the heterogeneity in citizen capabilities and tendencies and the different types of conditions (listed above) about the process, we could better understand the viable and democratic effect of minipublics.

in the absence of opportunities for actually discussing the politics face to face with diverse others. Insofar as it is possible and feasible to evoke imaginative conversations in citizens' minds, before they make important political decisions, this would lessen the 'burdens of deliberative democracy in mass society', by making the citizens 'imaginatively present in the minds of deliberators' (Goodin 2000, 83).

In the previous section of this chapter, I argued that perspective-taking has a motivating force for individuals' willingness to engage in reflective political reasoning. The next question is whether perspective-taking can have a similar effect on the reflectiveness of political judgements in the absence of the interpersonal deliberation carried out with physically present others.

Psychologists argue that empathic perspective-taking is possible even in the absence of the different other, and can produce a number of beneficial democratic outcomes, such as improved intergroup relations, reduced prejudice and increased altruism (Batson 2011). However, there are limits to our ability to imagine the lives of different others and these limits, and in some instances empathy may not lead to positive effects, and can even backfire. For example, in the absence of accurate information about the other, that is the person whose perspective is being taken, wrong inferences about the other's life, thoughts and feelings could be drawn. When no knowledge is available about the target of empathic perspective-taking, individuals may make use of their stereotypical knowledge about the other; as a result, the process may lead to biased and one-sided, rather than reflective political reasoning[19].

In other words, for empathetic perspective-taking to function well, we should draw on accurate information resources. Well-organized face-to-face interpersonal deliberation facilitates the exchange of information and knowledge about others' lives, perspectives, thoughts and feelings and, therefore, has the motivational power to induce accurate perspective-taking in citizens and encourage them to reflect on their decisions. If we wish to understand why other people think the way they do and comprehend why a particular perspective matters to a person, we could ask the question of a peer citizen deliberator and, thus, engage in more accurate perspective-taking.

[19] As far as some scholars are concerned, the pernicious effects of stereotypical thinking about different others may be exaggerated. For example, Lewis and Hodges (2012, 76) posit that when there is a lack of information about the other person's thoughts and feelings, 'stereotypes [can] serve as an important source of information' when individuals are trying to 'form broad impressions about others'.

Naturally, this emphasizes once more the importance of the face-to-face interpersonal deliberation, in which any stereotypical inferences about others' lives and perspectives could be overcome with the help of the give-and-take part of the discussion. Doubts can be clarified by talking to others and, thus, by gaining more knowledge and information about them.

In this thesis, I examine whether empathy towards different others can be induced via other ways. I test two mechanisms. First, I investigate whether reading about a diverse set of pro and con arguments, that a deliberative forum has considered when deliberating can facilitate the process of empathic perspective-taking towards people who are on the other side of the policy issue. Second, I consider whether a similar thing can occur when information about a different other is provided to the individual directly. If accompanied by explicit instructions to take the perspective of that person, empathetic imaginings could have a similar reflection-inducing effect on political reasoning. I expand on these ideas in what follows.

We know from research in social psychology that at the heart of the processes of empathic imagination lies the perceived similarity (i.e. self-other overlap) between the target of the empathy (that is, the person towards whom the empathizer feels empathy) and the empathizer. Individuals may 'feel for a stranger [...] to the degree that they perceive the stranger to be similar to themselves.' (Batson et al. 2005, 15). People may perceive the members of the minipublic as more similar to themselves: ordinary, laypeople with similar needs and interests. This perception of similarity can engender more empathic feelings in people toward other citizens, particularly towards those in a disadvantaged position (Grönlund, Herne, and Setälä 2017). Therefore, *reading about* a deliberative forum in which ordinary lay citizens are engaged in a careful deliberation and consideration of *diverse perspectives and arguments* from both sides of the policy issue under discussion may help non-participating citizens to imagine such a deliberative encounter. This imagined deliberation may, in turn, prompt them to adopt more reflective political reasoning.

Second, imagined deliberation with someone we disagree with can be induced with the help of empathy interventions that are used widely in the social psychology literature. These interventions are designed to activate empathic imaginings in people by encouraging them to understand the mental states of people who are different to them. Different kinds of empathy interventions exist, such as narrative-, game-, and instruction-based interventions (Batson 2011; Herrera et al. 2018). One type of empathy intervention entails the respondents reading about (i.e. the provision of information) a hypothetical character with counter-attitudinal views on the issue under discussion and being instructed to actively imagine the feelings, thoughts and life of this person. The respondents then have to write down what they imagine these to be. It is possible

that this approach will be useful for encouraging someone to imagine what it would be like to deliberate with this hypothetical individual in his/her own head. I argue that both of these simple interventions can have the potential effect of firing people's imagination and motivating them to consider perspectives different to their own and then integrate these into their thinking. The next chapter describes the empirical strategy I adopt in this thesis to test the theory outlined above.

# Chapter 3: Research Design

This chapter begins by describing the methodological strategy I employ in my thesis, before briefly discussing the methods applied in each of the six articles that constitute the empirical core of this thesis. I end the chapter by discussing the proxy measures I use in my articles for capturing my main outcome variable, namely reflection.

## A Mixed-Methods Research Design

This thesis applies a mixed-methods research design (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010; Greene 2008), which involves 'the connection, integration, or linking of' quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell 2010, 51). Mixed-methods research enables researchers to benefit from the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches and complement each other in creative ways, without compromising the complexity of the phenomenon (Morse 2010). This approach has gained in popularity across different disciplines within social sciences over the last 20 years [20].

There are diverse ways in which a researcher can combine and match different methods in his/her research design. Greene (2008) proposes three typologies (see also Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2009): first, the chosen methods can be incorporated either independently or interactively; second, priority can be given to either qualitative or quantitative methodology in the research or, alternatively, they can be given equal status. Third, different methods can be used either in parallel or in sequence.

Building on this typology, I take the analytical strategy that can be named 'exploratory sequential mixed methods' (Creswell and Plano Clark 2018), an approach that combines quantitative and qualitative data in a sequential manner (see Figure 3). The rationale for taking an exploratory sequential approach is the following. The first part of data collection for my thesis is aimed at building a theory: professing an explanation for the effect of interpersonal deliberation on reflectiveness of political judgements. More specifically, its objective was to answer the research questions of, 'Why would interpersonal deliberation motivate more reflection in citizens'

[20] In employing the mixed-methods design, I start from the assumption that 'the choice of a mixed method […] should be driven by the very questions that research seeks to answer', rather than from strict philosophical convictions about qualitative and quantitative research (Biesta 2010, 96).

thinking?'. To investigate this question, I initially took an exploratory approach – and collected qualitative data from a real-world deliberative forum, the Irish Citizens' Assembly. The findings from in-depth interviews, participant observations and qualitative content analyses of video recordings of the event culminated in theory development and hypotheses generation. Driven by the theory and hypotheses, I developed ensuing research questions, and research designs for the subsequent quantitative empirical studies (Plano Clark and Badiee 2010).

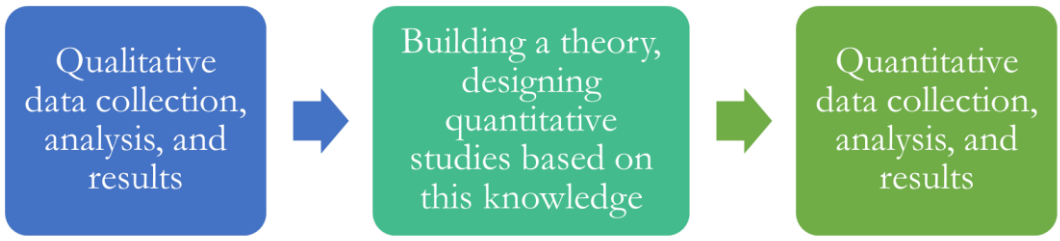


*Figure 3. Mixed Methods Research Design*

Methodologically, the empirical part of this thesis is based on data from a real-world structured deliberation, namely the Irish Citizens' Assembly and several experiments. Below I discuss each method separately after having discussed the reasons underlying the real-world case selection – the Irish Citizens' Assembly.

## The Irish Citizens' Assembly

The micro-dimension of the theory guiding this thesis is studied in Articles I and II, and relies on a real-world deliberative forum, the Irish Citizens' Assembly (ICA), which was convened between 2016-2018. The objective of the ICA was to bring a diverse group of Irish citizens together, to consider and discuss five important socio-political and legal issues concerning the Irish society: a constitutional ban on abortion; an ageing population; climate change; referenda; and fixed-term parliaments. The Assembly was composed of 100 members: an appointed chairperson and 99 randomly selected citizens. In addition, 99 more people were randomly chosen as substitutes to account for future drop-outs. In selecting the members, representativeness of the group with regard to the Irish voters along the sociodemographic features of age, gender, social class and regional spread was ensured. The assembly met during eleven weekends to learn from the experts and each other, deliberate in small groups and

produce specific recommendations on each of the discussed topics. These conclusions were translated into reports and voted recommendations which were later submitted to the Irish Parliament, Oireachtas, for ensuing discussions and concrete action plans (Farrell, Suiter, and Harris 2018).

The rationale behind choosing this assembly for my thesis is manifold. Here, I will focus on three reasons. First, the ICA was specifically convened and organized with the intention of realising the virtues of deliberative democracy. Almost all features of a deliberative forum theorized in the extant theories of deliberation was met in designing it (Farrell et al., 2019). For instance, its members were chosen randomly; they were representative of the Irish population among the key sociodemographic characteristics; organizers ensured that a balanced body of information and knowledge was provided to the participants; facilitators were trained to ensure discursive equality and so on.[21] Second, the ICA was designed with political consequentiality in mind, which is not always the case in convening other structured deliberative forums. In other words, it was not a type of focus group convened with an objective of brainstorming ideas, or discussing the issues without planned concrete actions plans. From its conception, the assembly was tasked with making concrete policy recommendations to the Irish Government. Its recommendations on the topic of abortion, for instance, pushed politicians to call for a national referendum on liberalizing abortion, which took place in May 2018. The contribution of the assembly to the formation of wider public opinion on this question is undisputable. In addition to bringing this important policy issue to the public agenda, and pushing for a nationwide referendum, the assembly directly 'shap[ed] the referendum question and the draft legislation' (Field 2018, 608). Furthermore, the assembly's plenary deliberations were livestreamed and its recommendations were publicized among the wider citizenry. Commentators suggest that the assembly has contributed substantially to progressing the debate on abortion within Irish society. Some preliminary findings from RTÉ/Universities exit poll suggested that the assembly influenced people's voting choices by improving a wider public's factual knowledge (Suiter 2018). Finally, the assembly's debates were also driven by broader divisive discourses outside the mini-public, especially when it came to the issues of abortion and climate change. In sum, the design features of the assembly which resembled the normative ideals of deliberative forums, and its politically consequential nature makes this case study with its strong ecological validity compelling.

[21] Please see Article I for more detailed information.

# Experiments

A significant portion of this thesis is based on randomized experiments, which are considered to be 'the gold standard' for studying the research questions of a causal nature (Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk 2007; Druckman et al. 2011). Experiments allow the researchers to isolate the separate effect of different elements of the studied phenomena and measure the outcome variables with more precision. Because of the random assignment to the treatment (i.e. the main independent variable), well-designed experiments are hailed as having high internal validity. Experiments are also useful for adjudicating theoretical claims of a contested nature; and are able to overcome the methodological concerns inherent in observational data, such as selection bias, spurious correlation, two-way causation and omitted variable bias (Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk 2007; Druckman et al. 2006). Experiments vary in their types, with the most commonly used ones being laboratory experiments (experiments implemented in controlled lab settings) (e.g. Aaroe, Peterson, and Arceneaux 2017; Iyengar 2011), field experiments (experiments conducted in natural settings) (e.g. Arceneaux and Kolodny 2009; Kalla and Broockman 2020), natural experiments (using a particular event or a situation to divide the data into seemingly randomly-assigned groups) (e.g. Hyde 2007; Frye and Borisova 2019) and survey experiments (e.g. Janezic and Gallego 2020; Campbell and Cowley 2014).

I use three types of experiments in my thesis. Article I, in addition to interview and survey data, relies on a laboratory experiment. Article III discusses the advantages and disadvantages of this type of laboratory experiments in researching citizen deliberation. Articles IV, V and VI rely on three large online survey experiments, fielded in Ireland (Article V), the UK (Articles IV and VI), and Chile (Article IV). Article IV uses a quasi-experiment in addition to a survey experiment. IN what follows, I expand on the discussion of these experiments. More detailed information about each article can be found in Part II.

### *Laboratory Experiments*

Experiments recreated in the lab settings mostly – but not exclusively – seek to simulate situations that resemble real-world situations, which requires from the research a good understanding and familiarity with the phenomena under study. Lab experiments have several advantages when it comes to studying the research questions of a causal nature. The major advantage of laboratory experiments is the maximum control that the researcher has over the experimental process (see Bol 2019 for a recent review of lab experiments in political science, their advantages and disadvantages). In a laboratory experiment, the researcher can control for, and hold important background variables (e.g. the time spent on a task, the features of the lab

environment) constant, that otherwise may have confounded the treatment effect (Morton and Williams 2010).

Scholars of deliberation have recently turned to the use of laboratory experiments when studying interpersonal deliberation (e.g. Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014; Sulkin and Simon 2001). Carefully designed laboratory experiments have a number of advantages when it comes to studying group deliberation. They enable the isolation of different parts of the group deliberation and the measurement of the variables of interest with precision. For example, in controlled laboratory settings the researcher could randomly assign participants to either information only condition or information and group discussion condition and thus disentangle a separate effect of group discussion. For a more extensive discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of laboratory experiments for research on deliberation, see Article III.

### *Survey Experiments*

*Survey experiments* marry the advantages of randomized controlled treatments with those of large N surveys. The experiment part of the term means that subjects are *randomly* assigned either to receive the experimental manipulation or not to receive it. The survey part denotes that experimental manipulation is embedded inside a survey, the major advantage of which is that we can have access to a larger and more heterogeneous sample. If survey experiments are based on nationally representative or more diverse and heterogeneous samples, they are also enjoy high external validity, i.e. they can 'provide firmly grounded inferences about real-world political attitudes and behavior' (Gaines, Kuklinski, and Quirk 2007, 2; Mutz 2011). Experimental manipulations in survey experiments are usually in the form of a simple text, image or audio/video. The causal effect of the treatment on the outcome variable is estimated by comparing the mean outcome variable in the treatment group to that in the control group. If the mean outcome variable in the treatment group differs systematically from that in the control condition, it can be concluded that the treatment had an effect.

Survey experiments are also easy to design and field. People can take them at home (in their online version), at their own convenience, thereby increasing their ecological validity[22]. Survey

[22] Survey experiments, however, are not without challenges. Some scholars question the generalizability of the effects found in survey experiments to the real-world decision making (see for example Barabas and Jerit 2010; but Mullinix et al. 2015). Gaines et al., (2007) posit that most survey experiments are not designed to capture the long-term, non-transitory effects of their

experiments have contributed to the advancement of many theories within political science and international relations. Some have argued that survey experiments 'have overturned much of the conventional wisdom on the nature of public opinion' (Barabas and Jerit 2010, 226), whereas others have called survey experiments 'a methodological breakthrough of great importance to public opinion and political psychology research' (Gaines et al. 2007, 17). Nowadays, different types of survey experiments (e.g. list experiments, conjoint experiments) are widely used to study a whole range of political phenomena, including decision heuristics, framing issues, candidate evaluations, and the micro-foundations of democratic resolve, among many others (see Sniderman 2018 for a review).

### *Quasi-Experiments*

Because of the absence of a pure control condition, and, thus, the impossibility of comparing the treatment and control groups at the baseline, some studies are called quasi- rather than fully-randomized experiments. Quasi-experiments mean 'an approximation of an experiment, a 'near experiment' ' (Mark and Reichardt 2009, 182) and are mostly used when the random assignment to experimental conditions is either unfeasible, unethical or impractical. Quasi-experiments were first developed by Donald Campbell (Campbell and Stanley 1966; Shadish, Cook, and Campbell 2002) and similar to randomized experiments, are employed to examine the effects of a treatment (or treatments) on outcome variables of interest. In this thesis I use one specific type of quasi-experimental design, the *one-group pretest-posttest design*[23]. In other words, I have one experimental group (interpersonal deliberation) where a group of people are convened to discuss a policy issue in small groups. In order to estimate the effect of interpersonal deliberation, a comparison is made across time between the mean outcome variable pre- and the mean outcome variable post-intervention (i.e. deliberation).

Quasi-experiments are commonly used in deliberation research, especially in cases in which the random assignment of subjects to either structured group deliberation or to other conditions (e.g. information only, no information/no group deliberation) is complicated in real-world

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studied treatments, which hinders the researchers' ability to 'determine the relevance of their findings for politics' (Gaines et al. 2007, 7).

[23] Other quasi-experiments include nonequivalent group design, interrupted time-series design and the regression-discontinuity design (see Mark and Reichardt 2009 for a discussion of these designs).

applications of citizen forums (e.g. O'Malley, Farrell, and Suiter 2020; Setälä, Grönlund, and Herne 2010)[24].

## Overview of Data and Individual Research Designs

Table 1 gives an overview of the articles and their respective research designs, the research questions, and the data. The data used for this thesis are derived from a range of primary sources. The exception is Article II, which is based on the qualitative content analysis of video-recorded (and publicly-available) presentations; and the text analysis of draft ballot papers.

In this section, I briefly outline the research method used in each of the articles. For the summary of the theoretical expectations guiding each article, and the main results of the empirical studies, please refer to Chapter 4. Each article can be found in its entirety in Part II of this thesis.

[24] However, note that quasi-experiments have their own shortcomings. For example, because of the lack of full randomization, quasi-experiments are usually 'susceptible to a variety of alternative interpretations', such as history, maturation, and so on (Mark and Reichardt, 2009, 184), the full discussion of which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

| Article | Core Research Question(s) | Data Sources | Research Design | Proxies for Reflection/Empathy |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I | How does interpersonal deliberation prompt more reflective political reasoning? Does emotional engagement mediate the relationship between deliberation and reflection? | * in-depth interviews with eleven members of the assembly<br>* a survey with all members of the assembly: *N*=99<br>* a laboratory experiment: Wave 1: *N*=600; Wave 2: *N*=127 | A mixed-methods design | deliberation within |
| II | How does interpersonal deliberation prompt more reflective political reasoning? Does emotional engagement mediate the relationship between deliberation and reflection? | * content analysis of video-recorded presentations by 21 speakers<br>* text analysis of draft ballot paper | A qualitative research design | policy uptake |
| III | What are the challenges of simulating deliberation in laboratory settings? (method paper) | * a laboratory experiment: Wave 1: *N*=600; Wave 2: *N*=127 | An experimental design | n/a |
| IV | How can the reflection-inducing effects of interpersonal deliberation be scaled up to other parts of the democratic system? Can deliberative forum evoke empathy in non-participants? | * a survey experiment: *N*=776 | An experimental design | affective empathy |
| V | How can the reflection-inducing effects of interpersonal deliberation be scaled up to other parts of the democratic system? Can empathy prompt more reflective thinking? | * a survey experiment: *N*=2014 | An experimental design | cognitive complexity and attitude change |
| VI | How can the reflection-inducing effects of interpersonal deliberation be scaled up to other parts of the democratic system? Effect of political disagreement on reflection | * a cross-national survey experiment: *N*=423<br>* a quasi-experiment in laboratory setting: *N*=75 | An experimental design | cognitive complexity and attitude change |

*Table 1. Overview of the Articles with their Respective Research Designs*

### *Article I*

In Article I, I employ a mixed-methods design, bringing together qualitative, survey and experimental data. Qualitative data were collected from the ICA and consists of participant observation (Kawulich 2005), and in-depth interviews (Legard, Keegan, and Ward 2003). I observed several meetings of the ICA as a researcher and took extensive field notes. The objective of participant observation was threefold. First, to gain a better understanding of a real-world deliberative forum and its processes and enable me to get a feel for how citizens participate in these processes it was important for me to be on site. Second, observing nonverbal expression of emotions by citizen deliberators in response to each other and to expert communicators (e.g. facial expressions, tone of voice, body movement, touch) during the formal part of the event, but also (perhaps especially) during informal encounters (e.g. coffee and lunch breaks, when bumped into each other in corridors, or the toilets) assisted me in gaining a more holistic understanding of how citizens interact during such events. Finally, being there day-after-day helped me to be known to the members of the Assembly and thereby facilitated the subsequent stages of the research process, more specifically, in-depth interviews. Analyzing the data collected from participant observation also helped me to formulate my questions to the citizen deliberators during in-depth interviews.

Semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted with eleven members of the ICA. Data saturation was used to discontinue data collection (Saunders et al. 2018). To increase the generalisability of the patterns identified from qualitative data to all members of the Assembly, I tested part of the theoretical argument with quantitative data. First, survey instruments were designed and *a survey* was fielded among the members of the Irish Citizens' Assembly. Two batteries measuring the variables of interest were fielded as part of a larger survey. The analyses were intended to test the association between empathy and the tendency of citizen deliberators to engage in reflective judgements during interpersonal deliberations. Pre- and post- surveys to measure the effect of deliberative experience on a range of outcome measures, such as political efficiency, attitude change, beliefs about the issue under discussion, and legitimacy perceptions of citizen deliberators about the democratic system, among others, are common to the study of citizen deliberation (Luskin et al., 2002; Grönlund et al., 2010).

Second, to substantiate my findings from qualitative and survey data, and increase the internal validity of my study, I designed and fielded a randomized *laboratory experiment*, which tested part of the theoretical argument experimentally.

### *Article II*

Article II is based on two types of data. First, qualitative content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005) of videorecorded expert communication on climate change at ICA was used. We applied holistic coding (Hawkins 2009) to code speakers' communication, whereby the coders watched the recorded presentations in their entirety twice and gave scores based on their overall impression of different communicative elements. More detailed information about the coding scheme can be found in Part II of this thesis.

The same method was applied to capture the specific policy proposals each communicator advanced in their speech. We measure citizen deliberators' uptake of the speakers' proposals via systematic text analysis of the (publicly-available) policy recommendation document that the ICA forwarded to Oireachtas (Irish Citizens' Assembly). Theoretical expectations are tested using Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA), a method developed by Charles Ragin (2008) to address the issues of causal complexity which is inherent to social sciences research. QCA is a configurational and set-theoretical method, and tests for the presence of necessary and sufficient conditions and their combinations, for the presence or absence of a studied outcome. QCA is also a more adequate tool for testing phenomena in small to intermediate - N studies (10-50 cases). There are 21 speaker cases in this article and thus QCA is well-suited for our analyses.

### *Article III*

Article III is a case study, and aims to dissect the advantages and shortcomings of stimulating citizen deliberation in laboratory settings. It is based on the same laboratory experiment that is applied in Article I.

### *Article IV*

The empirical core of Article IV consists of a large and descriptively representative survey experiment conducted in Ireland in the run-up to the 2018 Irish national referendum on blasphemy.

Although the use of survey experiments in deliberation research is relatively new, the incipient research has shown their advantages with regard to scaling up the beneficial effects of deliberative forums to the larger public (Ingham and Levin 2018; Werner and Muradova, forthcoming). It is on this strand of recent literature that our survey experiment was built. The experimental manipulation in our study consisted of the participants being exposed to information (in the form of a vignette) about a deliberative forum (the Irish Constitutional

Convention, which was the predecessor of the Irish Citizens' Assembly) and the arguments it considered in relation to the controversial and moral policy issue of blasphemy.

### *Article V*

We conducted a large and heterogeneous survey experiment to examine the theoretical expectations posed in Article V. Respondents were then randomly assigned to one of three treatment conditions - a control group, a placebo group and a treatment group. In this experiment our main experimental manipulation was empathy for the other side. We induced empathy in respondents via a writing exercise. Subjects were asked to actively imagine the thoughts and feelings of a hypothetical persona and write from her perspective. This intervention is similar to those widely used in psychology experiments (Batson et al. 2003; Batson, Early, and Salvarani 1997; Adida, Lo, and Platas 2018).

In addition to conventional ways of measuring the variables of interest, i.e. with closed-ended questions, we fielded an open-ended question, the qualitative responses to which were later coded with the help of automated text analysis (Lucas et al. 2015)

### *Article VI*

Article VI is based on two studies. Study 1 is a uniquely designed cross-national survey experiment conducted in the UK and Chile in which I manipulated individuals' exposure to dissonant information experimentally with the help of a short vignette. The policy issue in question was the introduction of a universal basic income. In Study 2, I employed a *quasi-experiment* conducted in a laboratory setting. The quasi-experiment had a pretest–posttest design and involved face-to-face discussions in small groups of people with heterogeneous backgrounds and diverse perspectives. The policy context was the legalization of assisted dying. Study 2 brings the interactive part of political talk into play and is meant to give more robustness to the mechanisms studied in the article.

## Operationalization

Capturing the intrapsychic processes underlying political attitudes is notoriously challenging, if not impossible. Several proxies across different disciplines have been used to capture the concepts akin to reflective reasoning[25]. The most commonly used measures include *attitude change, attitude coherence*, *political sophistication*, and *awareness of legitimate rationales for opposing viewpoints*, among

[25] Recall that I conceptualise reflection as the type of reasoning that involves considering and integrating diverse and opposing perspectives on an issue, before arriving at political decisions.

others (see, for example, Mutz 2002; Fishkin 2009; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1993). In this thesis, I expand on the extant literature by employing four different proxies for capturing reflection in my studies. Column 5 of the Table 1 lists these proxies.

First, in Article I, I use a psychometric measurement of *deliberation within*, constructed and validated by Carina Weinmann (2018). The measure tries to tap into the cognitive information processing steps that people engage in to 'critically reflect on […] issues, to weigh different opinions and arguments, and to rethink their own preferences' (Weinmann 2018, 367; see also Goodin 2000, 2003). To operationalize and construct the items for deliberation within, Weinmann (2018) builds on Mercier and Landemore's (2012) definition of private deliberation, Goodin's concept of deliberation within and Gastil's (2008) criteria of deliberation and captures cognitive steps such as (a) simulation of different opinions; (b) gathering of arguments consistent and inconsistent with own; and (c) the evaluation of these arguments. The final version of the construct is a battery of five self-reported items (e.g. I thought about arguments for and against the issue under discussion; I evaluated the arguments that speak for and against my own and others' opinions, etc).

Second, I employ the *cognitive complexity* of reasoning measure (Suedfeld 2010; Tetlock 1983; Owens and Wedeking 2011; Colombo 2018) in Aritlces V and VI. This measure is, probably, the most adequate proxy (compared with others) for capturing the concept I study in this thesis. Cognitive complexity is a measure that captures the extent to which people's reasoning is uni- or multi-dimensional. It encompasses two elements of good reasoning: differentiation and integration. The first component measures the degree of differentiation between solutions, perspectives or dimensions of the issue under consideration, whereas integration refers to the integration of these different and alternative solutions or dimensions into thinking and decision-making (Tausczik and Pennebaker 2010). High scores indicate more reflective reasoning, whereas the low scores suggest less reflective reasoning.

Third, in Articles IV and VI, I complement the cognitive complexity measure with the measure of *attitude change*, that is, a change in people's policy preferences, a widely used proxy for capturing reflection as a result of deliberation (e.g. Fishkin 2009; Luskin et al. 2002). The logic

here is that when people reflect, they should be more willing to lay aside their previously held attitudes on a policy issue (Stanovich 2011)[26].

Finally, in Article II, we use a *policy uptake* with regard to an ambitious climate change policy. We use it as an indirect proxy to capture reflection as a result of climate change communication during the ICA deliberations on climate change. Thereby, this article focuses on a particular policy issue – climate change – and on a particular element of interpersonal deliberation, namely expert communication. We rely on video recordings of presentations by climate change speakers to study the idea that when communication engages people's emotions, operationalized as communication that resonates with people's daily lives and contains vivid details and personal stories, it motivates citizen deliberators to engage with the messages more and reflect upon them. To capture policy uptake, we proceeded as follows in our paper. Two coders coded each speakers' communication style and content, as well as policy proposals each communicator advanced. We further examined the (publicly-available) ballot paper, where citizens voted on different policy proposals[27]. The main outcome variable was a high proportion of a speaker's proposals ending up on the final ballot, as the final ballot of recommendations was decided by majority vote by the citizen deliberators.' The average score per recommendation per speaker was then calculated by adding up all of a speaker's scores and dividing the total score by the number of proposals. This was calibrated into a fuzzy set using the direct method of calibration (Ragin 2008). Please see the Article II in Part II for more detailed information.

[26] More extended discussions about the proxy measures can be found in each article in Part II of this thesis.

[27] At the end of the ICA deliberations on each topic, citizen deliberators voted anonymously for different policy proposals, which were forwarded to the Irish Parliament for further deliberation and concrete actions.

# Chapter 4. Overview of Core Results

This chapter provides an overview of the core results from six articles. As mentioned elsewhere, empirical studies were conducted in two steps. The first set of studies is dedicated to the micro processes underlying interpersonal deliberation, whereas the second set extends the findings to the wider citizenry, by testing the macro effects of deliberation.

## Emotional Engagement and Reflection in Interpersonal Deliberation

### *Interpersonal Deliberation, Perspective-Taking and Reflective Judgements*

In Article I 'Seeing the Other Side,' I develop a theory of how interpersonal deliberation promotes more reflection in citizens' reasoning by encouraging the processes of perspective-taking in citizen deliberators. More specifically, I argue that under the right conditions, citizens are motivated to take different others' perspectives (e.g. 'put themselves in their shoes') while deliberating interpersonally. This then leads them to overcome their egocentric biases and engage in more even-handed and reflective thinking. Moreover, I build on the psychological literature on perspective-taking and the scholarship of deliberative democracy and discuss why structured deliberative forums provide fertile environments for these processes.

I focus on two institutional characteristics: the presence of diverse perspectives and the interplay between fact-based argumentation and storytelling. I posit that the presence of the diversity of perspectives in minipublic creates a rich informational context that should prompt more *accurate*, rather than *stereotypical* perspective-taking Second, the presence of different communicative tools through which people can express their perspectives facilitates the process of perspective-taking. Previous scholarship in communication has emphasized the role of stories in the processes of perspective-taking. Storytelling is a communicative tool that is capable of inviting and encouraging the process of perspective-taking. Personal stories have the potential for 'bring[ing] people's experiences and perspectives to the conversation in a powerful way' (Black 2008, 96), and prompting citizen deliberators to 'imagine the real[ity] of the other' (Buber 1998, 71 in Black 2008, 96).

I test my theory in two stages and employ three types of data. First, I examine whether, and, if so, how a structured deliberative forum is capable of evoking perspective-taking in citizens. In

doing so, I focused on the case study of Irish Citizens' Assembly, established in 2016 with an objective of considering five important socio-political issues facing Irish society and making concrete policy recommendations to the Irish Government. I discuss its design features and how these institutional characteristics made the assembly particularly suitable for evoking more reflective political thinking in its members. I show that the Assembly met my theoretical conditions (the presence of diversity of perspectives and the interplay between the rational argumentation and personal storytelling) for facilitating the process of perspective-taking among participants. I further move on to examine whether the members of the Assembly who participated in the meetings for months also shared this view. This part of the study relies on in-depth and semi-structured interviews with eleven members of the Irish Assembly. The patterns identified from qualitative data showed that citizens found the mentioned features of this deliberative forum particularly crucial for inviting them to take the perspectives of different others and imagine the world from their vantage point.

In the second stage, I studied if the process of perspective-taking has any effect on citizens' engagement in reflective thinking during deliberations, with the help of survey data from the Irish Citizens' Assembly (the whole sample). I measured perspective-taking with two items from the widely-used and validated Interpersonal Reactivity Index questionnaire (Davis 1994); whereas reflection is measured with the validated psychometric measurement of 'deliberation within' (Weinmann, 2018). The results of a nonparametric Spearman's rho test showed that perspective-taking and reflective judgements were positively associated, providing some support for my theoretical argument.

Both types of data (interview and survey) from the real-world deliberative forum – the Irish Citizens' Assembly - provide my study with a high ecological validity. However, due to their qualitative or observational nature, they also create some challenges with regard to making causal claims about the relationship between interpersonal deliberation, perspective-taking and reflection. Taking into account these limitations, I subjected some of my theoretical argument to an experimental test. A laboratory experiment in two waves (Wave 1: $N$=600; Wave 2: $N$=127) was designed and fielded with UK residents. Interpersonal deliberation was manipulated by inviting a randomly assigned group of participants to engage in an hour-long and moderated small group discussion on the controversial topic of legalizing assisted dying in the UK. Those who were randomly assigned to either 'information only' and 'control' conditions did not engage in group discussion and instead either read balanced information (equal number of pro and con

arguments on the topic) about the topic[28] (information condition), or nothing (control condition) before responding a set of survey questions measuring reflectiveness of people's political attitudes. Experimental data, which were analyzed with the help of simple linear regression analysis, provided further support for the argument that the processes of perspective-taking are beneficial for evoking more reflective reasoning in citizens.

The first novelty of the study is that it combines data from a real-world consequential deliberative forum with a lab experiment which simulates citizen deliberation. By mixing different research methods, this study endeavors to shed more nuanced light on the relationship between interpersonal deliberation, emotions and reflective reasoning. In Article III – 'The Challenges of Experimenting with Citizen Deliberation in Laboratory Settings', I discuss extensively the advantages and the challenges associated with manipulating interpersonal deliberation in a laboratory setting; and recommend combining such studies with the study of a real-world deliberative forum.

Article I is the first of its kind to offer a systematic study of the role of perspective-taking in interpersonal deliberation and reflection and makes important contributions to several strands of literature: (a) micro-theories of citizen deliberation; (b) theoretical accounts of deliberative democratic systems; (c) political opinion formation; and (d) social psychological literature on the benefits of perspective-taking. The article discusses these contributions, together with the shortcomings of the study.

### *Expert Communication During Interpersonal Deliberation, Emotional Engagement and Citizens' Policy Uptake of Policy Proposals*

In Article II, I extended the theory on emotional engagement to the study of one separate component of a structured deliberative forum – expert communication. Expert communication is a crucial aspect of a structured interpersonal deliberation. Citizen deliberation requires adequate information and empirical evidence, which are provided by expert communication right before group discussions during minipublics. They are particularly crucial for gaining better understanding of more complex and/or technical matters, such as climate change or genome ethics. With very few recent exceptions, the empirical deliberative democracy scholarship has devoted less attention to the study of expert communication during deliberative forums.

[28] The same information was provided to those in the deliberation condition, who read it before engaging in a small group discussion.

In this article, together with my co-authors, I develop and test the idea that the way in which an expert speaker communicates information on climate change within deliberative settings can influence citizen deliberators' reasoning about the policy proposals advanced. I emphasize the type of communication that engages people's emotions most effectively, specifically, communication that (a) resonates with people's day-to-day lives and values, (b) is expressed in accessible language in a narrative format (e.g. personal stories, anecdotes) and (c) is expressed in an authentic manner. I argue that citizens are more likely to engage with messages and reflect upon them when the information they receive is interesting, relates to their day-to-day lives (as opposed to abstract concepts) and contains vivid details, and personal stories provide the communicative tool that facilitates this kind of emotional engagement. Personal stories and testimonies also hold 'emotionally and culturally relevant information that is lacking from traditional ways of communicating climate change' (Muradova et al. 2020, 4). Communicating expert information on climate change in an accessible format is crucial for building trust with the audience, and for prompting citizens to reconsider their previous thoughts by reflecting upon the factual information and testimonies provided. Conversely, excessively abstract communication risks inducing feelings of exclusion, mistrust and/or defensiveness in citizen deliberators. To operationalize this kind of communication, I relied on Corner et al. (2018). As discussed in the method section, I take the 'policy uptake' as a proxy for reflective judgements in this article[29].

We test the theoretical expectations with the case study of the Irish Citizens' Assembly. More specifically, together with my co-authors, I analyse the publicly available, videorecorded presentations of 21 speakers on climate change who participated in the assembly meetings during two weekends in October and November 2017. The videorecordings were coded for 'effective communication' by trained coders consistent with a coding scheme we developed that was based on Corner et al. (2018). Next, the policy proposals advanced by speakers were coded separately by authors with expertise in climate policy. Finally, to measure the citizen deliberators' uptake of the speakers' proposals, we examined the policy recommendation document that the assembly forwarded to the Irish Parliament and the draft ballot paper that was used by the members to vote on each policy proposal.

We use a fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) (Ragin 2008) to conduct our analyses, which relies on set theory and uncovers combinations of conditions that are conducive to a particular outcome.

[29] When reading the article, the reader will notice that the words 'reflection' or 'reflective judgements' are not mentioned so as not to add another layer of conceptualization.

The results of this study provide convincing evidence for the argument that communicating information on climate change in a way that engages people's emotions is important for citizen deliberators' policy uptake. However, other factors, such as the repetition of policy proposals by various speakers and the uniqueness of the speakers (making themselves stand out from the crowd) also have a significant complementary impact on policy uptake.

The study speaks to different strands of literature, from micro-theories of deliberative democracy to climate change communication. It is also among the first to examine the nature and effects of climate change communication on citizens' decision-making in interpersonal deliberative settings. The article concludes that the way in which information is communicated, namely in a way that engages people emotionally, is a good starting point for those wishing to promote more ambitious climate change policies at a national level.

## Scaling Up the Effects of Interpersonal Deliberation

The last three articles extend the theory advanced in this thesis by experimentally examining the scalability of the effects of deliberation to a larger public. First, Article IV examines the effect of information about a minipublic (and the arguments it considered before arriving at policy recommendations) on people's emotional engagement (empathy for the other side). Second, Article V studies the causal relationship between empathy for the other side and reflection in people's political reasoning. Third, Article VI focuses on one specific element of deliberation – exposure to disagreement – and examines its separate effect on reflection. The objective of the latter is to add a robustness test to the theoretical argument, and examine if the mere exposure to disagreement, without its emotional dimension is able to do the work.

### *Does Merely Reading About a Minipublic Elicit More Empathy in Citizens for The Other Side?*

In Article IV, along with my co-authors, I study the extent to which merely providing information about a citizen forum can assist voters in the wider public to become more empathetic towards people on the other side of a public policy debate.[30] The objective was to test the first part of the theoretical chain, depicted in Figure 2 of this thesis, that is, the argument that interpersonal deliberation can induce the feelings of empathic concern in citizens towards different others. While participating in citizen deliberation has been found to generate more

[30] Another outcome variable studied in the article is *acquisition of factual knowledge*. In this summary I focus on empathy only.

empathetic understanding among participating citizens towards others, less is known about whether these effects also extend to non-participating individuals. The research question that we explore in this article is whether mere informational exposure to minipublics can augment people's other-regarding empathic responses to the other side.

Furthermore, we also explore what amount of information is enough for eliciting such feelings in citizens? We explore the differing effects of different informational levels of exposure about the same minipublics. More specifically, we study varied combinations of three main elements of the minipublics: (a) brief information about the minipublic and its policy position (i.e. policy recommendations); (b) a paragraph justifying its policy position; (c) a list of main statements in favour of, and against the policy issue, which was carefully considered by the minipublic. Hypotheses about the differing effects of each element and their combinations rely on democratic theory and are discussed in the paper.

To study the posed research question(s), we designed and fielded an original survey experiment among Irish citizens in the run-up to a referendum (N=776). The treatments, i.e. vignettes, were based on deliberations of a real-world deliberative minipublic – Irish Constitutional Convention (ICC), a predecessor of the Irish Citizens' Assembly. The ICC was held between 2012-2014 and consisted of not only randomly-chosen lay citizens (representative of the Irish population in terms of sex, age, region and socio-economic status), but also politicians - members of the Irish parliament. The ICC was convened with an objective of considering eight socio-political issues: review of the parliament electoral system; reducing the presidential term to five years, marriage equality, amending the clause on women in the home, greater participation of women in politics, voting rights for emigrants in presidential elections, reducing the voting age and removing blasphemy from the Irish Constitution. In line with the Convention's recommendations, the government called for three nation-wide referendums. Our study was conducted in the run-up to one of these referendums, a referendum on blasphemy, which was held in October 2018. The treatments of our study built on the Convention's report on blasphemy, which specifically addressed the question of whether the ban on blasphemy in the Irish Constitution should be removed or not.

We measured respondents' empathic attitudes with self-reported items tapping into empathic reactions of compassion and sympathy toward people on the opposite side of a policy debate (i.e. blasphemy). The results of the experiment showed that different informational exposure had different effects on empathy. The information on the diverse set of pro and con arguments the minipublic considered when making decisions, exerted a positive and significant effect on

*empathic concern* citizens felt towards *others* on the policy issue of blasphemy. However, being exposed to information about the minipublic and its findings *per se* did not lead to an increase in empathy.

A practical takeaway from this research is that the information about a minipublic's report can have an impact on a wider public. If the information is presented with the set of pro and con arguments that the citizen deliberators considered when arriving at collective decisions, it can evoke other-regarding attitudes among citizens. However, care must be taken regarding the purpose of such an informational intervention. People may react to one-sided information (as opposed to the one featuring pro and con arguments) quite differently, and pairing the two together can yield mixed results. Therefore, thought should be given to the question of how to craft deliberative interventions to best achieve the democratic goals underlying such processes.

### *Empathy Intervention: Does Perspective-taking Lead to More Reflection in Reasoning?*

> 'If we hope to meet the moral test of our times, we're going to have to talk more about the empathy deficit, the ability to see ourselves when we choose to empathize with the plight of others. It is time for a sense of empathy to infuse our politics in America'
>
> Barack Obama, *04 December 2006*

Article V studies the causal relationship between perspective-taking and reflection in political reasoning. Whereas in previous articles (e.g. Article I and Article IV), I *measured* empathy, in this article we *manipulated* perspective-taking *experimentally,* thus increasing the internal validity of our causal claim. The core hypothesis underlying this article is that taking the perspective of someone one disagrees with on a policy issue would prompt more reflective political reasoning in respondents. To test this hypothesis, we designed and fielded a survey experiment with a descriptively representative sample, along the main sociodemographic factors, such as gender, age and region. The policy issue studied in this experiment was the introduction of a universal basic income (UBI) in the UK.

Respondents in the experiment were randomly assigned to either control, placebo or empathy conditions. In the last two conditions, respondents were exposed to a short vignette about a hypothetical person, Sarah, who holds counter-attitudinal views on UBI. Perspective-taking was induced via a writing assignment, consistent with the social psychology literature. Respondents were asked to imagine Sarah's feelings and thoughts and write down what they imagined. Those randomly assigned to the placebo condition only read about Sarah, but were not instructed to take her perspective.

Post-treatment, the main variables of interest were measured. As mentioned in the method section, I measured reflection with two proxies: cognitive complexity of political reasoning and attitude change. The article gives more detailed information on each of these proxies.

Three core results are worth mentioning. First, the findings show that taking the perspective of someone with counter-attitudinal views on a policy issue increases the cognitive complexity of respondents' political reasoning. Second, the results also reveal that imagining the world from someone else's vantage point elicits other-oriented empathic feelings of concern in individuals toward their issue opponents, and the effect is substantively and statistically significant, amounting to about a third standard deviation (SD). Third, the feelings of empathic concern have, in turn, a significant positive effect on the probability of changing one's attitudes on the policy issue. In sum, perspective-taking exerts a direct and indirect positive effect on the levels of reflection respondents engage when reasoning about a policy issue.

This article constitutes a starting point for future research on affective and cognitive strategies for mitigating increasingly polarized and biased political reasoning among people. The findings show that this minimalistic and non-obtrusive written intervention has the potential of motivating people to consider and integrate the views of others in their political reasoning and make people more empathic towards the diverse others. Future research could evaluate similar interventions in real world political decision-making, for example, referendums, to see if their effect extends beyond an online experimental setting.

### *Can Mere Exposure to Counter-Attitudinal Views Have Similar Effects?*

Article VI provides a robustness test for the overall theoretical argument advanced in this thesis, by examining whether the mere exposure to political disagreement (without its emotional engagement component) could have a similar positive effect on people's political reasoning.

I designed and fielded two types of experiment to examine this research question. Study 1 applies a treatment–placebo vignette design that was conducted cross-nationally in two country contexts (UK and Chile). In this experiment, I study the separate effect of one specific element of deliberation, namely, exposure to disagreement-inducing information. Respondents randomly assigned to the treatment condition were exposed to a short vignette about a hypothetical couple who held counter-attitudinal views (to the respondent) on the policy issue of universal basic income. Those in the placebo condition read information about the same hypothetical couple who held a policy position similar to that of the respondent. I estimate the effect of exposure to disagreement by running simple linear regression analyses. The findings show that exposure to

disagreement per se has no significant effect on two kinds of proxy measures I use for capturing reflective reasoning: cognitive complexity and attitude change.

In Study 2, I designed and conducted a quasi-experiment in which respondents were randomly assigned to moderated face-to-face small groups to engage in an hour-long discussion about a salient policy issue, that is legalizing assisted dying. Whereas in Study, I experimentally manipulated political disagreement, in Study 2, disagreement was captured through content analysis of the discussions, consistent with Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger (2009). To examine the relationship between individual exposure to disagreement during the discussions and the levels of cognitive complexity of thinking and willingness to override one's prior positions on the policy issue, I estimated a set of linear regression analyses. Similar to Study 1, the findings of Study 2 yield null results. In other words, mere exposure to disagreement-inducing information during a political talk does not motivate citizens to be more reflective when making political judgements. To put it differently, when the social component of citizen deliberation, that is, the part that engages citizens' feelings and emotions, is absent from the equation, deliberation may not have the potential for assisting people to reach more reflective political decisions.

# Chapter 5: Conclusion

It is normatively desirable that citizens in democracies engage in reflective thinking, that is, consider and then integrate multiple and opposing viewpoints into their thinking when making political decisions. This thesis was aimed at investigating the conditions under which individuals can meet this requirement. Building on deliberative democracy scholarship, I investigated the potential of interpersonal deliberation for prompting individuals to make more reflective political judgements. Furthermore, I studied whether the ability of deliberation to induce reflection can be scaled up to the wider public. The research questions that drove this endeavour were the following: *How does interpersonal deliberation prompt more reflective political reasoning?* and *How can the reflection-inducing effects of interpersonal deliberation be scaled up to other parts of the democratic system?*

First, driven by the first research question, I developed a novel theory of how interpersonal deliberation can motivate more reflective political reasoning by placing 'emotional engagement' at the heart of this process. I argued that citizens' emotional engagement during interpersonal deliberation induces them to make more reflective political judgements. In particular, I focused on the role of empathy. The thesis is an important theoretical contribution to the study of micro deliberation – deliberation that takes place on a small scale – because it is one of the very first scholarly endeavours that translates the implications of highly abstract theoretical ideas about the role of emotions in deliberation into an empirically testable theory (Neblo 2020).

Second, to address the second research question, I theorized how the reflection-inducing effects of interpersonal deliberation can be scaled up. I argued that empathic perspective taking could facilitate this process of imagined deliberation in people's minds. This theory speaks to the macro theories of deliberation, those that theorize about the ways in which the benefits of deliberation can be extended to different parts of the democratic system.

Third, I marshalled a set of original qualitative, survey and experimental data to test both the micro and macro implications of my theory. My findings showed that emotional engagement experienced during deliberative discussions provides a motivation, an impetus for citizens to engage in a kind of political reasoning that is normatively desirable. I also showed that this kind of engagement can be induced beyond deliberative settings, with the help of empathetic perspective-taking interventions.

# Future Research

This thesis opens up many new questions for future research. One important question is whether one-off interventions are capable of triggering reflective thinking in the medium and long term. Does participating in a structured interpersonal deliberation make citizens more reflective in general, or are the beneficial effects short-lived? Do citizen deliberators regress towards their initial levels of reflectiveness after leaving the deliberative forum, or do the effects persist or, indeed, increase? Do instructions telling people to be empathetic encourage them to think about their future political choices more reflectively or does the effect gradually wear off over time? Within research on deliberation and within social science research in general, the long-term effects of interventions are rarely investigated. It is, however, important to shed light on the magnitude, the limits and scopes of reflection-inducing interventions to understand better how they work in practice, so that more appropriate, optimal policy interventions that would have far-reaching effects could be designed. Future studies could assess the long-term effects of the interventions proposed in this thesis, using carefully crafted panel surveys that would interview individuals at multiple time points before and after the intervention.

Another area ripe for investigation is whether reflective reasoning can be fostered in other ways. For example, moving from structured interpersonal deliberation to informal spaces, an interesting question is whether reflection can be prompted by informal political talks among neighbours, family members and acquaintances. Although previous studies have examined this question with the help of observational data (e.g. Mutz 2002), the impossibility of making causal claims from such data and the problems of self-selection and reverse causality, among others, which are inherent in survey data, hinder our understanding of the causal effect of such conversations on the formation of political attitudes. Randomized field experiments could help fill this gap (e.g. Kalla and Brookman 2020).

Future research could also examine whether, and if so, how, different institutional characteristics moderate the effect interpersonal deliberation has on motivating citizens to make more reflective political judgements. There is a growing body of empirical evidence that shows the positive effects of structured interpersonal deliberation are conditional upon its different institutional designs, for example, the composition of the deliberating groups, the decision-making structures therein and the types of communicative tools used in deliberation (Maia et al. 2020; Karpowitz, Mendelberg, and Shaker 2012; Setälä, Grönlund, and Herne 2010; Colombo 2018). For example, testing the two design features of deliberative forums (the presence of diversity of viewpoints and the interaction between rational argumentation and storytelling) that I have proposed in this

research experimentally, either alone or in conjunction with other design characteristics, could shed more light on the processes underlying deliberation and reveal its limits.

Another important question that merits academic study but falls outside the scope of this thesis is the extent to which individuals' group identity conditions the processes of empathic imagination and reflective judgements. In other words, does our group membership influence our ability to take the perspectives of those who belong to different social groups? In other words, does our membership of a particular group influence our ability to take the perspectives of those who belong to different social groups? For example, how does partisanship, an important group identity, come into play in these processes? Partisanship is one of the strongest predictors of political attitudes, and in the presence of partisan cues, the quality of political reasoning could be affected substantively (Druckman et al. 2013). Some of the policy issues discussed by the Irish Citizens' Assembly were highly partisan in nature (e.g. abortion), and deliberative discussions were, of course, not devoid of partisan politics. However, none of my empirical studies allows me to separate the individual effect of partisanship in the relationship between interpersonal deliberation, empathy and the reflectiveness of people's political judgements.[31] Future research should study this question experimentally.

Finally, to generalize the findings of this thesis, additional studies in different country contexts and with other, and perhaps more contentious policy issues (e.g. immigration, health policy) are needed.

## Applications in Practice

> 'Our campuses educate our citizens. This means learning a lot of facts, and mastering techniques of reasoning. But it means something more. It means learning how to be a human being capable of love and imagination.' (Nussbaum 2002, 301)

One of the important implications of this thesis is that increasing opportunities for interpersonal deliberation within deliberative citizen forums could augment the number of people motivated to reason reflectively about politics. This experience may have a positive spill-over effect on participating citizens' future political decision-making processes, making them more reflective in

[31] It could be the case that when hearing or reading about the policy opponent being from a different political party, citizens would have found it difficult, if not impossible to take his/her perspective and, thus, the relationship between empathy and reflection would have been moderated by partisanship or loyalty. My initial objective was to test this conjecture with another survey experiment in the USA in which I intended to manipulate the partisanship of the policy opponent. The onset of the global pandemic obliged me to reassess my plans.

general. However, as mentioned elsewhere, structured deliberative processes are demanding, costly, and attract only small numbers of people; thus they are limited in their scope of influence. It is practically impossible to engage all citizens in these processes. Although these deliberative institutions could complement the existing representative institutions whenever necessary and possible, what needs to be done in the long term is to improve the reflectiveness of mass political decision-making in the framework of the current representative institutions and via other and less demanding and wide-reaching policy and behavioral measures.

The findings of this thesis suggest that emotions, in particular empathy for the other side, can serve as a potentially powerful vehicle for motivating more reflective reasoning among citizens. Insofar as empathy is beneficial for the reflectiveness of citizens' political thinking, we should further cultivate it among and instil it into among citizens in democracies. One way of doing it would be to develop education for empathic imagination at schools, universities and beyond (Morrell 2007, 2010; Dewey 1933; Hannon 2019; Nussbaum 2002). 'Enlisting students' sympathy for distant lives', Martha Nussbaum (2002, 300) once argued, 'is […] a way of training, so to speak, the muscles of the imagination'. This can be done, for example, via art and literature. Films and novels that invite us to imagine the lives of people who are different to us can aid us in our empathetic imaginings. This potential is put vividly by the 19th century English novelist George Eliot, referring to her own ambition:

> 'The only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings, is that those who read them should be better able to *imagine* and to *feel* the pains and joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being struggling erring human creatures'
>
> (George Eliot, quoted in Mead 2014)

Previous studies show that although there are individual differences in people's ability and capacity to be empathetic, empathy can be taught and learned. Not only children and adolescents, but also the adults are capable of becoming more empathetic (Riess 2017) and, on the whole, specific trainings aimed at enhancing people's empathy levels is effective (van Berkhout and Malouff 2016).

One of the most effective types of empathy trainings is experiential training, which provides first-hand 'experiences' about others' lives via games and role-plays. International organisations already use such games with the objective of prompting perspective-taking and feelings of empathy in people in relation to those from vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. For example, the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) uses a video game entitled 'My Life as a Refugee' (www.mylifeasrefugee.org/game.html, which encourages imaginative

visualization of the life of a refugee. Similarly, the BBC has an online game entitled Syrian Journey (htt ps://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-32057601), which is based on many stories of Syrian refugees who made it to safe lands.

Another way of inducing empathetic imagination in people, as I show in one of my articles (Article V) is to instruct them explicitly to take the perspective of a different other. Consider, for example, Figure 4, which is an image of an empathy-inducing poster that I encountered while walking in Chicago back in April 2019.


*Figure 4. Imagine...*

The poster asks you to stop and put yourself in the shoes of someone who has lost their job because of whom they love. With regard to the social issues of immigration, affirmative action, racial and sexual discrimination and neighbourhood desegregation, for example, such interventions could play a major positive role. They could make the passer-by stop and think, and inspire them to engage in empathetic imaginings. However, as mentioned elsewhere, in parallel with such interventions, we also need accurate information about the target of our empathetic imaginings. In the absence of such information, our stereotypical thinking could taint our imagination. Therefore, exposure to different others in real life becomes critical for facilitating the exchange of information that would constitute the basis for our empathetic imaginings. Public policies that encourage and nurture social mixing, and enable meaningful socialization and interaction with people who are different from ourselves (according to different social and political characteristics) could facilitate understanding of what different others think and feel and lead to more empathetic and reflective political attitudes.

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# Summary

One of the biggest challenges facing contemporary democracies is that when making political judgements, most citizens do not engage in reflective political reasoning. Research finds that people's political reasoning is distorted by a range of cognitive biases and constraints. When faced with opposing information, most people have tendency to neglect it and cling to their prior attitudes. People's emotional attachment to their favored political party makes them support their party and endorse party positions, irrespective of whether these positions reflect citizens' policy preferences or not.

The normative models of political reasoning, however, assume that citizens are willing to lay aside their prior beliefs by considering diverse and opposing perspectives about the candidates and issues, and integrate these perspectives in their reasoning processes, before arriving at political judgements. How to bridge this inconsistency between the normative expectations and the reality?

The broader argument of this thesis is that well-documented biases in human political reasoning are not indicative of inherent human limitations, but rather of deficiencies in political institutional arrangements. When motivated, it argues, citizens are capable of engaging in reflective political reasoning. How to motivate citizens to think reflectively about politics? This is the research question at the heart of this dissertation.

To respond to this question, this thesis bridges democratic theory, in particular, deliberative democratic theory with the insights from social psychology. *Theoretically*, this dissertation makes a novel argument about the potential of one discrete emotion – *emotion for the other* – in motivating more reflective political thinking in citizens. It argues that when citizens are encouraged to imagine the world from different other's vantage point, they are able to lay aside their egocentric political thinking and engage in a type of reasoning which is other-regarding. I further argue that interpersonal deliberation – discussing political issues with different others – has the potential for creating a fertile political environment, capable of evoking *empathy for the other* in citizens. *Methodologically*, the dissertation applies a mixed-methods research design integrating experimental and survey data with the qualitative in-depth interview data. The thesis builds on real-world and hypothetical examples of political decision making.

The dissertation consists of two parts. Part I consists of five chapters (introduction, theoretical framework, research design, summary of empirical studies and conclusion), and Part II

encompasses six articles that constitute the analytical core of this thesis. Theoretical framework (Chapter 2) lays out the theory guiding this dissertation. Chapter 3 discusses the methodological approach of the thesis, and more particularly the mixed-methods research design. In Chapter 4, I summarize the six articles that test my theory empirically.

In Article I, I rely on a laboratory experiment, in-depth interviews and survey data and find that interpersonal deliberative communication motivates citizens to engage in more reflective and less biased political thinking, via eliciting the processes of empathic perspective taking in them. Article II shows that the kind of climate change communication that engages people emotionally is able to encourage people to reason more reflectively about ambitious climate change policies. Article III is a methodological case study which discusses the advantages and challenges of simulating real-world interpersonal deliberation in a laboratory setting. Article IV experimentally investigates the extent to which information provided about a structured interpersonal deliberation can help voters in the wider public to become more empathetic towards the people on the other side of a public policy debate. The objective of the Article V is to causally test whether empathy for the other can encourage people to think more reflectively about a policy issue. Article VI examines whether the mere exposure to opposing views on a policy issue can engender similar empathetic and reflective processes in people's political judgements.

In sum, empirical studies show that empathy for the other side can serve as a potentially powerful vehicle for motivating more reflective political reasoning among citizens. The dissertation concludes by discussing the main contributions of this thesis, suggesting new avenues for future research and proposing some applications in practice.

# Samenvatting

Één van de grootste uitdagingen waarmee democratieën geconfronteerd worden vandaag is dat de meeste burgers hun politieke beslissingen niet baseren op bedachtzame of 'reflectieve' redeneringen. Uit onderzoek blijkt dat de politieke redeneringen van mensen worden verstoord door een reeks cognitieve vertekeningen en beperkingen. Wanneer mensen bijvoorbeeld met tegengestelde informatie geconfronteerd worden, hebben de meeste mensen de neiging deze te negeren en vast te houden aan hun eerdere opvattingen. De emotionele band die mensen hebben met hun voorkeurspartij zorgt er ook voor dat ze hun partij steunen en de partijstandpunten onderschrijven, ongeacht of deze standpunten hun beleidsvoorkeuren weerspiegelen.

Normatieve modellen over politiek redeneren gaan er echter van uit dat burgers bereid zijn hun eerdere overtuigingen opzij te schuiven door andere en tegengestelde perspectieven omtrent de kandidaat en het probleem in overweging te nemen. Burgers zouden deze perspectieven dan integreren in hun redeneringsprocessen, voordat ze tot politieke oordelen komen. Kunnen we deze tegenstelling tussen de normatieve verwachtingen en de realiteit overbruggen? Hoe doen we dat?

Ik argumenteer in dit proefschrift dat welbekende cognitieve vertekeningen in het menselijke politieke redeneren niet zozeer te wijten zijn aan inherent menselijke beperkingen, maar eerder aan tekortkomingen in politieke en institutionele settings. Burgers zijn in staat reflectief en bedachtzaam te redeneren over politieke zaken –mits ze gemotiveerd zijn. Hieruit volgt de logische vraag: Hoe motiveer je burgers om reflectief over politiek na te denken? Dit is de overkoepelende onderzoeksvraag die centraal staat in dit proefschrift.

Om deze vraag te beantwoorden, slaat dit proefschrift een brug tussen democratische theorie, in het bijzonder deliberatieve democratische theorie, en sociale psychologie. *Theoretisch* stelt deze thesis een nieuw argument voor, waarin beargumenteerd wordt dat éénbepaalde emotie –*emotie voor de andere*– meer reflectief politiek denken bij burgers kan motiveren. Het stelt dat wanneer burgers worden aangemoedigd om de wereld vanuit een ander gezichtspunt voor te stellen, ze in staat zijn om hun egocentrische politieke denken opzij te zetten en te redeneren vanuit het perspectief van die andere. Ik beargumenteer verder dat interpersoonlijk overleg of 'deliberatie' - het bediscussiëren van politieke kwesties met verschillende anderen - het potentieel heeft om een vruchtbare politieke omgeving te creëren die *empathie voor de andere* bij burgers kan oproepen.

*Methodologisch* past het proefschrift een *mixed-methods* design toe, waarbij experimentele en survey data worden geïntegreerd met de kwalitatieve gegevens van diepte-interviews. Het proefschrift bouwt voort op praktijkvoorbeelden en hypothetische voorbeelden van politieke besluitvorming.

Het proefschrift bestaat uit twee delen. Deel I bestaat uit vijf hoofdstukken (inleiding, theoretisch kader, onderzoeksopzet, samenvatting van empirische studies en conclusie), en deel II omvat zes artikelen die de analytische kern van dit proefschrift vormen. Het theoretisch kader (Hoofdstuk 2) beschrijft de theorie die aan de basis ligt van dit proefschrift. Hoofdstuk 3 bespreekt de methodologische benadering van het proefschrift, en meer in het bijzonder het zogenaamde "mixed-methods" onderzoeksontwerp. In hoofdstuk 4 vat ik de zes artikelen samen die mijn theorie empirisch toetsen.

In artikel I gebruik ik een laboratoriumexperiment, diepte-interviews en enquêtegegevens. De bevindingen tonen dat interpersoonlijke deliberatieve communicatie burgers effectief motiveert om meer reflectief en minder bevooroordeeld na te denken over politiek. Het stimuleren van het innemen van een empathisch perspectief speelt hierbij een belangrijke rol. Artikel II laat zien dat communicatie omtrent de klimaatsverandering waarbij mensen emotioneel betrokken worden, mensen kan aanmoedigen om meer reflectief na te denken over een ambitieus klimaatveranderingsbeleid. Artikel III is een methodologische studie die de voordelen en uitdagingen bespreekt van het simuleren van interpersoonlijk overleg in een laboratoriumomgeving. Artikel IV onderzoekt, via een experiment, in hoeverre informatie die wordt verstrekt over een gestructureerd interpersoonlijk overleg het bredere publiek kan helpen om meer empathie te vertonen naar diegene aan de andere kant van een beleidskwestie. Het doel van artikel V is om te testen of "empathie voor de andere" mensen kan aanmoedigen om meer reflectief na te denken over een beleidskwestie, wanneer er louter informatie over de andere aanwezig is. Artikel VI onderzoekt of de loutere blootstelling aan tegengestelde opvattingen over een beleidskwestie soortgelijke empathische en reflectieve processen kan veroorzaken in het politieke oordeel van mensen.

Samenvattend tonen de empirische studies aan dat "empathie voor de andere" kan dienen als een krachtig middel om burgers te motiveren om tot meer reflectieve politieke redeneringen te komen. Het proefschrift eindigt met een bespreking van de belangrijkste bijdragen van dit proefschrift, ideeën voor toekomstig onderzoek, en enkele lessen die de praktijk kan trekken uit dit werk.

# PART II

# The Six Articles

Table 2 presents an overview of six articles. The articles are then presented in their entirety, together with their annexes. As the table shows, all requirements for an articles-based doctoral thesis according to the KU Leuven standards have been met. The thesis has at least four articles, at least three of which have either been published or accepted by peer-reviewed journals; and one is under review[32].

[32] Article 18 ('Particulars of the Faculty of Social Sciences' section) of the regulation concerning the attainment of doctoral degrees at the KU Leuven, supplemented with the particulars of the faculty of social sciences indicate: 'If the PhD thesis consists of a series of journal articles and/or book chapters, at least three journal articles and/or book chapters are accepted in at least two different high-quality journals or by high-quality publishers. The other article(s) and/or chapter(s)s is/are in review. The articles and/or chapters collected in the thesis form a coherent whole, as shown by the introduction and a synthesis' (Retrieved from: https://admin.kuleuven.be/rd/doctoraatsreglement/en/phdregulation-fss#section-6)

| Title | Co-authors? | Publication status | Journal/book | Impact factor |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Seeing the Other Side? Perspective-taking and Reflective Political Judgements in Interpersonal Deliberation | Single-authored | published; online first | *Political Studies* | 1.901 |
| Climate Change Communication and Public Engagement in Interpersonal Deliberative Settings: Evidence from the Irish Citizens' Assembly | Hayley Walker and Francesca Colli | published; online first | *Climate Policy* | 4.011 |
| Challenges of Experimenting with Citizen Deliberation in Laboratory Settings. | Single-authored | published | *SAGE Research Method Cases* | not applicable |
| Scaling up deliberation: Testing the Potential of Mini-Publics to Enhance the Deliberative Capacity of Citizens | Jane Suiter, John Gastil and David Farrell | published | *Swiss Political Science Review* | 2.065 |
| Disagreeing Empathetically: Perspective-taking and Reflective Political Reasoning | Kevin Arceneaux | under review | | |
| Political Disagreement and Reflectiveness of Political Judgements | Single-authored | under review | | |

*Table 2. Overview of the Articles with their Respective Publication Status*

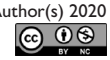
# ARTICLE I

Political Studies Association | POLITICAL STUDIES

Article

# Seeing the Other Side? Perspective-Taking and Reflective Political Judgements in Interpersonal Deliberation

Political Studies
1–21



DOI: 10.1177/0032321720916605
journals.sagepub.com/home/psx
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## Abstract

A healthy democracy needs citizens to make reflective political judgements. Sceptics argue that reflective opinions are either nonexistent or rare. Proponents of deliberative democracy suggest that democratic deliberation is capable of prompting reflective political reasoning among people. Yet, little is known about the mechanisms underlying this relationship. This article offers a bridge between psychology and political theory and proposes a theory of *perspective-taking* in deliberation. It argues that under the right conditions, deliberation induces more reflective judgements by eliciting the process of perspective-taking – *actively imagining others' experiences, perspectives and feelings* – in citizen deliberators. Two institutional features of deliberative forums are emphasized: the presence of a diversity of viewpoints and the interplay of fact-based rational argumentation and storytelling. I test the plausibility of this theory using a case study – the Irish Citizens' Assembly – thereby, relying on qualitative in-depth interview data and quantitative survey data. I further substantiate my findings with a laboratory experiment.

## Keywords

political psychology, deliberation, political reasoning, perspective-taking, empathy

Accepted: 12 March 2020

A *reflective* citizenry is crucial for democracy to flourish (Chambers, 2003; Dryzek, 2000; Goodin, 2000). Reflective opinions are the products of processes in which citizens engage in careful and systematic consideration and evaluation of diverse and conflicting arguments and justifications, and weigh the reasons for and against the course of action before arriving at political judgements (Dewey, 1933). Sceptics argue that reflective opinions are either nonexistent or rare. Some question the ability and

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competence of citizens to engage in the demanding task of reflection (Achen and Bartels, 2016); others argue that citizens know little about politics (Delli et al., 1996) and/or they are largely misinformed (Kuklinski et al., 2000). Evidence from political psychology corroborates this pessimism by emphasizing the prevalence of biased political thinking in humans (e.g. Lodge and Taber, 2010).

Is it possible to make citizens' judgements more reflective? Studying this question is important because the quality of democracy is dependent on reflection. Many individuals would have different voting preferences and more sophisticated input into policymaking if they reflected on their choices more deeply (Fishkin, 2009; Fournier et al., 2011; Luskin et al., 2002). Recent research finds that reflection decreases partisan-motivated reasoning and attenuates affective polarization (Arceneaux and Vander Wielen, 2017).

Proponents of deliberative democracy, a school of thought that 'puts communication at the heart of democracy' (Bächtiger et al., 2018: 2), suggest that citizen-to-citizen deliberation is capable of overcoming these biases and inducing more reflection in citizens' political thinking. Research shows that deliberation, be it within structured citizen assemblies, deliberative polls, citizens' juries or small group discussion experiments, leads to transformed attitudes towards policy (e.g. Fishkin, 2009; Luskin et al., 2002; Suiter et al., 2016), increased cognitive complexity of political reasoning (e.g. Colombo, 2018) and better alignment between values, beliefs and preferences (Niemeyer, 2019; Niemeyer and Dryzek, 2007) among citizen deliberators.[1]

Yet, little is known about the mechanisms underlying these transformations. There have been few systematic theoretical and empirical endeavours to unpack the emotional and cognitive processes through which deliberation leads to more reflective public opinion (Rosenberg, 2013). Scholars propose at least two mutually nonexclusive potential pathways. Some argue that citizens arrive at more reflective judgements through *justification rationality* (Bächtiger and Parkinson, 2019), in other words, 'by the force of the better argument' (Habermas, 1981), whereas others accentuate the role of knowledge acquisition (Barabas, 2004). Yet, empirical evidence for these theories is mixed and inconclusive. Furthermore, by focusing exclusively on factual information gain and reason-giving, they tend to neglect the role of emotions in citizens' political reasoning and decision-making processes (Marcus et al., 2000; Morrell, 2010).

This study offers a bridge between psychology and political theory and proposes a theory of *perspective-taking* in deliberation, which complements the existing theories on reflection through deliberation. Building on the psychological theory of perspective-taking[2] (Todd and Galinsky, 2014), it argues that under the right conditions, deliberation produces more reflective political judgements by inducing the process of perspective-taking among citizens.

The theory is examined using the Irish Citizens' Assembly (ICA) – a real-world deliberative body consisting of randomly selected and nationally representative citizens of Ireland (Farrell et al., 2019). First, I discuss institutional characteristics of the ICA that make it particularly suitable for inducing the process of perspective-taking among participants. The following two design features are emphasized: the presence of a diversity of viewpoints and the interplay of fact-based argumentation and storytelling during deliberations. Furthermore, I examine if the ICA meets the theoretical conditions for inducing perspective-taking from the viewpoint of the citizen deliberators by employing rich qualitative data collected from 11 in-depth interviews with members of the assembly. Second, with the help of survey data from the ICA, I study the relationship between

perspective-taking and reflective judgements. Finally, using a laboratory experiment that manipulated deliberation and employed more extended measures for the variables of interest, I further substantiate the role of perspective-taking in reflective political thinking. My findings show that dispositional perspective-taking, that citizen deliberators bring to deliberation, influences the effectiveness of deliberation in prompting more reflection in citizens' judgements.

This study adds to the microtheories of deliberation (see Bächtiger and Parkinson, 2019 for a review) in making a new theoretical contribution in relation to the potential of citizen deliberation for evoking more reflective political judgements by activating the process of perspective-taking in participants. Furthermore, it contributes to the scholarship in political psychology that studies the correlates of reflective political reasoning (see Arceneaux and Vander Wielen, 2017) by adding empirical evidence on the relationship between perspective-taking and reflection.

Finally, the findings have practical implications for systemic approaches to deliberation. In today's societies, it is practically unfeasible for all citizens to engage in structured face-to-face group deliberations (Goodin, 2000). If we come to better understand the processes underlying deliberation, we could, for instance, isolate those elements of deliberation that induce more reflection in citizens and embed them in other settings in the larger democratic system (Boswell and Corbett, 2017; Mansbridge et al., 2012; Owen and Smith, 2015), such as the media, education and electoral campaigns.

## Unpacking Deliberation

Existing research suggests that several mutually nonexclusive mechanisms may drive reflection in citizens' political thinking in deliberative settings. The *justification rationality* theory embraces the Habermasian logic of communication, and argues that any positive transformation in citizens' judgements within public deliberative settings is the product of a 'systematic process wherein actors tell the truth, justify their positions extensively and are willing to *yield to the better argument*' (Bächtiger et al., 2010: 33, emphasis author's). The logic underlying this pathway is that rational arguments exchanged during deliberation make citizens 'become aware of the conflicts inherent in their own desires' and offer them 'new perspectives not only with respect to possible solutions, but also with respect to their own preferences' (Manin, 1987: 350). As a result, citizens are induced to reflect on their judgements 'by the force of the better argument' (Habermas, 1981). Prior research offers some evidence to support this claim. For instance, Gerber et al. (2014) examine mechanisms underlying opinion transformations in the context of Europolis deliberations and find that reason-giving during deliberation affects opinion transformation among citizens (albeit this influence is context-specific). Yet, Caluwaerts and Reuchamps (2014) find that the quality of deliberation (e.g. the level of justification, respect for counter-arguments) has a very limited impact upon citizens' political judgements (see also Himmelroos and Christensen, 2014).

The *information* theory, however, posits that individuals gain issue-related information and knowledge either from experts or from each other (or both) in deliberation, which leads them to reconsider their policy choices. Jason Barabas (2004) finds that information gained during deliberation leads to the formation of enlightened judgements.

Still, some studies show that the effect may not be exclusive to group deliberations (e.g. Goodin and Niemeyer, 2003; Muhlberger, 2005).

Both theories capture the crucial aspects of deliberation, most importantly reason-giving and learning. However, by focusing exclusively on reasons and factual information gain as potential mechanisms, these theories either implicitly or explicitly discount the role of emotions in citizens' reasoning processes. The research across disciplines shows that reflection is a complex process, and is not devoid of emotions. In fact, emotions precede and influence human reasoning and decision-making and interact to produce more thoughtful political judgements (Marcus et al., 2000). Therefore, the main objective of this article is to advance a theory on the role of perspective-taking – a dimension of empathy – in prompting more reflection in citizens' political thinking in deliberative settings.

## Deliberation and Perspective-Taking

The study of perspective-taking and affective empathy is not new to deliberative democracy and deliberation research. For example, Tali Mendelberg (2002: 153) argues that 'deliberation is expected to lead to empathy with the other and a broadened sense of people's own interests'. Jane Mansbridge (1983: 285) posits that face-to-face discussions 'provide the conditions in which citizens are most likely to take responsibility for and empathize with others'. Jurgen Habermas (1981), in his interpretation of discourse ethics, advocates the process of ideal role taking (i.e. perspective-taking) as being an important precondition of a good deliberation, and suggests that only by taking the perspective of others and projecting ourselves into their situation can we understand their arguments.

It is argued that perspective-taking and affective empathy lead, in turn, to a set of beneficial democratic outcomes. Jane Mansbridge suggests that empathy leads people to make each other's good their own (Mansbridge, 1983: 27) by 'facilitate(ing) the creation of common interest' (Mansbridge, 1983: 285) and nurturing listening and mutual respect (Mansbridge, 1999: 225). In a similar vein, Michael Morrell (2010), in his comprehensive account of the role of empathy in deliberative democracy, *Empathy and Democracy*, contends that empathy is a crucial process in which we have to engage if we want deliberative democracy to succeed. He calls for reshaping deliberative theory in order to place the process of empathy at the centre of deliberation, and advocates the inclusion of empathy in the democratic education system (Morrell, 2007, 2010).

Despite this attention to perspective-taking and affective empathy, scholars have rarely theorized about *why, how* and *under what conditions* deliberation can induce the process of perspective-taking among citizens and, similarly, *whether* and *under what conditions* perspective-taking is beneficial for citizens' reasoning processes during deliberations.

Here, I offer a theory of perspective-taking in deliberation focused on two questions. First, what institutional features of deliberative forums make them perfect for inducing the process of perspective-taking among citizen deliberators? Second, how is this process, in turn, capable of producing more reflection in citizens' political reasoning?

Reflection involves engaging in the consideration and evaluation of diverse and conflicting perspectives before arriving at political decisions (Dewey, 1933). Research in social psychology tells us that *perspective-taking* – actively imagining others' experiences, perspectives and feelings – attenuates egocentrism in human judgements, and leads to more reflective and considerate thinking in individuals (see Todd and Galinsky,

2014 for a review). Scholars suggest that there are several mechanisms underlying this relationship. First, putting oneself in someone else's shoes may evoke feelings of increased *empathic concern* towards the target (whose perspective one is taking), which may, in turn, prompt the individual to overcome egocentric reasoning and reflect on his or her choices more deeply. Second, taking someone else's perspective may lead to a 'greater overlap in mental representations of self and other' (Todd and Galinsky, 2014: 380). In other words, perspective-taking can make the other person appear 'self-like' or make the self seem more 'other-like' (see Todd and Galinsky, 2014 for a review). Whichever is the underlying mechanism, perspective-taking may create an increased awareness and understanding in citizen deliberators of others' lives and perspectives. In this dawning of awareness, people may be more motivated to engage in reflective reasoning (e.g. Galinsky and Moskowitz, 2000; Todd et al., 2012).

Perspective-taking is itself a challenging process. There are several important barriers that hinder people from taking others' perspectives accurately (see Epley and Caruso, 2009). This process requires at least two conditions. First, for a person to actively imagine the world from another person's perspective, he or she needs to have information about *that world*. In the absence of information, imagining the scenario in question becomes difficult or something inaccurate is envisaged. When trying to take the perspective of someone else, people may, by default, rely on their 'stored knowledge', which may include 'stereotypes or other idiosyncratic information known about the target' (Epley and Caruso, 2009: 300–305). Potential biases in the stored knowledge may lead people to make erroneous inferences about another person's feelings and thoughts. This could, in turn, become a potential barrier to the process of perspective-taking. In other words, for perspective-taking to work, a person needs to acquire relevant and useful information about the target and his or her world.

Second, the information about the target's feelings and thoughts should be communicated to the perspective-taker in a way that facilitates the process of perspective-taking. In rare situations, perspective-taking is automatic. In most cases, it needs to be explicitly activated (Epley and Caruso, 2009). Communication scholars have proposed *storytelling* as an important communicative tool capable of inviting and encouraging the process of perspective-taking (see Gastil and Black, 2018 for a review). In Laura Black's (2008: 99) words, 'stories bring people's experiences and perspectives to the conversation in a powerful way that is qualitatively different from issue-oriented discussion', due to their ability to 'display values and worldviews that are typically not talked about' via other discursive modes, such as fact-based argumentation (Black, 2008: 105). In other words, personal stories should have the potential for prompting participants to 'imagine the real[ity] of the other' (Black, 2008: 96; Buber, 1998: 71; Gastil and Black, 2018).

The institutional features of deliberative forums make them well suited for meeting these required conditions. With respect to *information*, deliberative forums include learning and deliberation processes that encourage the participants to listen, learn, ask clarifying questions and get acquainted with diverse perspectives, viewpoints and lives. One of the key features of many deliberative forums is that they are usually designed to enable the participation of people with diverse and opposing points of view. After having spent some time together, participants acquire information not only about each other's views on the issues under discussion, but also about each other's life experiences, families and other background characteristics. The presence of diverse perspectives should, thus, create a rich informational context that should further facilitate the process of perspective-taking among participants (see Grönlund et al., 2017: 464 for a similar argument).[3]

Second, nowadays, deliberative forums foster not only the fact-based argumentation, but also alternative and less formal modes of communication such as storytelling, narratives, testimony and humour. These additions to the ideal type of deliberative discourse modes have mainly been inspired by the arguments put forward by feminist democrats that the neutral language of rational reason-giving is typical of middle-class white men and largely disadvantages women, minorities and the working class (e.g. Sanders, 1997; Young, 2000).

When combined, these two features of deliberation – the presence of diverse perspectives and the opportunity for expressing one's arguments and perspectives through personal stories – should induce the process of perspective-taking in citizen deliberators. Therefore, deliberative forums should provide fertile environments for inducing in people the process of perspective-taking and, subsequently, that of reflective judgement.

## Perspective-Taking at the ICA

Although my argument is primarily theoretical, in this section I rely on a real-world deliberative forum – the ICA – to illustrate its plausibility. The ICA was established in 2016 with the goal of carefully considering five important legal and policy issues pertaining to Irish society: a constitutional ban on abortion, an ageing population, climate change, referenda and fixed-term parliaments. It consisted of the chairperson and 99 randomly selected citizens (and 99 substitutes) from all walks of life and largely representative of the Irish voters, according to main sociodemographic features such as age, gender, social class and regional spread. During 11 weekends, assembly members met to deliberate in small groups, listened to expert presentations from both sides and produced conclusions on each of the topics discussed. These conclusions comprised the bases of reports and voted recommendations, and were later submitted to the Houses of Oireachtas (Irish parliament) for subsequent debate by the elected members. The assembly made 1 key recommendation on abortion, 15 recommendations (and 6 ancillary ones) on ageing population, 13 recommendations on climate change, 8 recommendations on referenda and 7 recommendations on fixed-term parliaments (see Farrell et al., 2019).

The selection of this particular case study is not coincidental. The ICA is a real-world and important deliberative forum, which has been influential in informing and shaping the political decisions of the broader Irish polity. Its recommendations on the topic of the Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution (i.e. abortion) pushed the Irish government to call for a nationwide referendum in May 2018. The assembly had a significant role in this process. First, it 'shap[ed] the referendum question and the draft legislation' (Field, 2018: 608). Second, public deliberations by the assembly were livestreamed and its recommendations were publicized among the wider citizenry. The commentators suggest that the assembly has contributed substantially to progressing the debate on abortion within Irish society. Early evidence from the RTÉ/Universities exit poll suggests that the assembly has influenced voting choices by improving knowledge about issues among a wider public. In other words, those participants who were more familiar with the assembly (compared to those who were unfamiliar) voted differently (Suiter, 2018). Furthermore, the debates of the ICA were also driven by broader divisive discourses outside the mini-public, especially when it came to the issues of abortion and climate change. Hence, the consequential character of this assembly for real-world policymaking, and its agenda-setting and awareness-raising roles in wider society (Suiter, 2018), makes this case study compelling with its strong ecological validity.

The ICA possessed the institutional features that should have induced the process of perspective-taking among participants according to the theory I have developed here. The assembly discussed topics that affected different parts of Irish society. For example, although *abortion* was clearly a feminine topic, *ageing population* was most relevant for the elderly and *climate change* mostly affected the future generation and so on. When the assembly was created, one of its main objectives was to bring together a group of citizens that closely resembled a microcosm of Irish society, not only with regard to the main sociodemographic factors, such as age, education, gender and region, but also in relation to views and perspectives. The presence of a diversity of viewpoints, or in the words of the organizers 'allow[ing] the full spectrum of views to be heard on every issue' (Citizens' Assembly, 2018) constituted one of the key principles of the assembly. Ensuring a diversity of viewpoints during each round table discussion was also one of the main objectives of the organizers.

Second, the ICA created and nurtured a deliberative environment in which fact-based rational argumentation, storytelling, narratives, testimony and humour were freely expressed, whether according to expert or witness communications, round table discussions undertaken by assembly members or within the framework of communications by the wider public to the assembly. The structure of the assembly enabled the citizen deliberators to become acquainted with different perspectives through different modes of communication and, thus, facilitated the process of perspective-taking.

Thus, the ICA meets my theoretical conditions for facilitating the process of perspective-taking among participants. But did citizens feel that was the case too? To examine this question, I conducted in-depth and semi-structured interviews with 11 members of the Irish Assembly (4 female and 7 male). Data saturation was used as a criterion for discontinuing interview data collection (Saunders et al., 2018). The objective of these interviews was not to reach a quantifiable sample, but rather to obtain a deeper and more nuanced understanding about the processes underlying deliberations. The interviews were face to face and lasted on average an hour. They were audio-recorded after having obtained the informed consent of the assembly members and were later transcribed verbatim.[4]

*Diversity and Inclusion*: A pattern that has emerged repeatedly from interview data is that the presence of diverse voices was crucial for the processes of empathic imaginations (Goodin, 2000); it enabled participants to imagine and understand 'where other people came from'. Consider, for example, the thoughts of an interviewee referring to the issue of *ageing population in Ireland*:

> [A] lot of the kind of personal stuff were actually self-generated within the people who had already experienced that, you know, dealing with elderly relatives. And also . . . Let us not to forget because of the *population spread within the group*, there was, you know, *the number of elderly*, yeah, so they . . . had opinion . . ., because a lot directly affects them. . . . So for people who are little bit younger to have one to one conversation, that or round table conversation that was important.

In addition to the mere presence of these opinions, the ICA also provided the members with a *safe environment* in which to air these differences. This environment invited the free expression of stories and arguments and it contributed to creating bonds of trust and mutual understanding among citizens even when they disagreed with each other:

> You know, everybody feels like it is a *safe* space for their opinion, even if they know that it [their expressed opinion] is not going to be popular with the people at the table in that forum [and]

> people will openly disagree with them; that it stays there and it is not being taken out to open air, where it is kind of . . . I do not like you, you know, because we do not agree and something like that.

Being encouraged to listen to and to speak with different others induced the processes of perspective-taking and affective empathy in participants:

> It does not matter if you think it's black and it is white. You know, you are listened to and spoken to. It is more important than you think it is black. Because at the end of the day, I know it is white and you think it is black. But the inclusion of it, being there. It is the *empathy*. I really listen to you; it is *trash*, but I listen to you. Yeah, you know what I mean?

*The interplay of fact-based argumentation and personal stories*: The interviewees repeatedly referred to the sequence of the ICA meetings as 'ideal', 'brilliant' and 'perfect' when talking about the ways in which deliberation affected their thought processes:

> I think . . . it was planned brilliantly: the first few meetings were specifically about *facts, and statistics*, and peer-reviewed research, so that we could get understanding without any emotional discussions. . . . She [the chair] wanted to make sure that we understood the facts surrounding the 8th amendment, around the constitution, around what currently happens. . . . Further along in the process, because some of it was kind of abstract, then became more personal, when we heard *personal stories* of some of the women involved. We heard the recordings of them, and we heard from advocacy groups . . . which brought more emotive part from late date, *once we had a grounding in proper factual information*. . . . Once they understood the facts, then they heard the *personal stories*, and you know, they could make a decision based on that, I think that changed a lot of people.

Factual information served as a basis for citizens' understanding of the issue, whereas personal stories and testimonies engaged their feelings with respect to the issue and made it easier for them to take the perspectives of diverse others. For some, these stories constituted a part of the factual information, especially when the story was about someone whose perspective was absent at the discussion table:

> *Personal stories* . . . they were backed up by the *factual information*, by the statistics, but I think it is the part that gets you in the guts. . . . It is *somebody's story*. We heard one story about an older lady who had been put in a care home, against her will, basically, and you know that was just incredibly sad, no amount of statistics could give you what actually happens underground, what actually happens in people's lives. Because you cannot boil down the people to numbers generally speaking. But it is good to have numbers and statistics to back up the thoughts. So I think that the more impactful of the two on me anyway, was kind of *personal stories and narratives* from people directly. You . . . have to consider especially when somebody [is] not in the room, the personal story might be the factual personal story. When the *two go hand in hand* . . .

The stories were not only a part of the testimonies of the people affected by the policy issue, but also an important part of the group discussions:

> [Y]ou know . . . other people's experiences, sometimes when we sit in these kinds of sessions, we do not, maybe, fully realize that the individual experiences at the end of the day are actually *big experiences*, you know, you are talking about things that affect people's lives, and quite often can change their lives, so, it is kind of, as I said, the *combination of all of those processes*.

In sum, these findings suggest that, consistent with the theory, citizens also found these two features of the ICA important for inviting them to take the perspectives of diverse others and imagine the world from others' vantage points.

## Survey Data from the ICA

Interview data showed that the ICA had relevant institutional features, which according to the members, facilitated the process of perspective-taking. The next thing to consider is if this process had any effect on citizens' engagement in reflective political reasoning during deliberations. Empirical studies examining the benefits of perspective-taking and affective empathy in deliberation are few and have mostly yielded mixed and inconclusive results. Michael Morrell (2010), for instance, studied the effect of empathy on individuals' reciprocity and commitment to continue deliberating by designing and fielding a laboratory experiment. He found that group levels of empathic predisposition (manipulated based on previously measured individual levels of empathic predisposition) led to citizens developing heightened perceptions of the value of mutual respect and an open-minded deliberative process. Ugarriza and Nussio (2017) induced perspective-taking in citizen deliberators by asking them 'to make references to their own personal perspective and history when justifying their proposals' (Ugarriza and Nussio, 2017: 9), and measured their intergroup attitudes pre- and post-intervention. Their findings show that perspective-taking improved mean attitudes towards the outgroup, although this effect was limited to only one group – community members – and was not found among ex-combatants. Although these studies find some support for the claim that empathy is good for deliberation, they do not examine the role of perspective-taking in citizens' political reasoning.

The exception is the Grönlund et al. (2017) study, in which the authors examine the question of whether the ability to consider others' perspectives is a precondition for citizen deliberation and the extent to which deliberation enhances this consideration. Their analysis relies on an experiment in citizen deliberation on the polarizing issue of immigration, held in Finland. Their main outcome variable – *consideration for an outgroup perspective* – while not the same measure, seems to capture processes similar to those underlying reflection.[5] Grönlund et al. (2017) find that deliberation increases consideration for the other side and this increase is greater among people in the *con* enclave (those with negative attitudes on immigration) deliberating in mixed groups. I build on this study and expand on it by studying the relationship between deliberation, perspective-taking and reflection in a real-world deliberative setting.

## Operationalizing and Measuring Perspective Taking in a Survey

It is challenging (if not impossible) to measure and capture the intrapsychic processes of perspective-taking directly with interview or survey data. However, it is possible to test the plausibility of perspective-taking indirectly. This section is an attempt to gauge whether perspective-taking is positively related to citizens' willingness to engage in a demanding task of reflective reasoning in interpersonal deliberative settings. Perspective-taking largely depends on 'dispositions that people bring to deliberation' (Morrell, 2018: 246). Psychologists argue that there is a wide variance in individuals' dispositions to engage in perspective-taking (Davis, 1980; Van der Graaff et al., 2018). Some people are more inclined than others 'to adopt the perspective, or point of view, of other people' in

everyday social interactions (Davis, 1980: 6). Thus, people who are most disposed to taking others' perspectives may be more affected by the process of perspective-taking induced by deliberation. Conversely, individuals who have lower levels of dispositional perspective-taking may be less affected by it. Under this assumption, we can hypothesize that those who score high on dispositional perspective-taking are also more motivated to reason reflectively. Therefore, my hypothesis is that people's dispositional perspective-taking will increase their willingness to engage in reflective political judgements.

The survey measures used for testing this expectation were part of a larger survey, fielded during the last weekend of the ICA in April 2018. I measure perspective-taking with two items from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) questionnaire (Davis, 1980), a widely used and validated measure for dispositional perspective-taking. Participants were asked to indicate how well the following statements described them: 'I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person's point of view' (reversed) and 'When I am upset at someone, I usually try to put myself in his or her shoes for a while'. Each statement was rated on a 5-point scale with the greater number indicating higher levels of dispositional perspective-taking ($M_1 = 4.24$, $SD_1 = 0.93$; $M_2 = 3.9$, $SD_2 = 0.99$). Before introducing these items to assembly members, I tested them among 36 Irish citizens through an online opt-in panel designed for research, Prolific. Although the internal reliability of the measure in the pilot sample was acceptable (Cronbach's alpha = 0.70), it was low in the ICA data. Therefore, I run my analyses on each item separately.

The proxy I use for the reflective judgement measure is adopted from a psychometric measurement called *deliberation within* by Weinmann (2017). The measurement builds on theoretical works by Mercier and Landemore (2012) and Gastil (2008), and taps into information processing 'which comprises specific cognitive processes of individuals as citizens of a democratic society' (Weinmann, 2017: 3). The original measure has five items; I use three items due to space restrictions within the survey. The validity and reliability of the measure were tested with a pilot study prior to fielding it. The items loaded well in one factor and the internal reliability of the measure was high (Cronbach's alpha = 0.80). Respondents were asked to indicate how well each of the items below described the development of their views over the course of the ICA meetings: (a) I tended to reflect on the different views about the issues discussed, (b) I thought about arguments for and against my own and others' opinions on the issues discussed and (c) I evaluated the arguments that speak for and against my own and others' opinions. An index was created summing the responses to three items ($\alpha = 0.74$). I rescaled the response scale from 9–15 to 1–7 for ease of interpretation ($M = 5.18$; $SD = 0.19$).

Figures 1 and 2 present the range and spread of the dataset for each variable of interest. Both independent and dependent variables seem to skew towards the high end: on average, citizen deliberators score high on the self-reported measures of dispositional perspective-taking ($M_{pt1} = 4.25$, $SD_{pt1} = 0.93$, $N_{pt1} = 69$; $M_{pt2} = 3.9$, $SD_{pt2} = 0.99$, $N_{pt2} = 69$; range: 1–5) and reflection ($M_{rj} = 5.2$, $SD_{rj} = 1.60$, $N_{rj} = 69$; range: 1–7).

Figure 3 presents two scatterplots visualizing the relationship between perspective-taking (in two separate items) and reflective judgements. It shows there are three observations (two in Figure 3(a) and one in Figure 3(b)) that are clear outliers. A closer look at these observations reveals that they share at least three common characteristics: all three are male, aged 65+ and retired. Dropping these outliers can substantially bias my results. Therefore, I run all my analyses twice, with and without these outliers.

For my analyses, I use a nonparametric test as my data have a very skewed distribution and have outliers that cannot be removed. I examine the relationship between

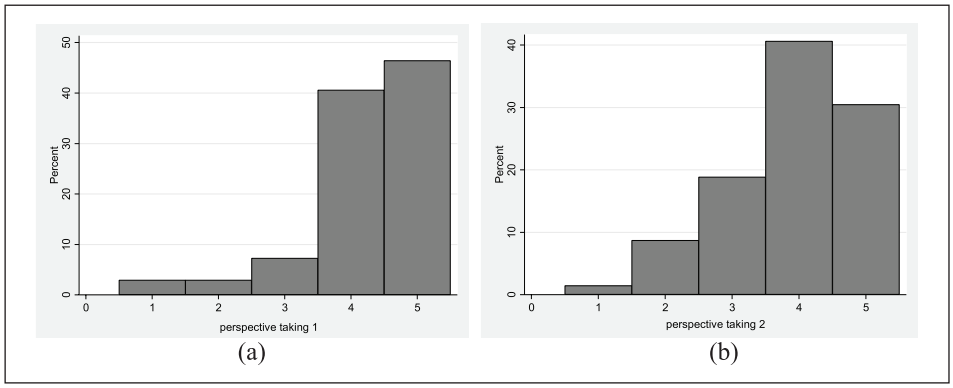


**Figure 1.** Distribution of Dispositional Perspective-Taking (In Two Items) Among ICA Members. (a) Perspective-Taking (1). (b) Perspective-Taking (2).

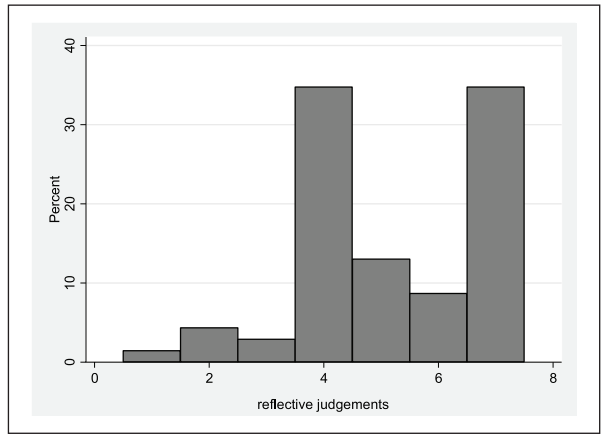


**Figure 2.** Distribution of Reflective Judgements among ICA Members.

perspective-taking and reflective judgements with the help of Spearman's rho, which assesses how well the association between two variables can be described. My preference for the Spearman rank correlation is based on the fact that its correlation coefficient is not as sensitive to extreme values.

The results show citizens' dispositional perspective-taking and their reflective judgements are positively associated (without outliers: $pt_1$: $r_s = 0.61$, $p < 0.00$; $pt_2$: $r_s = 0.30$, $p < 0.02$; with outliers: $pt_1$: $r_s = 0.54$, $p < 0.00$; $pt_2$: $r_s = 0.28$, $p < 0.02$), although the strength of this correlation depends on the item used to measure dispositional perspective-taking. In other words, people who are most disposed to perspective-taking are more likely to engage in reflective political judgements. The excerpt that follows from my qualitative interviews illustrates the role the perspective-taking process plays in citizens' reflections on a highly contentious issue – abortion:

> [F]rom the very first day at the table I was on, there were elderly people, who would have been raised in a very catholic environment, who would have been . . . from rural environment . . .

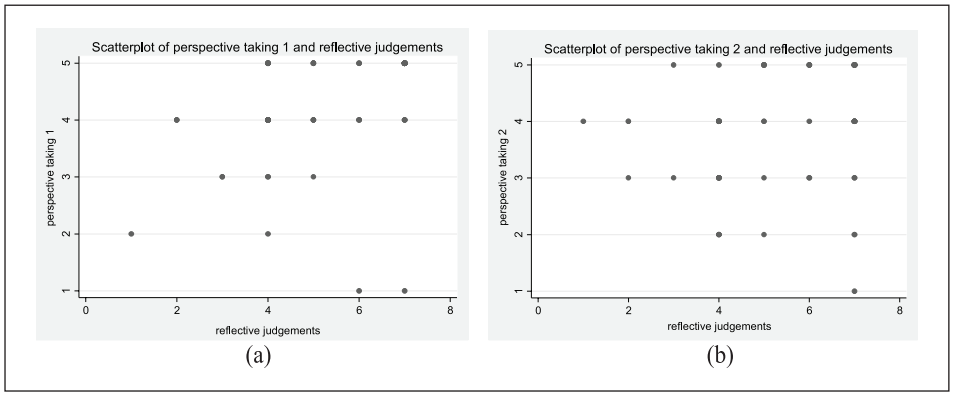


**Figure 3.** Scatterplot of the Relationship Between Perspective-Taking and Reflective Judgements. (a) Perspective-Taking (1). (b) Perspective-Taking (2).

> you know . . . they were totally opposed to abortion. They made it totally clear from day one that they had huge issues with this. Towards the end, they would say: 'that is still how all stands, that is how I feel . . . But I totally understand why things need to change for *other* people'. . . . You know, hang on . . . This affects other people, who are younger, who have passed this. . . . 'I will vote this way, even though this goes against my beliefs'. . . . I thought it was *empathetic*, brave and unselfish. I could see these people were really struggling, that was the core of their belief, that was how they grew up, that was ingrained [in them], you know. Yet, they decided that changes need to happen, even though [they] did not believe in it. . . . I think it was a very hard decision for many people. It was not just some sort of a throw-away decision, you know, there was a lot of *soul-searching* for a lot of people.

In sum, these findings show that citizen deliberators' dispositional perspective-taking is associated with their willingness to engage in reflective political reasoning.

## An Experimental Test

The quantitative data from the ICA, albeit having high ecological validity, have (at least) two limitations. First, dispositional perspective-taking was measured post-deliberation and, thus, it is challenging to discount the confounding effect of prior deliberations on citizens' levels of dispositional perspective-taking. Citizen deliberators may have become better perspective-takers as a result of deliberations. Second, it is difficult to make causal claims about the relationship between deliberation, perspective-taking and reflective judgements by relying on observational and interview data.

With these limitations in mind, I subjected a part of my theoretical model to an experimental test. More specifically, I aimed to examine the relationship between dispositional perspective-taking and reflective judgement, and whether the latter is affected by small group deliberations. A laboratory experiment with UK residents was designed and fielded, in which deliberation was manipulated by inviting subjects to participate in a small group discussion on the issue of legalizing assisted dying. The study consisted of two waves. In wave 1 (on average, 7 days prior to the experiment), I fielded a survey to 600 UK residents (55% student and 45% non-student; 68% female; 55% 18–26 years old; 32% having at least a bachelor's degree or equivalent),[6] recruited through a behavioural laboratory of

a university from the United Kingdom. In this survey, individuals' dispositional perspective-taking was measured with a full battery of seven items from Davis' IRI questionnaire (see the Supplemental, online appendix). For the purposes of the analyses, a sum index was created (M = 23.36; SD = 4.42; range: 9 to 35), which was standardized for ease of interpretation (M = 0.00; SD = 1; range: –3.25 to 2.63).

In wave 2 of the study, a subgroup of subjects were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions: deliberation, placebo or control. Those in the deliberation group were invited to take part in a small group (8–12 participants in each) discussion in the laboratory. Prior to discussions, participants read a short article about legalizing assisted dying that featured four arguments in favour and four arguments against (see the Supplemental, online appendix). Group discussions lasted 45–70 minutes. Consistent with the ideals of deliberation, I ensured that the subjects (a) received balanced information, (b) had a facilitator, (c) understood and agreed upon the rules of group deliberation and (d) were encouraged to express their thoughts and arguments through different communicative tools (such as personal stories, narratives and so on, in addition to fact-based argumentation). The only condition that the experiment did not meet was the presence of diverse perspectives in each discussion group. Most people who self-selected to participate in the experiment, having been previously notified about its objective and the possibility of being randomly assigned to a discussion group, were in favour of legalizing assisted dying.

Immediately after the discussion, respondents completed a post-intervention survey, in which outcome variables were measured. Those randomly assigned to the placebo group read the same short article with arguments and completed a post-intervention survey. Participants randomly assigned to the control condition only completed the post-intervention survey.

A total of 127 subjects participated in the study: 37 in the deliberation, 59 in the placebo and 31 in the control conditions.[7] The unbalanced nature of the sample was due to the following factors. First, the objective was to have 60 subjects in the deliberation condition and 60 subjects in the placebo condition. There was, however, drop-outs from the experiment. Attrition was the greatest in the deliberation group, due to heavy snow on the day of discussions and, potentially, the demanding nature of deliberations. Post hoc analyses showed that the attrition was not systematic according to either the attitudinal measures or the sociodemographic characteristics. Second, I opted for a smaller sample size for the control group, due to the costly nature of the laboratory experiment and the relative lack of interest for the control condition.[8]

Consistent with the first study, reflective judgements are captured with the *deliberation within* measure (Weinmann, 2017). A summary index of a full battery of items was created (M = 26.03; SD = 4.41; range: 11 to 35). All items loaded in one factor well, and the Cronbach's alpha was acceptable (0.68). The index was standardized for ease of interpretation (M = 0; SD = 1; range: –3.4 to 2.03).

Figures 4 and 5 visualize the range and spread of dispositional perspective-taking and reflective judgements among participants ($n = 126$).

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of reflective judgements across the three experimental conditions.

As can be seen, those in the deliberation group report having reflected about their choices more than those in the other two conditions. However, the results of difference in means t-tests show that this difference is not statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ significance level.

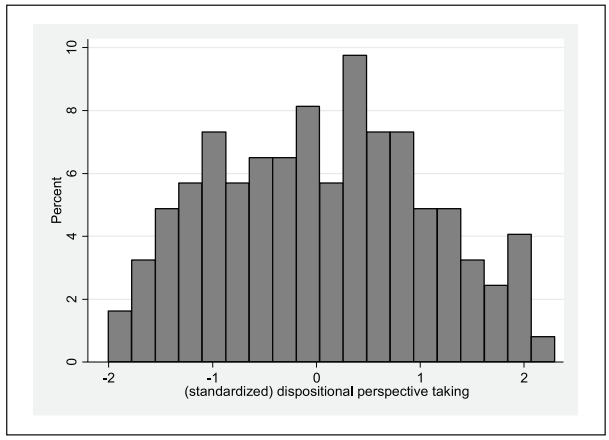


**Figure 4.** Distribution of Perspective-Taking among Participants.

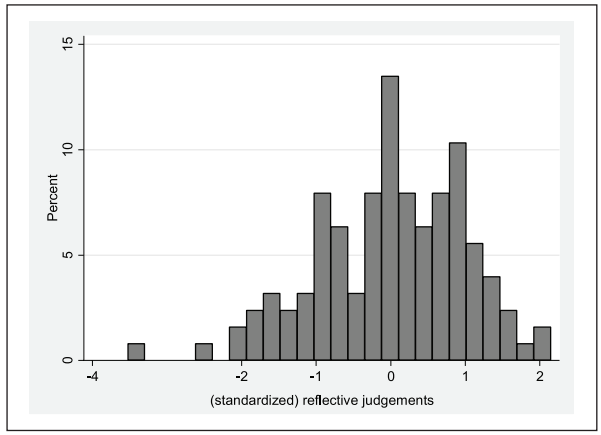


**Figure 5.** Distribution of Reflective Judgements among Participants.

To estimate the relationship between deliberation, dispositional perspective-taking and reflective judgements, I use linear regression analyses. Table 2 presents the results of these analyses.

Model 1 estimates the bivariate relationship between dispositional perspective-taking and reflective judgements. It shows that a one unit increase in dispositional perspective-taking leads to a 0.32 SD increase in reflective judgements. Model 2 examines the effect of experimental interventions (information and deliberation) on the reflectiveness of citizen deliberators' political judgements, controlling for their dispositional perspective-taking. While the direction of the coefficients for both information and deliberation is consistent with theoretical expectations that they would have positive effects on reflective judgements, neither effect is statistically significant at a conventional significance level ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the data do not allow us to directly test whether deliberation induced the perspective-taking process in citizen deliberators. Furthermore, care must be taken in interpreting this finding. One of the key conditions for the process of

**Table 1.** Mean (Standardized) Reflective Judgement across Experimental Conditions.

| | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|
| Control group, $n = 31$ | –0.19 | 1.13 |
| Information group, $n = 58$ | 0.02 | 0.97 |
| Deliberation group, $n = 37$ | 0.13 | 0.94 |

**Table 2.** OLS Estimates of the Relationship Between Perspective-Taking and Reflective Judgements in Interpersonal Deliberative Settings.

| | (1) | (2) |
|---|---|---|
| Dispositional perspective-taking | 0.32*** | 0.32*** |
| | (0.08) | (0.09) |
| Information treatment | | 0.10 |
| | | (0.24) |
| Deliberation treatment | | 0.31 |
| | | (0.25) |
| Intercept | –0.02 | –0.16 |
| | (0.08) | (0. 20) |
| Observations | 126 | 126 |
| Adjusted R-squared | 0.10 | 0.12 |

Robust standard errors in parentheses.
***$p < 0.000$.

perspective-taking that is identified in the theory developed in this article – the presence of a diversity of viewpoints on the issue – could not be guaranteed in this experiment. Most of the discussion groups in this experiment consisted of like-minded individuals. This was different in the Irish case in which deliberators were exposed to opposing viewpoints during deliberations.

## Discussion and Conclusion

A healthy democracy needs citizens to make reflective and well-thought-out political judgements, as opposed to unreflective and impulsive ones. Proponents of deliberative democracy suggest that citizen deliberation is capable of inducing more reflective political thinking among people. Yet, little is known about the mechanisms underlying this relationship. This article offers a bridge between psychology and political science and proposes a theory of *perspective-taking* in deliberation. It argues that under the right conditions, deliberation produces more reflection when citizens make judgements by inducing the process of perspective-taking – *actively imagining others' experiences, perspectives and feelings* – in citizen deliberators. Two institutional features of citizen deliberation are particularly important in this respect: the presence of a diversity of viewpoints and the interplay of fact-based rational argumentation and storytelling.

Although my contribution is primarily theoretical, I illustrate my case by studying the real-world and influential deliberative forum, the Irish Citizens' Assembly. To examine the first part of the theory – that citizen deliberation induces the process of perspective-taking among citizens – I rely on in-depth interview data obtained from the

members of the ICA. The patterns identified in the qualitative data provide evidence for the proposed theory.

To indirectly study the second part of the theory – the beneficial effect of perspective-taking on reflective reasoning – I rely on unique survey data obtained from members of the ICA and a laboratory experiment. The results across two studies (the ICA and a laboratory experiment) show that citizens' dispositional perspective-taking influence the effectiveness of deliberation in activating reflective political reasoning among citizen deliberators. In other words, while deliberation may provide the forum in which perspective-taking and reflection are activated, dispositional perspective-taking is a pre-requisite for these processes.

Of course, this research is not without its caveats. The quantitative studies used in this article have several limitations that are worth discussing. First, neither the survey nor the experimental data are able to directly capture the complex processes of perspective-taking and reflection. Instead, they rely on self-reported measures of dispositional perspective-taking and reflective judgements. Thus, these studies are only indirect tests for the proposed theory. Future research could endeavour to improve on these measures. For example, in future research, reflection could be captured through thought-listing techniques (Weinmann, 2017) or the cognitive complexity of reasoning measure (Colombo, 2018).

Second, perspective-taking may be challenging for people. A person may be more likely to take the perspective of someone with whom he or she shares some common characteristics. For example, women may be more likely to take the perspective of a woman, and vice versa. As a result, the process of perspective-taking may be biased. Scudder (2016) posits that the success of perspective-taking is contingent upon unrealizable assumptions, such as the commonality between the observer and the target, and that empathy in general has the potential for distracting the citizen deliberators from listening to each other. The data in this research do not allow me to study these limitations. Elsewhere with different data, I find no empirical evidence for this claim (Muradova, 2019). However, future research could design experiments that could manipulate the common ground between the target and the perspective-taker and study its moderating role in the relationship between perspective-taking and reflection in deliberative settings.

Third, future research could endeavour to experimentally manipulate perspective-taking and test its effect on reflective judgements in order to contribute to our understanding as to whether reflective judgement truly causally follows perspective-taking (similar to Muradova, 2019).

Fourth, people who agree to attend deliberative forums may be better perspective-takers and reflective thinkers than non-attenders. In other words, despite the recruitment process being random, deliberative events may suffer from a self-selection problem. Although the Irish data does not allow me to test this contention, I can examine it with my experimental data. The findings show that there is no significant difference in mean (standardized) dispositional perspective-taking between those who attended the experiment and those who did not ($M=-0.02$; $SD=1$, $n=472$; $M=0.06$; $SD=1$, $n=126$, $p<0.41$). However, real-world deliberative events are more demanding, require more commitment from citizens and usually last longer. Therefore, future research could test this assumption with data from real-world deliberative forums.

Finally, this study does not allow for a direct and causal test of the effect of different levels of deliberation on perspective-taking and reflective judgements. Future

research could address this shortcoming. One way to go, for example, would be to transcribe and code group deliberations for their deliberativeness and study the relationship between different levels of deliberation and perspective-taking. Another strategy would be to experimentally vary the different elements of deliberation and study their potentially differing implications for the processes of perspective-taking and reflection. In other words, future research could endeavour to test the proposed theory with data that would permit a mediation analysis, in which the effect of the levels of deliberation on the mediator (perspective-taking) and the outcome variable (reflective judgements) could be examined.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, this study is a first of its kind to offer a systematic study of the role of perspective-taking in deliberation and reflection. The findings contribute to several different strands of literature.

First, citizen deliberation forums seem to be the most favoured democratic innovation nowadays. Although their increasing usage across the globe is laudable (see www.participedia.net), the lack of a systematic understanding of the processes underlying the so-called deliberative transformations observed as a result of these forums is worrisome. This study endeavoured to contribute to this gap by systematically examining the processes underlying deliberation and reflective reasoning among citizens.

Second, this research speaks to the body of scholarship within deliberative democracy that is examining the microprocesses underlying deliberation (see Bächtiger and Parkinson, 2019 for a review). It also brings a renewed focus on the arguments by difference and feminist democrats about the importance of embracing different kinds of communication such as storytelling, narratives and testimony in deliberation (Black, 2008; Sanders, 1997; Young, 2000). It suggests that in addition to making deliberation more democratic and egalitarian, they have the potential for facilitating greater understanding and perspective-taking among individuals. Although evidence-based reasons help individuals to gain new information and knowledge about the issue under discussion, personal stories and testimonies enable them to get acquainted with the true identities, values and worldviews of the storytellers (Black, 2008). However, my study shows that stories and testimonies told in isolation clearly cannot convey the full picture. Only if accompanied by factual information and argumentation can they inform the citizens of the nuances and complexities of the issue under discussion and facilitate the process of perspective-taking.

Third, these findings contribute to the scholarship in political psychology that is studying the correlates of reflective reasoning (e.g. Arceneaux and Vander Wielen, 2017). It shows that perspective-taking is beneficial for people's willingness to engage in more reflective reasoning.

Fourth, the research contributes to the strand of literature in social psychology that is looking at the inter- and intrapersonal effects of perspective-taking, such as decreased intergroup prejudice, and altruism (see Todd and Galinsky, 2014 for a review) and expands on it with empirical evidence on the role of perspective-taking in people's political reasoning.

Fifth, these findings have implications for systemic approaches to deliberative democracy (Mansbridge et al., 2012). The deliberative systemic approach 'has emphasized multiple sites of communication, each of which can host various forms of speech that can enrich the inclusive character of a deliberative system' (Curato et al., 2017: 30). To the extent that perspective-taking induces more reflection when citizens make judgements, it can be evoked and nurtured in different areas of democratic politics, for instance, through

empathy training at schools (Morrell, 2007), choose-your-own story games among adolescents (e.g. Simonovitz et al., 2018) and empathy-inducing ads in the media.

## Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to David Farrell and Jane Suiter for the opportunity to observe the meetings of the Irish Citizens' Assembly and field her survey questions among its members. She thanks the Secretariat of the Assembly for facilitating her in-depth interviews with the assembly members and the interviewees for their time and contribution. She extends her sincere gratitude to André Bächtiger, Nicole Curato, David Farrell, Andrea Felicetti, Sofie Marien, Simon Niemeyer and Jane Suiter for reading and commenting on previous drafts of this article. Parts of this article was presented at the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) General Conference, Hamburg, 2018 and Politicologenetmaal – Dutch-Belgian Political Science Annual Conference, 2018 . The laboratory experiment was conducted at the Nuffield College Centre for Experimental Social Sciences (CESS), University of Oxford, while the author was a visiting scholar at the Nuffield College. She gratefully acknowledges the support of the CESS in fielding this experiment. She is also thankful to Wouter Vanbroekhoven for his research assistance. Finally, the author thanks the editor and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

## Funding

The author disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement n° 759736) as well as Research Foundation – Flanders (Belgium) (FWO) under the grant n° G075615N.

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## Supplementary Information

Additional Supplementary Information may be found with the online version of this article.

## Notes

1. Others emphasize potential downfalls of deliberation. Diana Mutz (2006), for example, argues that exposure to cross-cutting communication in face to face interactions may engender ambivalence and confusion in people's political attitudes which may in turn discourage their participation in politics.
2. Perspective-taking is one dimension of *empathy*, with another dimension tapping into people's affective responses to the experiences of others (i.e. feelings of warmth, concern and compassion towards others) (Davis, 1980; Morrell, 2010).
3. Although it is possible to imagine the perspective of someone who holds the same perspective as another, 'doing so', as Epley and Caruso (2009) argue, 'cannot meaningfully be distinguished from not doing so at all and remaining completely egocentric' (Epley and Caruso, 2009: 299).
4. Interviews were coded manually. All the data identifying the interviewees were anonymized. Each transcription was read three times. First, each interview was read with the aim of understanding the general tone and structure of the interview. Second, they were read with the objective of identifying common patterns consistent with the theory. Third, they were read once more in order to choose relevant quotes for this article.
5. For the battery of items measuring the 'consideration', see Grönlund et al. (2017: 469).
6. The final sample was $n = 598$ after dropping duplicates.
7. Subjects were compensated for their time and participation.
8. One of the respondents in the placebo condition did not record his or her ID number correctly, and was excluded from the data analysis.

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## Author Biography

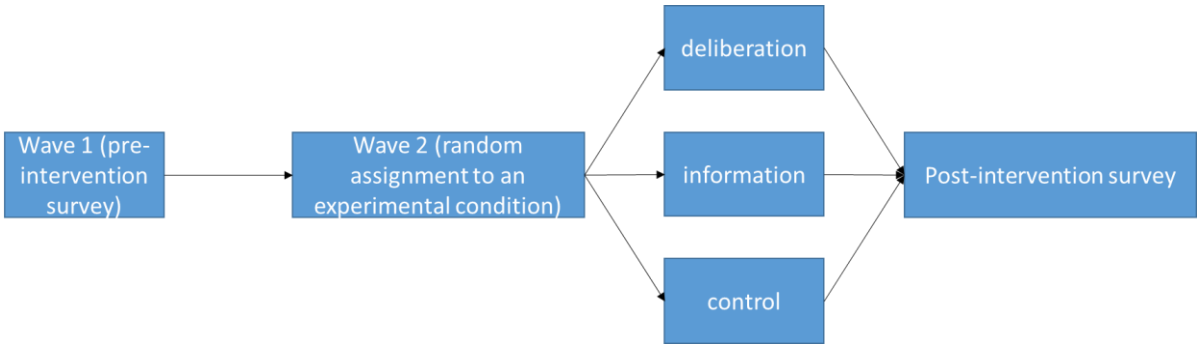
Lala Muradova is a PhD Candidate at the Democratic Innovations and Legitimacy Research Group, University of Leuven, Belgium and Associate at the Centre for Deliberative Democracy and Global Governance, University of Canberra, Australia. In her PhD project, she uses experimental research designs combined with observation of real-world deliberative practices, to study the cognitive and affective processes underlying interpersonal and intrapersonal deliberation. In 2019, Lala received the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Best Paper Prize in the Democratic Innovations section.

# Online Appendix

"Seeing the Other Side? Perspective-Taking and Reflective Political Judgements in Interpersonal Deliberation: Evidence from the Irish Citizens' Assembly"

Contents

# A. Experimental Design.




**Text for information and deliberation group**

"In this study, we will ask you to read a short text which talks about the pros and cons of legalising assisted dying in the UK."

"Assisted dying allows a dying person the choice to control their own death if they decide their suffering is unbearable. In countries, where it is legal, it is usually applied to competent, but terminally ill patients diagnosed with less than 6 months of living, who want to hasten their inevitable death. For the time being, assisted dying is illegal in the UK. However the issue has been widely discussed and constitutes one of the contested topics of the society. People who are pushing for the legalization of assisted dying argue that:

a. Every human being should be given the option of controlling their own death. Terminally ill citizens who feel that they are emotional and physical burden to their loved ones, should be given the right to put to an end to years of pain and suffering.

b. Some argue that many people already pay thousands of pounds to travel abroad to foreign medical centers in order to ensure their peaceful death.

c. Others emphasize the practical benefits of assisted dying, such as, for example, decrease in the health care costs. For example, they argue, that money and care could be spent on another patient who has more chances of living.

d. Another wide spread argument from the supporters, is that some people with chronical pain, who cannot afford travelling to foreign countries to get assisted dying, do commit suicide every year anyway, however, in traumatic ways. With this law, as they argue, we could prevent this kind of painful and traumatic deaths.

Others, however, oppose legalising the assisted dying.

a. The main argument they show is that, legalising assisted dying decreases the value of human life. They believe that all people, regardless whether they suffer or not from terminal illnesses, are human beings and should be respected as such.

b. Another common argument is that, legalising assisted dying could create a 'slippery slope' and is especially bad for vulnerable people. For example, doctors can make inaccurate diagnoses with regards to the patients not living beyond the given 6 months period; or relatives might be prompted to give up on recovery much too early, as well, facing with pressures from government and insurance companies. Others fear that some people might even coerce elderly to take their lives precipitately.

c. If assisted by doctors, some argue, it would violate the doctors "Hippocratic oath".

d. Critics also say that legalization will somehow persuade people that it is morally correct to take one's life.

To sum up, there are two camps in this issue. While some are in favour of legalising assisted dying, others oppose it vehemently. What is your opinion on that?

*

A message on the screen (for 'information only' group participants): "Thank you very much for having read the text. Now, please respond the following questions"

A message on the screen (for 'deliberation' group participants): "Thank you very much for having read the text. In a few minutes, you will engage in a discussion with other citizens about this topic.

Please remain seated until further notification".

## B. Attitudes on legalising assisted dying across experimental conditions

**Question:** Assisted dying is a contested issue. It involves doctors *prescribing* a lethal dose of drugs to the *terminally ill*, but *mentally competent* patients with less than six months to live. It is legal in some countries (e.g. Belgium, Netherlands). In the UK it is currently illegal. Some citizens are in favour of legalising assisted dying in the UK, while others strongly oppose it.

We are interested in your opinion. To what extent do you approve of legalising assisted dying in the UK? Please take your time to think about it.

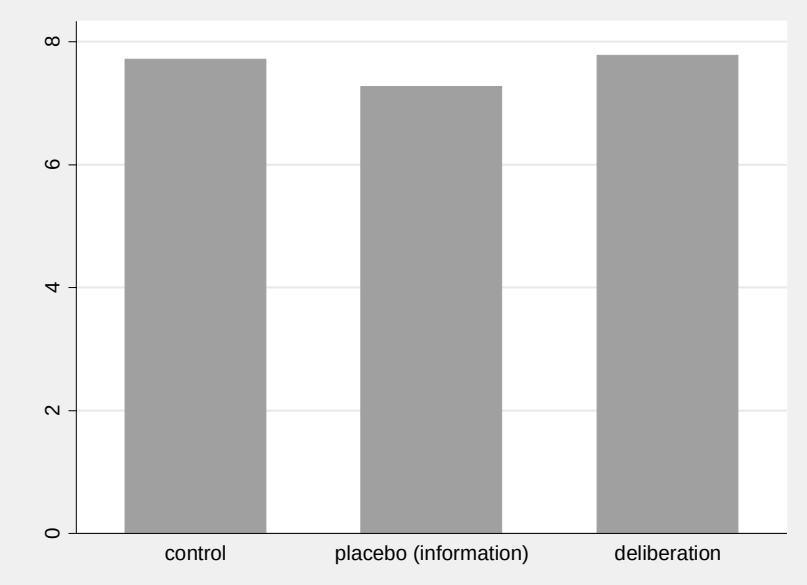


Figure B1. Mean Support for Legalising Assisted Dying Across Experimental Conditions (Pre-Intervention)

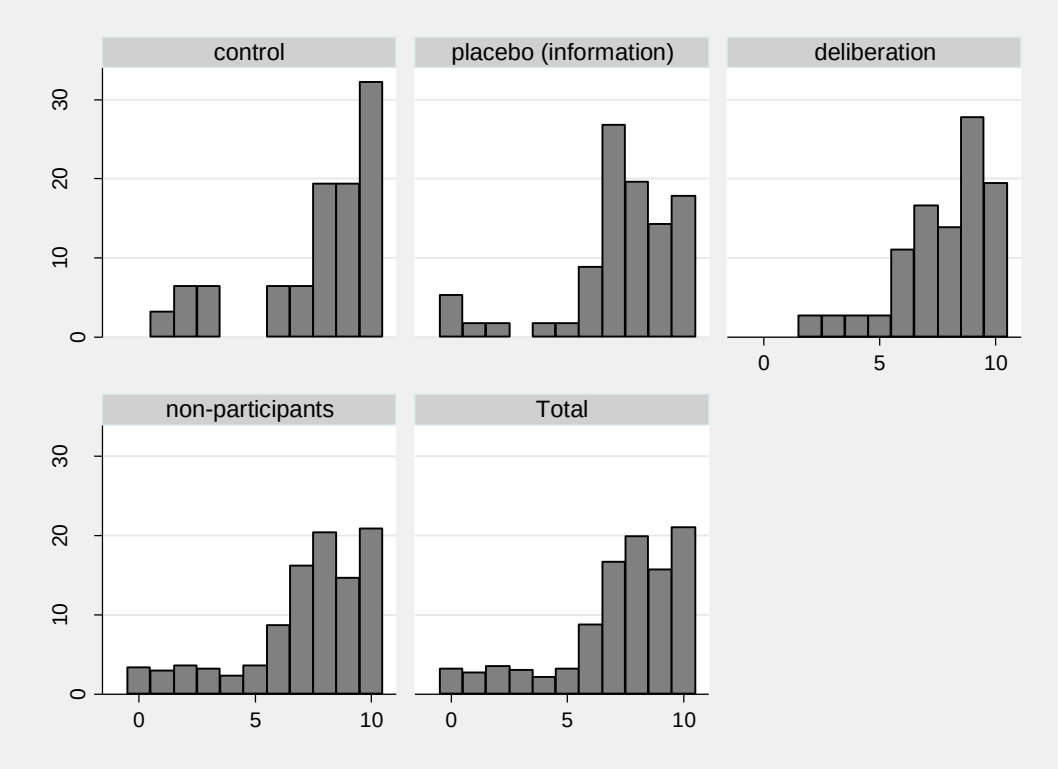



Figure B2. Pre-Experimental Distribution of Attitudes on Assisted Dying Across Experimental Conditions.

Non-participants are people who did not opt for participating in my study. Total sample n=598. 0 means "strongly disapprove" and 10 means "strongly approve".

## C. Detailed information on the variables of interest

**Table B1.**

| Variables | Range | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Dispositional perspective taking battery (n=126)** | | | |
| *The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate answer. Please read each item carefully before responding.* | | | |
| Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place. | 1"not well at all" - 5"extremely well" | M=3.27 | SD=1.13 |
| If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. | 1"not well at all" - 5"extremely well" | M=3.53 | SD=0.93 |
| I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective. | 1"not well at all" - 5"extremely well" | M=3.45 | SD=1.13 |
| I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both. | 1"not well at all" - 5"extremely well" | M=3.52 | SD=1.12 |
| I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other person's" point of view. | 1"not well at all" - 5"extremely well" | M=3.55 | SD=1.10 |
| I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision. | 1"not well at all" - 5"extremely well" | M=3.28 | SD=1.12 |
| When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his/her shoes" for a while. | 1"not well at all" - 5"extremely well" | M=3.02 | SD=1.13 |
| **Deliberation Within (n=126)** | | | |
| *For each statement below, please indicate how well it describes the development of your thought processes during and after the deliberation.* | | | |
| I have reassessed my biases favoring or opposing different arguments. | 1"strongly disagree" - 7"strongly agree" | M=4.11 | SD=1.67 |
| After having read the arguments of others, I have taken responsibility for making up my own mind about the topic. | 1"strongly disagree" - 7"strongly agree" | M=5.61 | SD=1.23 |
| I have simulated several opinions about the topic. | 1"strongly disagree" - 7"strongly agree" | M=5.05 | SD=1.34 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I have thought about arguments for and against my own as well as others' opinions about the topic. | 1"strongly disagree" - 7"strongly agree" | M=5.65 | SD=1.20 |
| I have evaluated the arguments that speak for and against my own as well as for and against others' opinions. | 1"strongly disagree" - 7"strongly agree" | M=5.60 | SD=1.12 |

## D. Discriminant Validity of Dispositional Perspective-Taking and Reflective Judgements

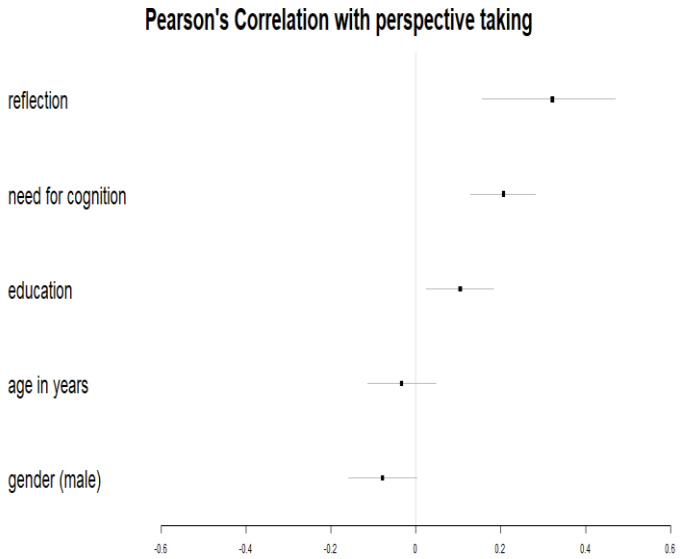
In order to examine whether my measures of dispositional perspective-taking and reflective judgements are two sufficiently different measures, I evaluated their *discriminant validity*.

First, on purely theoretical grounds, these validated measures capture two different concepts. *Dispositional perspective-taking* is a trait measure and taps into *individual differences* in people's *tendency* to adopt the feelings, thoughts and general mental states of others (Davis, 1980, 1983, 1996). On the other hand, *deliberation within* is a behavioural measure, and captures behavioural information processing steps that individuals take when engaging in political reasoning (Weinmann, 2017).

Second, I have assessed empirically whether these measures are sufficiently distinct. I accomplish this by calculating the bivariate correlations between dispositional perspective-taking and reflective judgements, and a set of sociodemographic and personality variables (first with experimental data, and later with the ICA data).

Cognitively effortful reasoning has been found to be positively associated with an individual's need for cognition (NfC) (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982).[1] Further, age, gender and education are reliable predictors of political attitudes and behaviour and can be expected to be associated with people's willingness to engage in reflective reasoning (see Arceneaux & Vander Wielen, 2017, Chapter 3 for a review).

The results of these correlations are summarized in Figures D1 and D2.




[1] NfC was measured with a battery of 18 items (Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1984). A sum measure was created (alpha = 0.90; M = 65.95; SD = 11.51; range: 26–90) and was later standardized for ease of interpretation (M = 0; SD = 1; range: -3.47 to 2.09).

Figure D1. Bivariate correlations with dispositional perspective-taking (data from the laboratory experiment, *n* = 593).

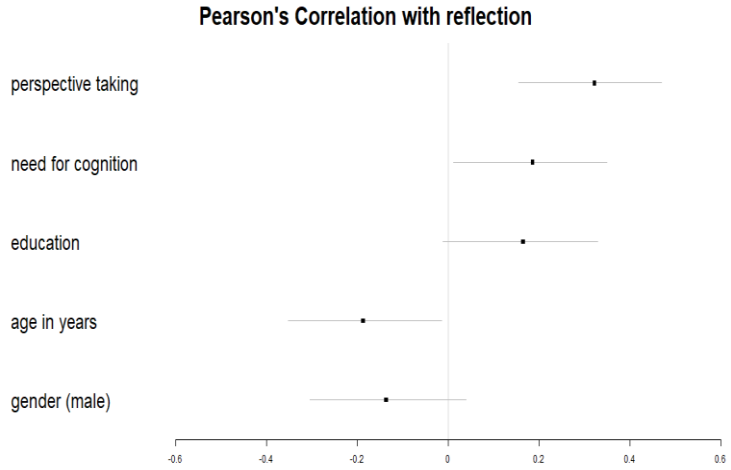



Figure D2. Bivariate correlation with reflective judgements (data from the laboratory experiment, *n* = 593).

The markers visualize Pearson's r correlation coefficients, together with their confidence intervals. Figure D1 shows the correlations with dispositional perspective-taking and other variables, and Figure D2 shows the correlations with reflective judgements and other variables.

The first thing we observe is the correlation between dispositional perspective-taking and reflective judgements. Consistent with my theoretical expectations, I find a positive weak correlation between the two variables (r = 32), which tells us that these variables are related and are not in opposition to each other. In other words, dispositional perspective-taking explains some of the motivation for engaging in reflective reasoning; however it does not explain all of it. Further, as expected, the NfC and reflective judgements are positively associated, although the association is weak (r = 0.19). Reflection is also positively associated with education (r = 0.16); it seems, therefore, that education explains a small part of the variation in reflection. There is a negative correlation between age in years and reflection (r = -0.18). There seems to be no association between gender and reflection.

I replicate this with the ICA data (Figures D3–D6). The NfC was not measured in the ICA data. I use all other variables. The first item for perspective-taking is positively associated with reflective judgements (r = 0.39), whereas the correlation coefficient between the second item for measuring perspective-taking and reflective judgements is much weaker (albeit also positive; r = 0.19). There is a very weak association between reflective judgements and education (r = 0.02), and a negative one between reflective judgements and gender (female; r = -0.26). Furthermore, there is a positive weak relationship between reflective judgements and age (r = 0.11). When we look at bivariate correlation results for the dispositional perspective-taking measure, we see that it is positively related to education (r = 0.17) and negatively related to gender (r = -0.26) and age (r = -0.21).

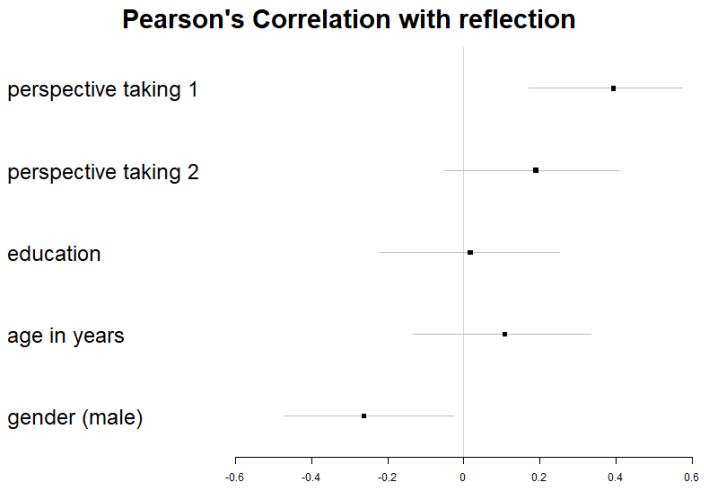



Figure D3. Bivariate correlations with reflection (data from the Irish Citizens' Assembly, $n$ = 69).

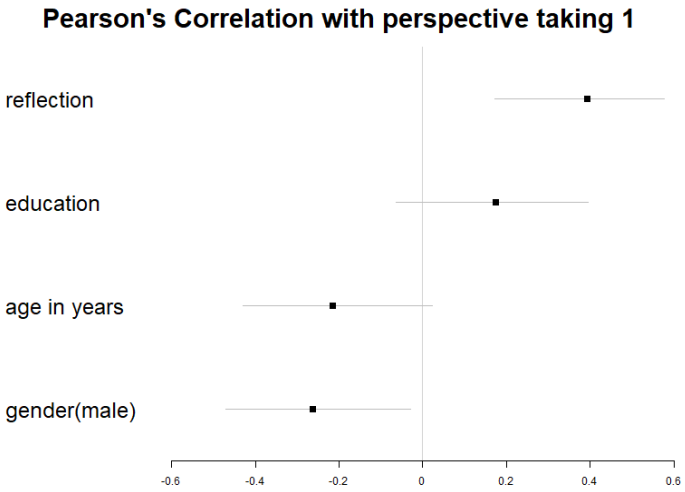



Figure D4. Bivariate correlations with perspective taking_1 (data from the Irish Citizens' Assembly, $n$ = 69).

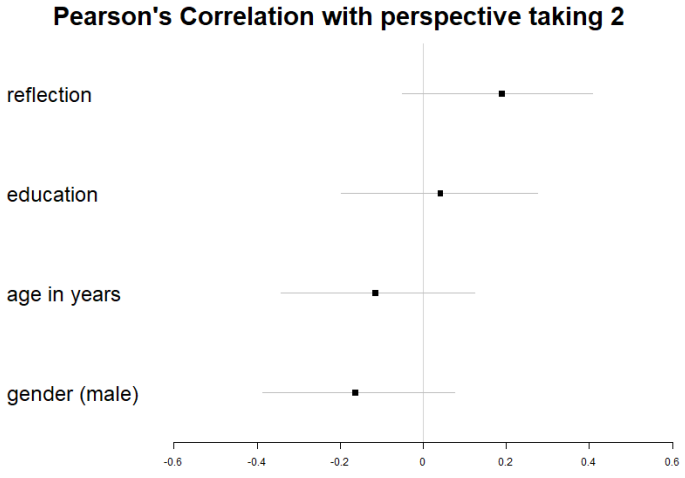


Figure D5. Bivariate correlations with dispositional perspective taking_2 (data from the Irish Citizens' Assembly, $n$ = 69).

In sum, the results of the discriminant validity tests presented here show convincingly that these measures (dispositional perspective-taking and reflective judgements) are sufficiently distinct and that they also differ substantially from other variables shown in the graph.

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# ARTICLE II

Climate Policy

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tcpo20

# Climate change communication and public engagement in interpersonal deliberative settings: evidence from the Irish citizens' assembly

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**To cite this article:** Lala Muradova , Hayley Walker & Francesca Colli (2020): Climate change communication and public engagement in interpersonal deliberative settings: evidence from the Irish citizens' assembly, Climate Policy, DOI: 10.1080/14693062.2020.1777928

**To link to this article:** https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2020.1777928

CLIMATE POLICY
https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2020.1777928

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RESEARCH ARTICLE



# Climate change communication and public engagement in interpersonal deliberative settings: evidence from the Irish citizens' assembly

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**ABSTRACT**

Citizens are being increasingly called upon to participate in climate change policymaking. Citizen assemblies have been proposed as a viable and effective way of boosting public support for ambitious climate policies. This study examines the varying effects of climate change communication on citizen support for the speaker's policy proposals, in the framework of the most consequential citizen-centred experimentation in environmental policymaking to date – the Irish Citizens' Assembly. Drawing on the six-principle framework for authors of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), we test whether effective communication contributes to explaining outcomes of deliberation on climate change. Methodologically, we take a set-theoretic approach, using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) to operationalise conditions and analyse the data. Our findings show that effective communication does explain why certain policy proposals were adopted by the Irish Citizens' Assembly over others, in conjunction with other conditions, such as having a high proportion of proposals being repeated by other speakers.

**Key policy insights**

- Citizen assemblies and other deliberative fora can boost public support and provide legitimacy for ambitious climate policy. The information presented to participants in such fora has an effect upon engagement with, and support for, policy proposals.
- It is not climate change information per se, but how it is communicated that matters for participants' uptake of ambitious climate measures. Speakers who communicate effectively see greater uptake of their policy proposals.
- Differences exist in the paths to success for expert and non-expert speakers. While the former were successful when they presented a high number of proposals, the latter were successful when they presented a simple, unique message.
- Organisers of citizens' assemblies should encourage the participation of such non-expert speakers who can connect with audiences on 'real-life' climate action.

**ARTICLE HISTORY**
Received 17 December 2019
Accepted 30 May 2020

**KEYWORDS**
Climate policy; Irish Citizens' assembly; citizen participation; IPCC; QCA; climate change communication

## Introduction

A perceived lack of public support or legitimacy is a major barrier to ambitious national climate policy (Drews & van den Bergh, 2016; Lockwood, 2011). Many of the most effective greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation measures, such as a meaningful carbon tax, investment in renewable energy and incentives for low-carbon land use change, pose short- to mid-term costs for citizens. Governments are therefore often reluctant to adopt the necessary policies to meet the goals set out in the Paris Agreement because they fear reprisals at the ballot box. Deliberative mini-publics, whereby a sample of lay-people, (usually) demographically representative of the larger population, convened to discuss and reflect on a political issue before making policy recommendations, have been proposed as a means of bringing credibility and legitimacy to political decision-making

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Supplemental data for this article can be accessed https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2020.1777928

and tackling the disconnect between citizens and the unique challenges posed by climate change (Stevenson & Dryzek, 2014). 'Talk-centric' deliberative approaches serve not only to enhance democratic legitimacy of collective decisions, but can also lead to support for more ambitious climate policy through the prioritisation of the commons over self-interest (for example, through arguments made in favour of future generations, non-human agents and others without a voice to promote their own interests), providing alternative perspectives and potential solutions, and facilitating greater coherence and consensus across highly complex issue areas (Niemeyer, 2013). However, the majority of such deliberative fora have limited or no direct connection to actual policy making (Smith & Setälä, 2018).

Ireland is a notable exception that appears to be 'systematizing' (Farrell et al., 2019) public deliberation into its policy cycle. From 2012–2014 a mini-public – the Irish Constitutional Convention – was convened to deliberate on marriage equality (together with eight other issues), leading to a national referendum on the topic in 2015. The advent of the Irish Citizens' Assembly broadened the scope of the democratic experiment. The Assembly brought together 99 participants,[1] selected randomly to broadly represent the electorate, to discuss a number of key policy areas including abortion and climate change, with the express purpose of forwarding legislative proposals to the Oireachtas (Irish parliament) for consideration. Citizens first received a number of expert and non-expert inputs on climate change including over 1,200 written submissions, oral presentations and question and answer (Q&A) sessions with 21 speakers, and subsequently engaged in deliberation in small groups. On climate change, the Assembly participants decided on 13 policy recommendations that were 'significantly more radical than many expected' (Torney & O'Gorman, 2019, p. 11). These included raising the carbon tax, support for low-carbon land use change, including reforestation, and a tax on agricultural GHG emissions: precisely the kind of measures that would be deemed too politically costly for an agriculture-dependent society like Ireland. The Assembly's recommendations were sent to the Oireachtas and in June 2019 the government announced an ambitious suite of climate policy measures. Although it stopped short of adopting the Assembly's most controversial recommendations for the agricultural sector, the plans include the 'politically fraught exercise' (Carroll, 2019) of hiking the carbon tax from €20 to €80 per tonne and increasing the share of renewables in the energy mix from 30% to 70%, both before 2030. For a climate laggard that has consistently failed to meet its EU targets (Torney & O'Gorman, 2019), this represents an extraordinary move.

Despite the far-reaching implications of the Irish case, it has received scant academic attention. Given that the mini-public was able to recommend policy proposals that far surpassed the prevailing level of political ambition in Ireland, and that the proposals look set to become national policy, it is surprising that no one has analysed why these specific recommendations were forwarded to the government and how expert information played a role in these processes. This article contributes to filling this gap. Engagement with and support for climate policy is a complex matter involving multiple factors operating at different levels of analysis. Individual-level factors include one's worldview, values and political orientation (Drews & van den Bergh, 2016). Each member of the Assembly brought a unique combination of political views and life experiences; yet, the wording of the draft ballot paper with policy recommendations was reached by consensus. Country-level factors pertain to economic and political considerations, such as an economic dependence on climate-detrimental fuel production (Harring et al., 2019). These fail to explain the surprising recommendations of the Irish Citizens' Assembly, for example, the agricultural GHG tax in the context of an agriculture-dependent society, or the recommendation to ban peat extraction subsidies, a highly damaging fuel source that has long been a key part of Ireland's energy mix. This paper therefore takes a different approach. It focuses on the effectiveness of climate change communication in deliberative settings as a condition that can explain citizens' policy-uptake, and in so doing contributes to the rich literature on climate change communication.

Effective communication is operationalised using the principles outlined in the handbook that was recently produced for authors of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Corner et al., 2018). We code video recordings of the 21 presentations made to the Irish Citizens' Assembly according to these principles. Additionally, we code the number and nature of proposals made by each speaker during the presentations and Q&A sessions. To measure members' uptake of the speakers' proposals, we analyse the policy recommendation document that was forwarded to the Oireachtas for further action, using systematic text analysis. We test our expectations using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) (Ragin, 1989, 2008). The results indicate that effective communication is a necessary component of policy uptake, but is not sufficient on its own

to explain the Assembly's inclusion of most of a speaker's proposals in its recommendations. Other factors, such as the repetition of the policy proposal by other speakers and uniqueness of the message communicated by non-expert speakers, also play a role.

These findings have important practical implications for policymakers. Unlike individual- or country-level factors that are not easily subject to change by those wishing to promote more ambitious climate action at the national level, the way in which information is communicated potentially represents low-hanging fruit. Since other governments, including the UK and France, are now following Ireland's example and using deliberative fora as a means to build public support and legitimacy for ambitious climate policy, it is imperative to draw lessons from this landmark case.

The paper proceeds as follows. The following section surveys the literature on deliberative democracy and shows how we expand this scholarship with our contribution. We then turn to the scholarship on climate change communication for insights to inform our theorisation and operationalisation of effective communication. This is followed by presenting our case study and methodology. We proceed to present the results of the QCA analysis and conclude by discussing the implications of these findings.

## Deliberative democracy and expert communication

Deliberative democratic theorists and practitioners argue that representative democracy should be complemented by a more talk-centric deliberative democracy whereby citizens (and politicians) engage in inclusive public decision-making processes, discuss and consider the issues that directly affect them and arrive at more legitimate, informed and reflective political decisions. Deliberative ideas have spawned a wide variety of citizen participation efforts around the world, ranging from small town hall meetings at one end of the spectrum, through citizen juries, citizens' initiative reviews and mini-publics. An institutionalised national event like the above-mentioned Irish Citizens' Assembly falls at the other end of the spectrum.

These deliberative public fora usually engage a randomly chosen cross-section of lay citizens convened to study a particular issue in open discussions overseen by professional facilitators. They involve an 'information phase' whereby participants absorb and reflect on the content of written material, expert presentations and testimonies of non-expert advocates, followed by a 'deliberative phase' whereby participants come together to consider different issues and problems from diverse angles; share arguments, personal stories, and narratives; and come to more considered political judgements, under the conditions of respect and equality.

Deliberative approaches to climate policy rest on the assumption that direct citizen engagement in policy making via public discussion leads to more informed, reflective and ambitious policies. Proponents argue that in creating an environment where citizens can learn from experts and express their arguments and perspectives freely, they better understand each other's concerns and thus come to more multi-faceted decisions, as opposed to narrow-minded and self-interested ones (see Bächtiger et al., 2018 for a review). Scholars argue that public deliberation is particularly well positioned to emphasise the less tangible dimensions of climate change, which might be pushed aside or intentionally distorted by public debate, and thus provide the public with a more thorough and sound vision of the environmental challenges posed (Niemeyer, 2013). Others emphasise the power of deliberation in bringing together the interests of those who cannot represent themselves in the discussions, such as future generations, and the non-human world (Dryzek, 2010).

The common assumption is that such benefits arise from the deliberative stage of the process. Indeed, this two-way 'communication [that] induces reflection on preferences in non-coercive fashion' (Dryzek, 2010, p. 10) constitutes the heart of many theories of deliberative democracy. Another stage of deliberation - expert information – is an equally important element of real-world mini-publics. Citizen deliberation on issues of societal importance necessitates adequate information and empirical evidence (Baekkeskov & Öberg, 2017). Expert information is particularly critical for shedding light on complex and technical issues, such as climate change.[2] Further, prior research suggests that outcomes might be induced by the information phase, rather than the deliberative phase. For example, Goodin and Niemeyer (2003) surveyed participants of an Australian citizens' jury convened to discuss an environmental issue. They measured preferences for various policy options at the beginning of the process, after the information phase and then finally after the deliberative

phase. Their results showed that the significant change occurred after the information phase (Fournier et al., 2011; but O'Malley et al., 2019).

Surprisingly, with a few notable exceptions (e.g. O'Malley et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2020), there has been little empirical research on how information communicated by speakers in mini-publics is consequential for deliberative outcomes with real-world implications. What are the desirable communicative qualities of expert (and non-expert) speakers on climate change? Does the way in which a speaker communicates influence engagement with and support for the policies they propose? In this paper we contribute to answering these questions by studying the role of expert (and non-expert) communication in citizen deliberators' uptake of policy proposals on climate change.

## Effective communication on climate policy

The 'information deficit' model argues that citizens' lack of support for climate policy results from a lack of scientific knowledge and an inability to understand the complexities of the issue, and proposes providing more information as a solution (see Suldovsky, 2017 for a review). However, a substantial body of research on cognitive biases and heuristics has convincingly demonstrated that humans do not process and act upon information rationally, but rather employ a range of heuristics to short-circuit the slow and cumbersome apparatus of rationality when handling the overwhelming quantity of information that the mind processes on a daily basis (see Suldovsky, 2017 for other critiques). These cognitive short-cuts are contingent on subjectivity, emotion and affect, and so depend as much on the individual listener as on the content of the message. Simply increasing the supply of information will not therefore have the desired effect.

Instead, individuals' opinions on climate change are a means of expressing their identity and social values, rather than a consequence of scientific literacy (Kahan et al., 2012). Climate change communicators should therefore be aware of the audience they are speaking to and appeal to the values held by their audience. Avoiding waste, the concept of 'balance' between humans and the environment, and the local impacts of climate change are all values that have been found to resonate across the political spectrum (O'Neill & Nicholson-Cole, 2009; Whitmarsh & Corner, 2017). This is where, we argue, the *effectiveness* of the communicator plays a major role. An effective communicator, in this paper, is conceptualised as a speaker who conveys information on climate change (1) that resonates well with daily lives and values of lay people, (2) in accessible language in a narrative format; and (3) in a convincing and authentic manner. For this conceptualisation we build upon the extant literature on climate change communication.

Climate change communication scholarship increasingly recognises the importance of stories, narratives and metaphors (Moezzi et al., 2017). Traditional ways of communicating climate change and other global environmental problems that are abstract in nature and not directly experienced are not aligned with the cognitive processes through which people acquire and process information. Stories, on the other hand, take advantage of these processes because they are 'inherently interesting, provide concrete examples of abstract issues or concepts (…), can be crafted to relate to people's lives and what they already know' (Kearney, 1994, p. 434). Cognitive activation is more likely to occur when the information received is interesting for the listener, relates to her prior knowledge, contains vivid details and is concrete rather than abstract, making stories the 'natural form of public engagement' (Shaw & Corner, 2017, p. 273).

The benefits of using stories, narratives and metaphors in communicating climate change go beyond cognitive processing. Everyday language and metaphors allow for the recognition of climate change as a personally relevant issue (Shaw & Corner, 2017) and stories can contain emotionally and culturally relevant information that is lacking from traditional ways of communicating climate change (Moezzi et al., 2017). Lastly, for their message to be heard, the speakers need to build trust with their audiences. Scientific and abstract language risks leading to feelings of exclusion, mistrust and/or defensiveness (Shaw & Corner, 2017). The extent to which speakers communicate confidently and authentically is a further driver of building trust with the audience (Corner et al., 2018).

The goal of this study is to test whether effective communication can contribute to explaining the outcome of deliberation on climate change in the highly impactful setting of the Irish Citizens' Assembly. Building on the

aforementioned literature, our main theoretical expectation is that citizens' support for policy proposals can be explained by communicator effectiveness.

## Measuring effective communication

To operationalise and capture effective communication, we rely on Corner et al. (2018). Whereas other measurements of effective climate change communication focus on the receivers of the message (e.g. Kahan, 2015), the IPCC handbook, hereinafter referred to as 'the handbook' (Corner et al., 2018) is built on evidence-based principles of effective climate change communication for senders of the message. The IPCC is the leading organisation responsible for assessing climate change science and communicating findings to policymakers and the broader public. The handbook sets out six principles for effective communication on climate change, which constitute our proxies for effective communication for two main reasons. First, the content is highly relevant for investigating expert communication in deliberative fora and reflects our theoretical expectations. Climate Outreach is an authority on climate change communication research and the extent and depth of the review upon which the handbook rests are greater than anything that could have been developed for this paper. Second, given that the handbook is specifically targeted at climate experts who might be invited to speak at deliberative events, examining whether the advice prescribed matches what works in practice seems pertinent. This study therefore represents a real-life test of the guidelines prescribed in the handbook.

The six principles are as follows: (a) be a confident communication; (b) talk about the real world, not abstract ideas; (c) connect with what matters to your audience; (d) tell a human story; (e) lead with what you know; and (f) use the most effective visual communication. The principles (b), (c) and (d) capture the first and second components of our concept (information that resonates well with daily lives and values of lay people communicated in accessible language in a narrative format) whereas the principles (a), (e) and (f) are proxies for the third component (speaking in a convincing and authentic manner).

## Other conditions

In addition to effectiveness of climate change communication, we expect a number of other speaker-level conditions to interact with effective communication in affecting the uptake of policy proposals. First, we expect discursive differences in communicating climate change among different types of speakers and for these differences to be reflected in members' engagement with the speaker's messages. In organised deliberative settings, there are usually two types of speakers: experts and non-experts ('witnesses'). Experts are academics or policy makers specialised in different aspects of the issue under discussion. Witnesses are non-experts, called upon to give (usually personal) evidence and/or advocate for a cause. At the Irish Citizens' Assembly on climate change, experts presented mostly scientific information, while witnesses shared their personal experiences in combating environmental challenges. For example, one witness was a champion in mobilising his colleagues to recycle and save energy in the workplace. Another witness had founded a non-profit company to address the problem of food waste while simultaneously providing impoverished citizens with free food.

Second, recent research has emphasised gender asymmetries in discursive influence of communicators. Beauvais (2019) finds that both men and women are more open to revise their opinions after having received an identical counterargument coming from a male communicator than from a female communicator. Accounting for potential gender differences in communication is therefore paramount.

In addition to communicator differences, we account for two factors related to policy proposals. Previous research suggests that moderate levels of *repetition* of the same message can result in the message being better understood and perceived as more credible (Cacioppo & Petty, 1989; Ernst et al., 2017). Two mechanisms have been proposed. First, repetition can increase the perceived credibility of the message via unconscious and memory-based processes. Second, exposure to the same message repeatedly can improve and facilitate information processing. A third possibility, in our case, is that certain proposals are particularly prominent in Irish climate policy circles and thus are more likely to be picked up by a number of speakers. Building on this body of work, we expect that repetition of the same policy proposal may positively affect citizens' engagement with that policy proposal.

## The Irish citizens' Assembly

The Irish Citizens' Assembly was a deliberative body established in 2016 consisting of 99 citizens (and a chair). The Assembly met on 12 occasions to deliberate on five important issues facing Irish society: the 8th amendment to the constitution; the aging population; climate change; referenda and fixed-term parliaments (see Farrell et al., 2019). After deliberations on each topic, Assembly members' conclusions were compiled into reports and recommendations and submitted to the Houses of Oireachtas to be debated and acted upon. One of the topics considered by the Assembly was climate change, more specifically titled 'How the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change', which was discussed during the weekends of 30 September-1 October and 4–5 November 2017.

Prior to deliberations the Assembly received 1,200 submissions from the larger population, civil society organisations, lobbyists and others (Devaney et al., 2020). A 'signpost document' containing an overview of these submissions was prepared by the chair of the Assembly and distributed among the members for consideration. Deliberations mostly focused on the pre-determined policy areas of energy, transport and agriculture. The information phase of the deliberations, consisting of presentations by 21 speakers and four Q&A sessions, was live-streamed on the Assembly website. In addition, one of the authors of this manuscript observed all the meetings on climate change and interviewed eleven members of the Assembly (Muradova, 2020).

The Steering Group, consisting of the chair and a representative group of Assembly members elected by the members themselves, shaped the choice of the speakers. During this process, an Expert Advisory Body was also consulted (see www.citizensassembly.ie for more information). The main criteria behind choosing experts was to ensure a wide range of balanced perspectives in terms of content and substance, and also good communication skills, broadly defined (informal interview with an expert from the Expert Advisory Body).

After two weeks of deliberations, the Assembly's recommendations were voted on by each citizen deliberator and decided by majority vote. There were 13 policy recommendations forwarded to the Oireachtas. Among others, the Assembly recommended that the government (a) put climate change at the centre of policy making in Ireland, by creating a new independent body responsible for this purpose; (b) impose higher taxes on carbon-intensive activities; and (c) introduce mitigation measures including retrofitting public buildings and low-carbon public vehicles. The 13 recommendations and the subsequent Parliamentary Committee recommendations significantly shaped the Irish government's landmark Climate Action Plan, published in June 2019 (Coleman et al., 2019). The goals in the Action Plan echo the recommendations of the Assembly: reducing greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, phasing down its coal- and peat-fired power generation, making car and van sales 100% electric by 2030 and imposing stricter energy-efficiency standards for buildings (Dabry, 2019). The Irish government has taken concrete action towards implementing the enhanced carbon tax: the parliamentary committee voted to back this proposal, with the carbon tax on fuel already increasing by €6 per tonne. This action constitutes a first step in a larger government policy to increase the carbon tax from €20 to €80 per tonne by 2030.

## Method

The objective of this study is to examine the question of whether effectiveness of climate change communication affects citizens' uptake of policy proposals in deliberative settings. In order to answer this question, we proceeded as follows. First, we developed a coding scheme that operationalises the six principles outlined in IPCC handbook. Second, we trained the coders on this coding scheme. We applied holistic coding (Hawkins, 2009) to code speakers' communication effectiveness, whereby the coders watched the presentation in its entirety, twice, and gave scores based upon their overall impression of communicative elements, outlined in the coding scheme. 20% of the data was coded by a secondary coder. The results of the inter-coder reliability tests were unsatisfactory for three questions. These questions contained the finest degrees of discrimination, which led to higher subjectivity (i.e. there was a clear difference between 0 and 1, but much smaller difference between 2 and 3). We therefore removed one degree of discrimination

(i.e. we merged 2 and 3) and the secondary coder repeated the tests (McHugh, 2012). It is important to note that there are still clear differences between the scores, meaning that merging the last two scores does not affect our operationalisation. The results of the second round of testing were high (on average 82% agreement across six items).[3]

Next, speakers' policy proposals were coded separately by two authors with expertise in climate policy. The same holistic approach was employed. Again, each presentation was watched twice in its entirety (alongside the Q&A sessions) to ensure that nothing was missed. For an idea expressed by a speaker to be considered a policy proposal, it could not refer to climate policies already in place in Ireland. Each of the speaker's proposals was given a score (0-3) based on whether it appeared on the ballot paper almost exactly as proposed (3), with the main idea but in an alternative formulation (2) or as a related topic but not the speaker's direct proposal (1). If a recommendation did not end up on the final ballot at all it was scored 0. The scores of both coders were either a match or within one point for all speakers. For those speakers where there was not an exact match, the coders discussed until they reached agreement.

To analyse the data, we take a set-theoretic approach, using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) to operationalise conditions and analyse the data (Goertz, 2006; Ragin, 1989, 2008). QCA relies on set theory (the membership of variables or 'conditions' to sets) to uncover combinations of conditions that lead to a particular outcome, also known as 'paths' or 'configurations'. This method was chosen for three main reasons. First, the objective of the research is to explain why the outcome occurred – why some speakers were successful in getting their proposals put on the ballot and others were not, and whether effective communication played a role in these processes. We take the stance that there is significant causal complexity in this relationship, and thus do not aim to purely examine the effect of individual independent variables. Second, QCA allows us to both test existing theories – by including variables that are identified as important in the climate change communication and deliberation literatures – but still maintain a somewhat exploratory stance, as QCA results automatically include all configurations of the variables included in the analysis. Finally, in practical terms, the limited number of speakers (21) lends itself well to set-theoretic research, as it is too large to use comparative case studies but too small for regression analysis.

The measurements for the conditions were subsequently calibrated into fuzzy sets. A word of explanation is warranted for the condition 'effective communication (EFF)', the only aggregate condition in the QCA. As explained above, this measure was based on the six indicators of effective climate communication, which were scored by coders from the speakers' presentations. Each of the six indicators was calibrated individually, before being aggregated through set-theoretic logic (Goertz, 2006). We split the notion of 'effective communication' into two parts: the *delivery* (presentation style) and the *content* of the message (whether the speaker remains concrete, tells stories and refers to local values – important aspects of climate change communication, as we have discussed above). Both of these are necessary for a speaker to be considered an effective communicator; however, the way in which a speaker relates their message to the local level can vary.

The outcome – a high proportion of a speaker's proposals ending up on the final ballot (PROP) – is a proxy measurement for the success with which a particular speaker communicated to the audience, as the final ballot of recommendations was decided by majority vote by the citizen deliberators. The average score per recommendation per speaker was then calculated by adding up all of a speaker's scores and dividing the total score by the number of proposals; this was calibrated into a fuzzy set using the direct method of calibration (Ragin, 2008).[4] The conditions are summarised in the table below, and more detail on this aggregation logic can be found in Appendix B.

Further, we categorised speakers as either expert or witness consistent with the Assembly report, which identified 15 speakers as 'experts' and 6 speakers as 'individuals who shared their personal experience of becoming a leader in the area of climate change in Ireland' (Citizens' Assembly, 2018, p. 2). We also included other conditions (gender, repetition, number of proposals).

Finally, in initial analyses, we also accounted for the costliness of policy proposals. An expert interviewee from the Assembly Expert Advisory Body highlighted that three policy proposals were considered to be particularly

**Table 1.** Operationalisation of conditions and outcome.

| Condition | Indicators/description | Data source | Measurement |
|---|---|---|---|
| Effective communication (EFF) | - Confident speaker<br>- Real-life examples<br>- Refers to local values<br>- Tells a human story<br>- Focuses on certainties<br>- Uses visual tools | Coding of videos of expert presentations during the Citizen's Assembly | Aggregated through set-theoretic measures (see concept development above + Appendix) |
| Repeated recommendations (REP) | A large proportion of the speakers' recommendations are repeated by other speakers | Manual count of repetitions by other speakers | Measured as an average number of repetitions per recommendation per speaker |
| High number of recommendations presented (NO) | The speaker made a high number of recommendations during their presentation | Manual coding of speakers' recommendations | Measured as the total number of recommendations the speaker made |
| Male speaker (MALE) | The speaker was male | Coding | Dichotomous/crisp set |
| Expert witness (EXP) | The speaker was an expert witness (i.e. subject expert rather than layperson witness) | Manual coding based on speakers' professions | Dichotomous/crisp set |
| Proportion of recommendations on the ballot (PROP) (outcome) | A high proportion of the speaker's recommendations ended up on the final ballot | Primary source (original ballot document), combined with coding of the speakers' recommendations | Measured as an average score per recommendation per speaker |

sensitive during the Assembly due to their indirect or direct costs on citizens: a carbon tax, agricultural tax, and removal of subsidies for peat extraction. However, including this condition in our model gave no meaningful results. We believe that this may be due to the level of aggregation of the analysis: given that most speakers mixed both costly and non-costly proposals, the effect was not visible at speaker level. We therefore do not report on costliness in this paper. However, this factor would be interesting to include in an analysis at the proposal level Table 1.

## Results

This section outlines the results of the QCA. We present the enhanced intermediate solution here (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012, p. 209) as it is simple enough to be interpretable, while relying on theoretical expectations for single conditions and ensuring that no combination of conditions is assumed to lead to both the outcome and its opposite. All analyses were carried out using statistical software R and its packages of QCA and SetMethods (Dusa, 2019; Oana and Schneider, 2018). Details of all other solutions, truth tables and XY plots are presented in Appendix B.

We present three models. The first includes three conditions: effective communication, a high proportion of repeated proposals and a high number of total proposals made by the speaker. The second includes these three conditions, plus the gender of the speaker. The final model replaces the gender condition with a speaker-type condition (i.e. whether the speaker was an expert chosen for subject-specific expertise or a non-expert chosen for their personal experience and testimony). The outcome for all three models was a speaker achieving a high proportion of their proposals on the ballot paper (PROP). We first present the three models, before discussing the results below. Table 2.

**Table 2.** Summary: parameters of fit of the three models.[8]

| Parameters of fit | Model 1 | Model 2 (with gender) | Model 3 (with speaker-type) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Consistency | 0.76 | 0.74 | 0.78 |
| Proportional reduction in inconsistency (PRI) | 0.59 | 0.58 | 0.61 |
| Coverage | 0.77 | 0.84 | 0.77 |
| Deviant cases in consistency | 2 | 4 | 2 |
| 'Unexplained' cases* | 3 | 2 | 2 |

*i.e. cases where the outcome was present but is not explained by this solution.

Model 1: three conditions

| Expression | Consistency | PRI | Coverage | Unique coverage[5] | Cases covered |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EFF*NO | 0.77 | 0.57 | 0.61 | 0.38 | 8 |
| REP*∼NO | 0.86 | 0.69 | 0.38 | 0.16 | 3 |
| Total | 0.76 | 0.59 | 0.77 | | 11 |

The full solution term for the first model is EFF*NO + REP∼NO → PROP. In other words, an effective speaker who presents a high number of proposals, or a speaker who presents a lower number of proposals but whose proposals are repeated by others, got a high proportion of their proposals on the ballot.

Model 2: four conditions, with gender

| Expression | Consistency | PRI | Coverage | Unique coverage | Cases covered *(uniquely covered)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EFF*NO | 0.77 | 0.57 | 0.61 | 0.384 | 8 *(3)* |
| REP*MALE | 0.81 | 0.66 | 0.53 | 0.18 | 9 *(4)* |
| EFF*∼REP*∼MALE | 0.77 | 0.58 | 0.19 | 0.048 | 3 *(2)* |
| Total | 0.74 | 0.58 | 0.84 | | 14 |

The complete solution expression for this model was reasonably similar: EFF*NO + REP*MALE + EFF*∼REP*∼-MALE → PROP. Again, effective speakers who make a high number of proposals get a high proportion of proposals on the ballot. Male speakers – effective communicators or not – whose proposals are repeated by others also get a high proportion of proposals on the ballot; in contrast, effective female speakers who are *not* repeated are successful.

Model 3: four conditions, with expert speaker

| Expression | Consistency | PRI | Coverage | Unique coverage | Cases covered *(uniquely covered)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EFF*REP | 0.82 | 0.62 | 0.58 | 0.14 | 8 (3) |
| EFF*NO*EXP | 0.80 | 0.57 | 0.46 | 0.09 | 6 (2) |
| EFF*∼NO*∼EXP | 0.91 | 0.86 | 0.12 | 0.05 | 2 (1) |
| REP*∼NO*∼EXP | 0.92 | 0.88 | 0.13 | 0.06 | 2 (1) |
| Total | 0.78 | 0.61 | 0.77 | | 12 |

The solution term here, while more complex than in previous models, indicates that – rather surprisingly – the effect of a high number of proposals is different for experts and witnesses. Effective speakers whose proposals are repeated get a high proportion of their proposals on the ballot, whether or not they are experts. Effective expert speakers who present a high number of proposals have a high proportion put on the ballot – clarifying the findings from the previous two models (EFF*NO). On the other hand, non-experts who *do not* present a large number of proposals and who are either effective speakers or are repeated by other speakers get a high proportion of their proposals put on the ballot. This effect provides suggestive evidence that audiences listen to experts and non-experts under different conditions. These somewhat puzzling results are discussed in the section below.

## Discussion

The results of the three models above indicate that being an effective communicator is *always* important. However, by itself, it is not sufficient. In addition, there are two main paths leading to uptake of a speaker's proposals. The first path, *repetition*, highlights that if a high proportion of a speaker's proposals are repeated by other speakers, then the audience takes up a high proportion of those proposals for the ballot. This is evident in different paths across the models: REP*∼NO*(∼EXP), EFF*REP and REP*MALE.

We see three main possible explanations for this 'repetition' path. The first two are founded in existing work on the topic: repetition may facilitate recall or provide support and evidence for a particular proposal – if enough different speakers repeat an idea, it must be a good one (Cacioppo & Petty, 1989; Ernst et al., 2017). An alternative explanation is that the ideas that are repeated are prominent in Irish climate change debates – this

prominence would thereby explain both their repetition by multiple speakers and their uptake by Assembly participants. It is true that the proposals that were most repeated were more general ones (such as wind energy and electric vehicles) compared to more sector-specific or technical proposals. This may imply that it may not be repetition itself, but rather the nature of the proposals that are repeated, that leads to uptake; or in other words, limit the applicability of the effect of repetition to more broad proposals. An example of this kind of case is speaker T. Speaker T made nine policy proposals, of which five ended up on the final ballot. Apart from one proposal, all of speaker T's accepted proposals were repeated up to seven times by others, and sometimes made more explicitly elsewhere.

The second path is *uniqueness*: if a speaker can make themselves stand out from the crowd, a high proportion of their proposals end up on the ballot. The way that speakers cultivate this uniqueness, however, seems to be different for experts and witnesses. For experts, being an effective communicator and presenting a high number of proposals (EFF*NO(*EXP)) leads to a high number of proposals being adopted. Speaker R, for example, was an expert discussing best practices implemented by a local council. This speaker was an effective communicator who made seven proposals on a range of policy areas. Five of these proposals appeared on the final ballot, of which four were either exact or direct matches of speaker R's ideas. In contrast, for witnesses, the opposite is true: being an effective speaker but presenting only few proposals (EFF*~NO*~EXP) leads to a high proportion of those proposals being put on the ballot.[6] For example, Speaker I, a witness, was an effective communicator who presented only four recommendations on a single topic: food waste. Two of these recommendations were taken up by the Assembly, despite the fact that Speaker I was the only speaker to mention food waste. These two typical cases demonstrate the difference between experts and witnesses who are effective communicators: experts can have an impact by presenting a high number of proposals, whereas witnesses should focus on a simple, unique message.

How can we explain this puzzling finding that for non-experts, having a lower total number of proposals helps them to get a higher proportion of their recommendations on the ballot? Prior theorisation does not exist, to the best of our knowledge, that would adequately explain this result, which arose as a consequence of the exploratory nature of the QCA method, and so we limit ourselves to some speculative hypotheses. It may be that audiences expect expert speakers to be informed across a broad spectrum of policy areas, thus allowing those experts who present a large number and variety of proposals to distinguish themselves. In contrast, putting forward a wide range of facts and recommendations may not be beneficial in the context of presenting one's personal testimony, and so those non-experts who effectively advocate for a single cause - in a narrative format that resonates with people's everyday realities – see greater engagement with their message.

## Conclusion

The climate emergency requires strong public support in order to implement ambitious climate policies. One way to boost public support for ambitious climate policy is to involve ordinary citizens in climate policy-making. Ireland has become a trailblazer in its recent citizen-centred approach to tackling climate change. A citizen assembly of randomly selected Irish citizens from all walks of life discussed climate change and agreed upon climate policies that far surpassed the government's existing level of ambition: higher and wider carbon taxation; increased incentives for electric vehicles; more public transport and an end to the subsidies for peat extraction. Its success has inspired calls for more citizens' assemblies and several ambitious citizen-centred experiments across the world. The objective of this paper was to study the role of information communicated to citizens on their uptake of climate change policy proposals in the framework of this unique real-world deliberative event.

Our results support our expectation that effective communication, conceptualised as communication conveyed in accessible language in a narrative format, reflecting daily lives and values of lay citizens and delivered in an authentic and convincing way, does affect deliberative outcomes: effective communicators across all conditions saw a greater proportion of their policy proposals taken up by the Assembly in the recommendations they forwarded to the government. Our findings have implications for several strands of literature. First, they lend weight to the importance of the information phase in deliberation, often overlooked in scholarship on deliberative democracy (see also Roberts et al., 2020). Policy uptake by citizens may (at least partially)

depend on the way in which experts present this evidence. In doing so, we do not discount the importance of deliberation, but rather stress that both components *together* determine outcomes (Brown, 2014). In Roberts et al.'s, words, 'mini-publics have the potential to enable fruitful relationships between experts and lay citizens which would enable public scrutiny of expertise and evidence' (2020,, p. 4). We propose that deliberation reinforces the understanding that participants gain through passively receiving information by allowing them to actively reflect, ask questions and apply newly acquired knowledge in the context of a discussion.

Interviews conducted with 11 members of the Assembly in the context of a larger research project offer some possible insights on this front. When questioned on the relative importance of the information and deliberation phases for their decision-making, most interviewees credited 'a mixture' of both: '*When somebody is just giving you information, you can retain it, you are learning it, but it is not in practice, whereas if you are actually discussing it, you are trying to look at pros and cons of different things, and then obviously you would ask questions and you get a response. I think that was the most important part, was, is, the most important part of the process, in my opinion.*'

Another key finding of our study, which currently lacks theorisation in the literature, is that there were some differences in the paths to success for experts and non-experts. While the former were successful when they presented a high number of proposals, the latter were successful when they presented few proposals, even without repetition by others. An important implication of this is that organisers of citizens' assemblies should encourage the participation of individuals who can connect with audiences on 'real-life' climate action and focus on a simple, unique message. This idea is illustrated by an Assembly member's comment during a reflective exercise:[7] '*Lock the scientists away and get the practitioners to the forefront […] Bin the scientism and promote pragmatism through the plain-speaking, uncontroversial and successful practitioners.*' While this may be an extreme opinion, it suggests that non-expert witnesses are well positioned to tap into the everyday concerns and values of citizen deliberators and highlights the need to include a range of expert and non-expert presenters at such fora. We call for future research to examine the different paths to success further, test our speculative hypotheses and develop appropriate theory.

Third, this study is, to the best of our knowledge, the first to operationalise and employ the six principles contained in the handbook for IPCC authors. Our experience shows that the handbook principles are a useful resource for measuring effective climate change communication (at least) in deliberative settings. Although the systematic validation of the instruments built upon the principles is beyond the scope of this paper (a method paper would be the most appropriate for this purpose), our coding results have produced a broad range of speaker scores, thereby implying that the handbook capture something meaningful. The ICA case provides a conservative test for this purpose, as the speakers were carefully chosen (see p. 12-13), which makes the variance obtained from our results even more interesting.

These contributions notwithstanding, our research has several limitations. First, our design does not allow us to disentangle the effects of information and deliberation or examine the relative importance of each. Information provided by the speakers during the first stage was subject to discussion during small group deliberations, which may have made the effect of information on citizens' judgements more or less strong. Second, we cannot discount the alternative explanation to our findings that effective communicators may have put forward 'convincing arguments' which eventually led citizens' uptake of their policy proposals, as deliberative democrats would have expected. In other words, it could have been the arguments themselves, rather than the effective communication style, that had an effect. While we do not argue that it is impossible, our design does not allow us to objectively evaluate the quality of the arguments advanced by experts. Future research could shed more light on this question.

A third limitation of the single-case approach is that it is situated within a specific political-cultural context. We therefore call for additional studies that may allow for greater generalisation than is possible from a single case study. Fourth, this research design does not say anything about final policy success: the recommendations do not automatically translate to policy change, although some of the Irish recommendations have already been enacted into law. Future research could shed more light on these questions, with alternative research designs, also disaggregated to (for example) the level of individual proposals. Finally, we use an indirect measure of effective communication. Future research could combine these principles with more direct measures, for example self-reported measures of participants' assessments of different speakers' effectiveness.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, our study is among the first to investigate the nature and effects of climate change communication on citizens' engagement with policy proposals in a deliberative setting. With citizens' assemblies proliferating and increasingly used around the world at different levels of climate governance, it is important to understand the contribution of different elements on participants' political reasoning processes. Our findings suggest that the way in which information is communicated may be a good place to start for those wishing to promote more ambitious climate action at the national level.

## Notes

1. In practice, there was a large turnover in membership and several rounds of recruitment were implemented with an objective of filling the gaps of those who dropped out. There were in total 152 citizens recruited over the life of the Irish Citizens' Assembly (15 months). 83 and 80 ICA members attended respectively the first and second weekend of climate change deliberations (see Farrell et al., 2019).
2. There are, of course, limits to expert information. It cannot *per se* resolve basic moral issues (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Brown, 2014); or unearth different perspectives and points of view that citizens from different walks of life may bring to the table. Expertise also needs to be subject to public scrutiny (Brown, 2014; Roberts et al., 2020).
3. More specifically, the percentage agreement for each item was the following: 100%, 75%, 75%, 50%, 92%, and 100%. More detailed information on the operationalisation of the handbook principles and the development of the coding system, as well as on alternative intercoder reliability measure (e.g. Cohen's Kappa) can be found in Appendix A.
4. The direct method of calibration plots all scores onto a logistic function, around thresholds set by the researcher.
5. Refers to the cases that are covered by *only* this solution expression.
6. The expression EFF*~REP*~MALE may also fit this path: there were significantly fewer women speakers than men (only 6 of the 21 speakers were female), so effective female speakers may have been more easily able to stand out to the audience.
7. The objective of this reflective exercise conducted at the end of the deliberation weekends was "to allow the Members to make comments and suggestions" about the discussed topics and the assembly (see Citizens' Assembly, 2018, p. 7).
8. Consistency measures how much the cases depart from a perfect subset relationship, basically taking into account cases where the solution term is present, but the outcome is absent. A higher score is better, with a minimum of 0.75 accepted. Proportional reduction in inconsistency (PRI) shows how much the solution belongs to the *outcome* and not the *absence* of the outcome. The closer this is to 0.5, the more it explains both (and thus the less useful it is as an explanation for a phenomenon). Coverage measures how much of the outcome the solution expression explains; again, higher scores are better. Deviant cases in consistency are cases that score >0.5 for the solution, but <0.5 for the outcome, and are best avoided (See also Schneider & Wagemann, 2012).

## Acknowledgements

Previous versions of this paper were presented at Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) General Conference 2019 and at the conference 'Democratic Renewal in Times of Polarization' in Leuven (Belgium) (September, 2019). The authors would like to thank the participants of these conferences for their valuable comments; and David Farrell and Jane Suiter for the opportunity to observe the Irish Citizens' Assembly meetings during the climate change weekends. We are also grateful for the many helpful suggestions we received when presenting an earlier draft at the LINES session. Many thanks to Bart, Gill, and Malek for their assistance with coding. Finally, we thank Ine Goovaerts for her help on questions related to intercoder reliability. Lala Muradova acknowledges funding from the Research Foundation – Flanders (Belgium) (FWO, grant n° G075615 N). Hayley Walker acknowledges funding from F.N.S. – FNRS (Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique).

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This work was supported by Research Foundation-Flanders (Belgium): [Grant Number G075615 N].

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# Online Appendix
for
"Climate Change Communication and Public Engagement with Climate Change in Interpersonal Deliberative Settings: Evidence from the Irish Citizens' Assembly."

## Contents

# Appendix A

*Measurement and coding of effective communication*

The six principles of effective climate change communication as outlined in the handbook for IPCC authors do not lend themselves easily to quantified, objective measurement. A pilot coding scheme attempted to operationalise each principle into a number of indicators based on a detailed reading of the handbook. For example, principle 4 ("Tell a human story") was operationalised into the following indicators derived from a detailed textual analysis of the relevant chapter of the handbook:

- The speaker uses accessible language
- The speech contains a personal story
- The speech contains a relevant anecdote, or humour
- The speech is in a narrative form which describes the problem, laying out its consequences and talking about solutions

The presentation was broken down into 30-second segments, and after each segment coders marked instances of each indicator. This pilot scheme proved unworkable, due to different inter-coder interpretations of what constituted an indication of each indicator and, more significantly, the overwhelming cognitive burden of having to split one's attention across so many different indicators at once invariably meant that certain indicators were missed. It was clear that coders could only focus their attention on a small number of indicators. We decided to work instead with holistic coding (Hawkins 2009), whereby each coder would watch the presentation in its entirety, twice, and respond to a limited number of questions that stuck as closely as possible to the original wording of the handbook principles. This simplified coding system is included and discussed below.

1. **Is the speaker a confident communicator? (**The coding is done based on two characteristics: confidence and authenticity of the speaker). *Please tick the relevant box.*

| | |
|---|---|
| | 0 - inauthentic & unconfident |
| | 1 - inauthentic & confident or authentic & unconfident |
| | 2 – authentic & confident |

2. **Does the speaker talk about the real world, not abstract ideas?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | 0 – entirely based on abstract ideas |
| | 1 – relates somewhat to people's day-to-day experiences |
| | 2 – relates considerably to people's day-to-day experiences |

3. **Does the speaker connect well to people's values (see the list below) and points of local interest?**

- Reducing waste
- Protecting nature
- Secure, stable & affordable
- Maintaining freedom of choice & autonomy
- A fair system

*Points of local interest means the experts refer to points that connect well with the Irish context.*

| | |
|---|---|
| | 0 – connects with none of the mentioned values |
| | 1 – connects with at least one value |
| | 2 – strongly connects with values and points of local (i.e. Irish) interest |

4. **Does the communicator use a human story / anecdote in their presentation?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | 0 – no stories |
| | 1 – s/he tells an anecdote |
| | 2 – story or anecdote shapes the whole message |

5. **Focusing on certainties rather than uncertainties in communication.**

| | |
|---|---|
| | 0 – consistently leads with uncertainties |
| | 1 – mixed |
| | 2 – consistently leads with certainties |

6. **Does the speaker use visual aids (e.g. powerpoint presentation)?**

| | |
|---|---|
| | 0 – no visual aids used |
| | 1 – visual aids used |

The first principle of the handbook, "Be a confident communicator", refers to the speaker's ability to "communicate confidently and authentically". Although other indicators are mentioned in the text of the handbook, these are the two most important components. The handbook does not weight one component over the other, therefore the 0-2 coding allows the coder to capture the essence of the principle while avoiding cognitive overload.

The second principle, 'Talk about the real world, not abstract ideas' refers to the communicating in a way that ordinary citizens can understand and relate to. Thus, effective speakers should avoid using abstract global metrics and trends that create psychological distance between the listener and the problem and instead reframe their message in a way that is relevant to people's everyday lives. In the coding scheme we remained as close as possible to the wording in the handbook when translating this principle into a question. In the first round of intercoder reliability tests, this question contained four degrees of discrimination (0-3). Following unsatisfactory results, it was further simplified to three degrees of discrimination (0-2), which delivered a high percentage of agreement in the second round of tests.

The third principle, 'Connect with what matters to your audience' is derived from research on motivated reasoning, whereby people 'filter' scientific messages according to their values and ideology and only engage with those messages that fit with their world view. There are two distinct elements to this principle. First, the authors identify a number of values that research has found to resonate across the political spectrum. Second, the authors recommend that speakers connect with local points of interest. We reflect both of these elements in the coding system. In order to score highly, a speaker must both connect with universally appealing values *and* connect well with the Irish context. In the first round of intercoder reliability tests, this question contained four degrees of discrimination (0-3). Following unsatisfactory results, it was further simplified to three degrees of discrimination (0-2), which delivered a high percentage of agreement in the second round of tests.

The fourth principle, 'Tell a human story' builds on research demonstrating that people understand and engage with messages more easily when they are told in a narrative structure. Coders are therefore asked to assess the extent to which stories and anecdotes structure the speaker's presentation. In the first round of intercoder reliability tests, this question contained four degrees of discrimination (0-3). Following unsatisfactory results, it was further simplified to three degrees of discrimination (0-2), which delivered a high percentage of agreement in the second round of tests.

The fifth principle, 'Lead with what you know' refers to the derailing effects that scientific uncertainties – no matter how small – can have on climate change communication. Scientific inquiry by its nature stresses disagreement and unknowns over agreement and certainty, but this is often misinterpreted by the public, who dramatically overestimate the degree of uncertainty around climate science. The handbook authors therefore recommend that speakers focus on the 'knowns' before the 'unknowns': this is the wording we have attempted to translate into the coding scheme.

The sixth and final principle is 'Use the most effective visual communication'. The handbook outlines rather complex guidance regarding what constitutes effective visual communication including a further five sub-principles. Given that the goal was to reduce cognitive overload and instead focus coders' attention on a few key areas, we decided to instead apply binary coding for this principle: 0 is no visual communication aids were employed; 1 if visual communications were used. This is an imperfect measure, which we base on the assumption that any visual communication will be more engaging for an audience than a speaker who only employs verbal communication.

*Intercoder Reliability*

As mentioned in the manuscript, a secondary coder coded 20% of speeches. We calculated both the percentage agreement and Cohen's Kappa. The percentage agreement for each item was the following: 100%, 75%, 75%, 50%, 92%, and 100%. However, Cohen's Kappa varied substantially, respectively it

equalled to 1.00, 0.00, 0.50,0.00, 0.76. In other words, for two items, despite very high inter-coder percentage agreement, the Cohen's Kappa was very low. This is called Cohen's paradox in the literature. One of the disadvantages of Kappa is that it is marginal-dependent (Von Eye and Von Eye 2008). In other words, "for a fixed value of the proportion of observed agreement, tables with marginal asymmetry produce higher values of kappa than tables with homogeneous marginals" (Warrens 2010, 323). The consequence of this is that the coders "that produce similar marginals are thus penalized compared" as opposed to coders with "different marginals" (Warrens, 2020, p. 323). The main issue with our study is that we have a very small sample (n=4) coded by the secondary coder, given the qualitative nature of the research and small n overall. For the items with low Cohen's Kappa the coders produced homogenous marginals, which potentially led to high percentage agreement, but low Cohen's Kappa.

# Appendix B.

## B1. Calibration of conditions and outcome

*Outcome: High proportion of proposals on the ballot (PROP)*

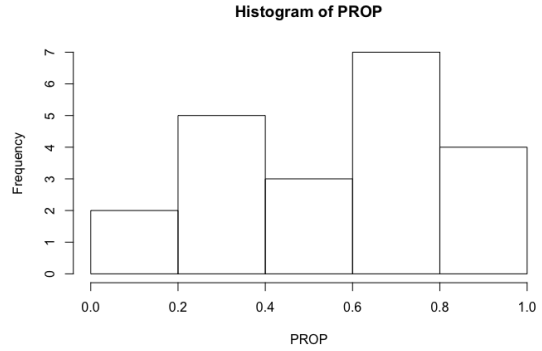
Each recommendation was coded as ending up on the ballot exactly (3). directly (2), indirectly (1) or not at all (0). The average score per proposal per speaker was calculated, which ranged from 0 to 2 (mean: 1.66; median: 2).

For example, speaker L proposed to (1) reward farmers for carbon sequestration through forestry; (2) to bring agriculture back into emissions trading. Speaker L also advocated (3) for less carbon-intense agricultural practices such as grassland management and genomics. These three proposals all made it on to the ballot in recommendation 11: *"89% of the Members recommended that there should be a tax on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from agriculture. There should be rewards for the farmer for land management that sequesters carbon. Any resulting revenue should be reinvested to support climate friendly agricultural practices."* Proposal (1) was coded as an exact match, since the same idea is formulated with almost the exact wording. Proposal (2) was coded as a direct match, and proposal (3) as an indirect match. Speaker L made a further two proposals that did not make it on to the ballot.

Calibration was then performed through the direct method of calibration and the following thresholds:

| **Raw score** | **Calibrated score** | **Verbal description** |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | Speaker's proposals didn't make it on the ballot |
| 0.9 | 0.5 | Speaker saw some of their proposals make it onto the ballot |
| 1.4 | 1 | Speaker saw a high proportion of their proposals make it onto the ballot |

While these thresholds may seem quite low, this is is actually quite logical: the majority of proposals simply cannot make it onto the ballot directly, because of the limited number of recommendations on the final ballot. We therefore consider a speaker successful if their average score per proposal is over 1.4 – in other words, *on average*, their proposals all made it onto the ballot indirectly.



*Effective communication*

Each of the indicators identified was calibrated separately according to the tables below.

**CONF**

| Raw score | Calibrated score | Verbal description |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | Neither confident nor authentic |
| 1 | 0.33 | Either confident or authentic |
| 2 | 1 | Both confident and authentic |

**REAL**

| Raw score | Calibrated score | Verbal description |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | Entirely based on abstract ideas |
| 1 | 0.33 | Relates somewhat to people's day-to-day experiences |
| 2 | 1 | Relates considerably to people's day-to-day experiences |

**VALUE**

| Raw score | Calibrated score | Verbal description |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | Connects with no values or local interests |
| 1 | 0.33 | Connects with at least one value |
| 2 | 1 | Strongly connects with values and points of interest |

**STORY**

| Raw score | Calibrated score | Verbal description |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | Uses no stories |
| 1 | 0.33 | Uses a human story |
| 2 | 1 | Relies on stories to shape the message |

**CERTAIN**

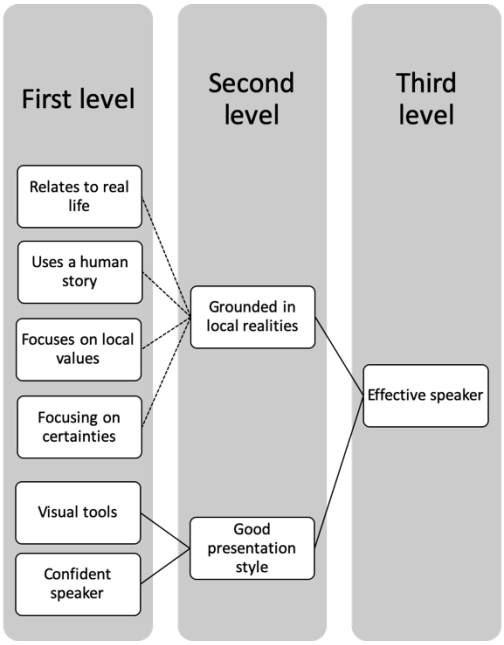
| Raw score | Calibrated score | Verbal description |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | Leads with uncertainties |
| 1 | 0.33 | Mixed |
| 2 | 1 | Leads with certainties |

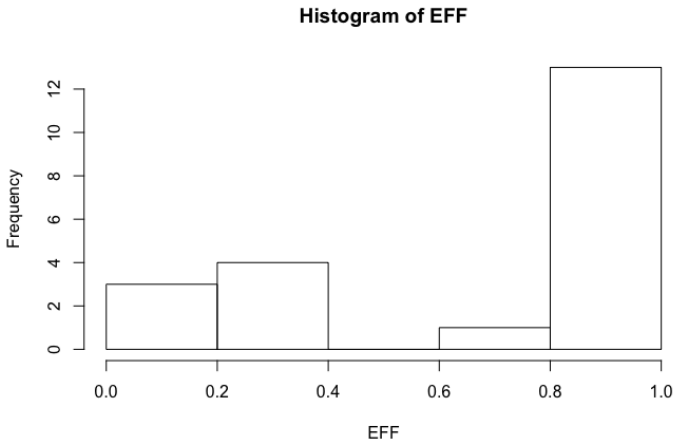
**VISUAL**

| Raw score | Calibrated score | Verbal description |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | No visual communication tools used |
| 1 | 1 | Visual communication tools used |

The results for each of the indicators were then aggregated following set-theoretic principles, following the diagram below. Dotted lines indicate relationships of sufficiency (maximum score ), while unbroken lines represent relations of necessity (minimum score). This splits the concept of effective communication into

the *delivery* of the message (presentation style) and the *content* of the message (whether the speaker uses concrete language, relates to local realities or tells a story).



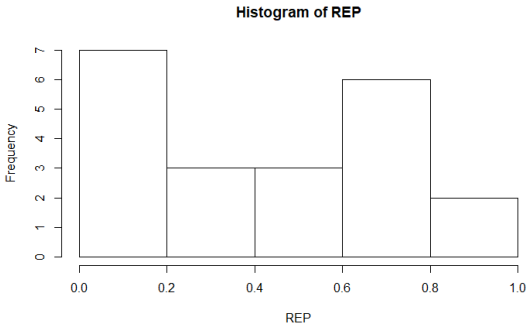




*Repeated proposals*

For each speaker, the average repetitions per recommendation per speaker were calculated. This ranged from 0 to 6 (mean 1.73; median 1.75).

Calibration was through the direct method of calibration and the following thresholds:

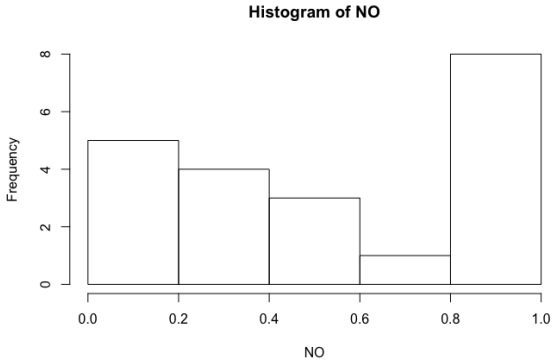
| **Raw score** | **Calibrated score** | **Verbal description** |
|---|---|---|
| 0 | 0 | Speaker's proposals not repeated |
| 1.5 | 0.5 | Speaker's proposals repeated somewhat frequently |
| 3 | 1 | Speaker's proposals repeated frequently |



*Number of proposals*

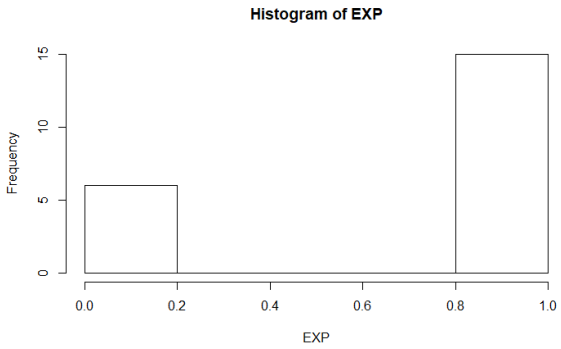
The number of proposals per speaker ranged from 1 to 11 (mean 5.2; median 5). Calibration was through the direct method of calibration using the following thresholds:

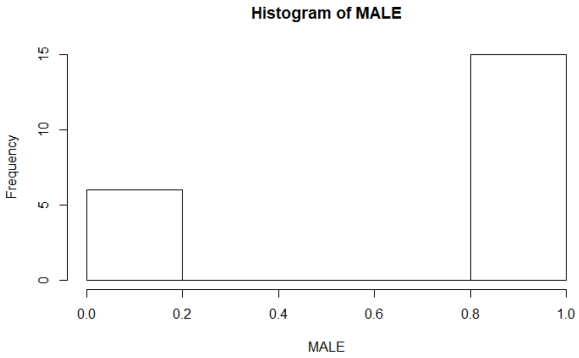
| Raw score | Calibrated score | Verbal description |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0 | Low number of proposals |
| 4.5 | 0.5 | Medium number of proposals |
| 8.5 | 1 | High number of proposals |




*Expert witness and male speaker*

Both of these conditions are naturally dichotomous, and so were coded as crisp-sets. (Note that although the number of non-experts and women is the same, this is purely coincidental and there is no relation between the two conditions.)



## B2. Calibrated conditions

| Case | EFF | MALE | REP | COST | PROP | NO | EXP |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **a** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0.05 | 0.64 | 0.05 | 1 |
| **b** | 0 | 1 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 1 |
| **c** | 1 | 1 | 0.2 | 0.54 | 0.64 | 0.96 | 1 |
| **d** | 1 | 0 | 0.2 | 0.97 | 0.49 | 0.96 | 1 |
| **e** | 1 | 1 | 0.68 | 0.99 | 0.51 | 0.99 | 1 |
| **f** | 0.33 | 1 | 0.2 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 1 |
| **g** | 1 | 0 | 0.95 | 0.05 | 0.64 | 0.59 | 1 |
| **h** | 0 | 1 | 0.57 | 0.97 | 1 | 0.22 | 0 |
| **i** | 1 | 0 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.97 | 0.39 | 0 |
| **j** | 0.33 | 1 | 0.39 | 0.99 | 0.27 | 0.59 | 1 |
| **k** | 1 | 0 | 0.27 | 0.9 | 0.38 | 0.40 | 1 |
| **l** | 1 | 1 | 0.79 | 1 | 0.85 | 0.59 | 1 |
| **m** | 0.33 | 1 | 0.67 | 0.73 | 0.45 | 0.75 | 1 |
| **n** | 1 | 1 | 0.76 | 0.05 | 0.64 | 0.22 | 0 |
| **o** | 0.33 | 0 | 0.33 | 0.05 | 0.64 | 0.86 | 1 |
| **p** | 1 | 1 | 0.65 | 0.59 | 0.38 | 0.93 | 0 |
| **q** | 1 | 1 | 0.2 | 0.05 | 0.21 | 0.11 | 1 |
| **r** | 1 | 1 | 0.66 | 0.65 | 0.96 | 0.86 | 1 |
| **s** | 1 | 1 | 0.05 | 0.05 | 0.64 | 0.05 | 1 |
| **t** | 1 | 1 | 0.57 | 0.54 | 0.78 | 0.96 | 0 |
| **u** | 0 | 0 | 0.44 | 0.05 | 0.29 | 0.93 | 0 |

### *Summary statistics*

| | Raw number of proposals | | | Calibrated score on number of proposals | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ***Range*** | ***Mean*** | ***Median*** | ***Range*** | ***Mean*** | ***Median*** |
| **Experts** | 1-11 | 4.9 | 5 | 0.05-0.99 | 0.52 | 0.59 |
| **Advocates** | 3-9 | 5.8 | 6 | 0.22-0.96 | 0.61 | 0.66 |

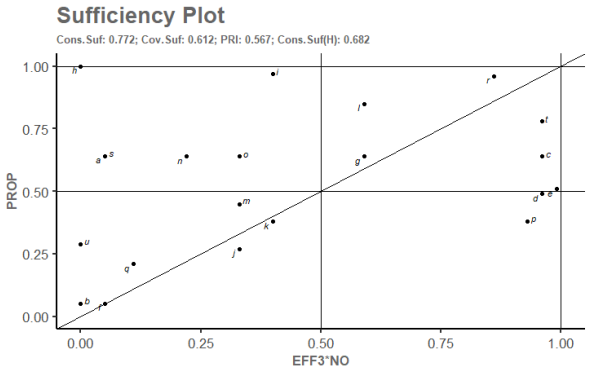
## B3. Solutions

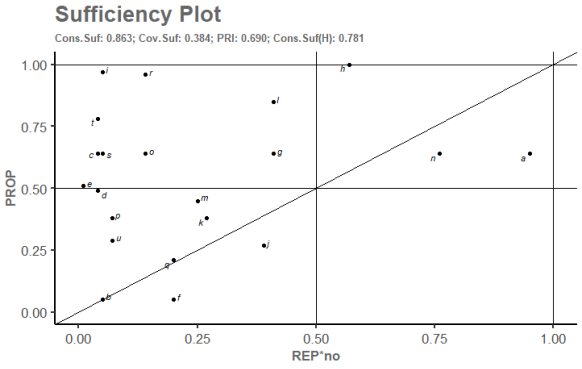
**Model 1**

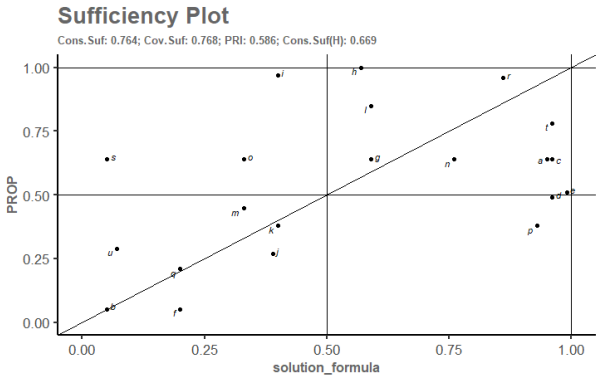
***Truth table***

| EFF | REP | NO | OUT | n | incl | PRI | cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 0.92 | 0.77 | e,g,l,p,r,t |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0.90 | 0.69 | c,d |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0.85 | 0.61 | a,n |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0.87 | 0.74 | h |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0.70 | 0.41 | i,k,q,s |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0.77 | 0.47 | j,o,u |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.47 | 0.23 | b,f |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.80 | 0.45 | m |

***XY plots (intermediate solution)***



**Model 2**

***Truth table***

| EFF3 | REP | NO | MALE | OUT | n | incl | PRI | cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 0.89 | 0.74 | e,l,p,r,t |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0.85 | 0.72 | i,k |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0.81 | 0.59 | a,n |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0.85 | 0.74 | h |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0.80 | 0.54 | m |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0.83 | 0.53 | d |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0.94 | 0.79 | c |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1.00 | 1.00 | g |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0.43 | 0.23 | b,f |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.76 | 0.48 | o,u |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0.64 | 0.26 | q,s |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.78 | 0.47 | j |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ? | 0 | - | - | |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | ? | 0 | - | - | |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | ? | 0 | - | - | |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | ? | 0 | - | - | |

***Conservative solution***

EFF*NO + REP*MALE + EFF*~REP*~MALE → PROP

| | inclS | PRI | covS | covU | Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EFF*NO | 0.77 | 0.58 | 0.61 | 0.12 | d, c, g, e, l, p, r, t |
| REP*MALE | 0.81 | 0.66 | 0.53 | 0.18 | h, m, a, n, e, l, p, r, t |
| EFF*~REP*~MALE | 0.77 | 0.58 | 0.19 | 0.05 | i, k, d |
| **Total** | 0.74 | 0.58 | 0.84 | | |

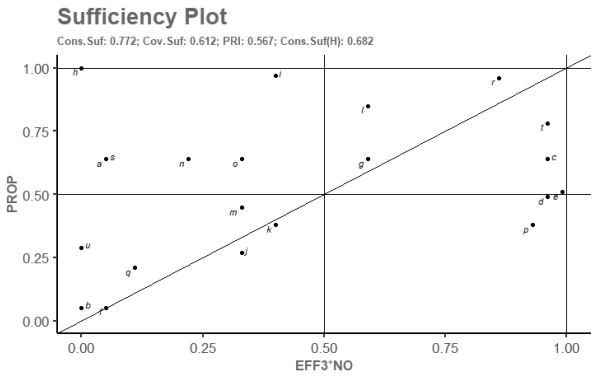
***Parsimonious solution***

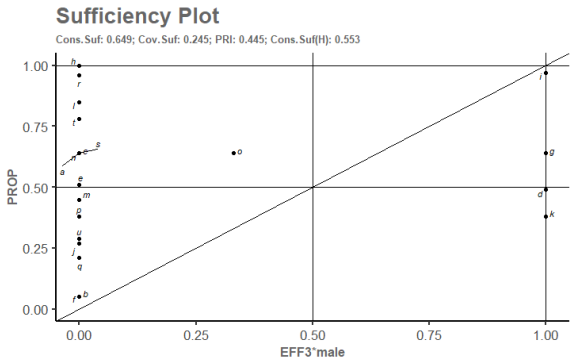
Model 1:REP + EFF*NO + EFF*~MALE → PROP

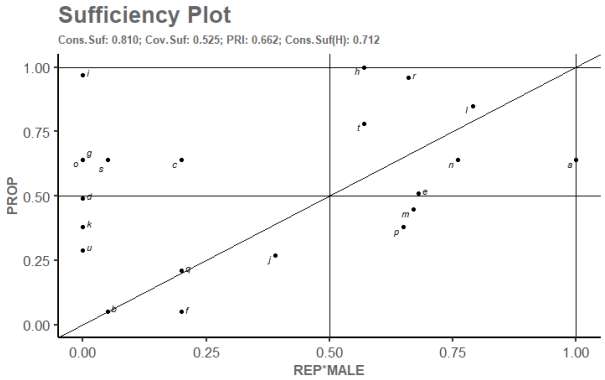
Model 2: REP + EFF*NO + ~NO*~MALE → PROP

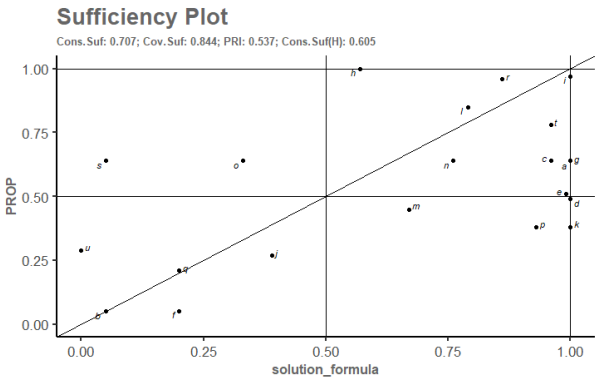
| | inclS | PRI | covS | covU | Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| REP | 0.81 | 0.62 | 0.68 | 0.20 | h, m, a, n, g, e, l, p, r, t |
| EFF*NO | 0.77 | 0.57 | 0.61 | 0.07 | d, c, g, e, l, p, r, t |
| EFF*~MALE | 0.65 | 0.45 | 0.25 | 0.05 | i, k, d, g |
| ~NO*~MALE | 0.88 | 0.74 | 0.14 | 0.02 | i, k |
| **Total Model 1** | 0.71 | 0.53 | 0.87 | | |
| **Total Model 2** | 0.73 | 0.54 | 0.84 | | |

***XY plots (intermediate solution)***



**Model 3**

***Truth table***

| EFF3 | REP | NO | NONEXP | OUT | n | incl | PRI | cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | h |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | i |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 0.95 | 0.85 | e, g, l, r |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0.87 | 0.71 | n |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0.87 | 0.54 | c, d |
| 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0.85 | 0.57 | a |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0.82 | 0.58 | p, t |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0.82 | 0.49 | j, o |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0.81 | 0.35 | m |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0.65 | 0.45 | u |
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0.62 | 0.23 | k, q, s |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0.37 | 0.03 | b, f |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ? | 0 | - | - | |
| 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | ? | 0 | - | - | |
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | ? | 0 | - | - | |
| 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | ? | 0 | - | - | |

***Conservative solution***

EFF*REP + EFF*~NO*~EXP + EFF*NO*EXP + REP*~NO*~EXP → PROP

| | inclS | PRI | covS | covU | Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EFF*REP | 0.82 | 0.62 | 0.58 | 0.14 | a, n, e, g, l, r, p, t |
| EFF*~NO*~EXP | 0.91 | 0.86 | 0.12 | 0.05 | i, n |
| EFF*NO*EXP | 0.80 | 0.57 | 0.46 | 0.10 | c, d, e, g, l, r |
| REP*~NO*~EXP | 0.92 | 0.88 | 0.13 | 0.06 | h, n |
| **Total** | 0.78 | 0.61 | 0.77 | | |

***Parsimonious solution***

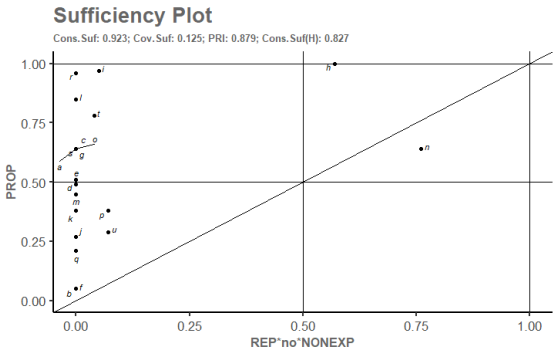
Model 1: EFF*NO + EFF*REP+ ~NO*~EXP → PROP

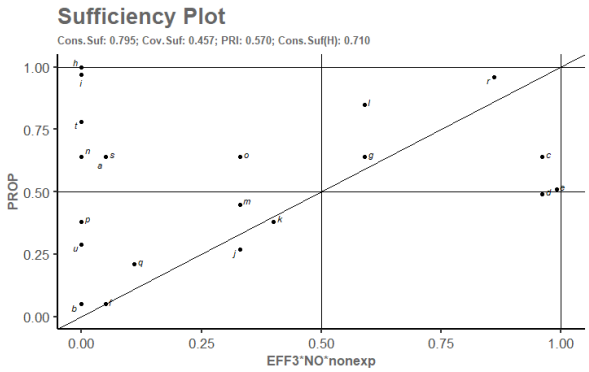
Model 2: EFF*NO + EFF*~EXP + REP*~NO → PROP

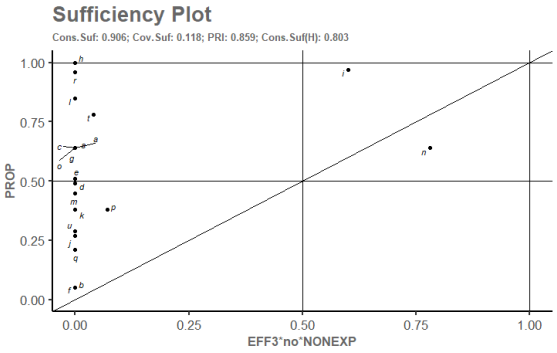
Model 3: EFF*NO + REP*~NO + ~NO*~EXP → PROP

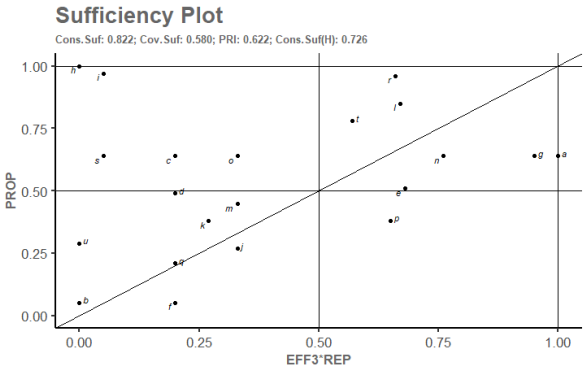
| | inclS | PRI | covS | covU | Cases |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| EFF*NO | 0.77 | 0.57 | 0.61 | 0.10 | c, d, e, g, l, r, p, t |
| EFF*REP | 0.82 | 0.62 | 0.58 | 0.01 | a, n, e, g, l, r, p, t |
| EFF*~EXP | 0.69 | 0.59 | 0.24 | 0.03 | I, n, p, t |
| REP*~NO | 0.86 | 0.69 | 0.38 | 0.1 | h, a, n |
| ~NO*~EXP | 0.94 | 0.92 | 0.19 | 0.02 | h, i, n |
| **Total Model 1** | 0.75 | 0.59 | 0.81 | | |
| **Total Model 2** | 0.75 | 0.59 | 0.82 | | |
| **Total Model 3** | 0.77 | 0.61 | 0.80 | | |

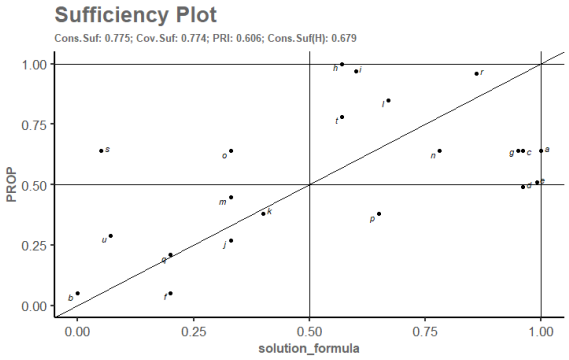
***XY plots (intermediate solution)***



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Warrens, Matthijs J. 2010. "A Formal Proof of a Paradox Associated with Cohen's Kappa." *Journal of Classification* 27 (3): 322–32. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00357-010-9060-x.

# ARTICLE III

SAGE researchmethods cases

# The Challenges of Experimenting With Citizen Deliberation in Laboratory Settings

Contributors: Lala Muradova
Pub. Date: 2020
Product: SAGE Research Methods Cases
Methods: Experimental design, Measurement, Survey research
Disciplines: Political Science and International Relations
Access Date: February 12, 2020
Academic Level: Postgraduate
Publishing Company: SAGE Publications Ltd
City: London
Online ISBN: 9781529707359
DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781529707359

# Abstract

This SAGE case study describes a laboratory experiment to study the benefits of small group citizen deliberation for individual political judgments. First an outline of theoretical approach of the study is given. Second, I discuss the main benefits, challenges, and shortcomings of conducting lab experiments in citizen deliberation. Close attention is paid in particular to the difficulty of measuring and manipulating a complex concept such as deliberation. Furthermore, I focus on some of the theoretical and methodological choices I made when designing and fielding my lab experiment.


## Learning Outcomes

By the end of this case, students should be able to

- Articulate the benefits, complexities, and shortcomings of laboratory experiments for examining citizen deliberation
- Be aware of the pitfalls of using grand treatments in experiments
- Identify the trade-offs involved between concealing the real objective of the experimental study and self-selection problem in experiments in deliberation
- Understand the importance of transparency in reporting the findings of experimental research
- Create their own experimental design on deliberation

## Project Overview and Context

Democracy seems to be in danger across the world. The recent cases of democratic backsliding happening in the United States, Poland, Hungary, The Philippines, and Turkey, *among others*; increasing public support for populism; and declining trust in liberal democratic institutions in Western democracies are among the most visible indicators of this crisis.

Against this backdrop, experts propose more direct citizen participation in political decision making as a potential solution for strengthening democracy. One of the suggested modes of direct citizen participation is democratic deliberation, which involves a group of citizens coming together publicly to discuss important political issues, listen to each other's arguments, learn from each other, and rigorously consider and reflect upon the issue from diverse angles. Researchers predict that public deliberation is beneficial for better political judgments among individuals (Gastil, 2018; Mendelberg, 2002). Recent history has shown that democratic deliberation can successfully inform larger society and shape public policies. For example, Irish Citizens' Assembly is an influential real-world example of democratic deliberation, whose recommendations shaped the public debate on a complex issue of legalizing abortion in Ireland and was a force behind the recent referendum on abortion (Suiter, 2018). Currently, the case of Irish Citizens' Assembly is being used as

an excellent example of the positive effect public deliberation can have on political decisions.

However, there are also many skeptics of this approach. Some argue that citizens are usually misinformed and irrational and are not capable of rigorous and interest-free deliberation (Achen and Bartels, 2016; Brennan, 2016). Others indicate that successful cases of real-world deliberation are rare.

Empirical research within deliberative democracy literature shows that democratic deliberation increases knowledge and transforms policy opinions of citizens (Barabas, 2004; for example, Fishkin, 2009; Setälä, Grönlund, & Herne, 2010). However, this evidence is inconsistent. Furthermore, even in the cases of positive findings, we still do not know why this happens. What makes deliberation unique and consequential for individual political judgments? Thus, because we know little about potential mechanisms underlying the relationship between democratic deliberation and better political judgments, we are unable to systematically demonstrate that positive transformation in citizens' political judgments is due to democratic deliberation (and not to something else). Does small group deliberation transform individual political judgments and under what conditions does this transformation occur? For example, does the transformation occur as a result of a new piece of information citizens receive, or via more affective mechanisms, such as social interaction, and feeling empathic toward each other's life experiences and perspectives?

Thus, inspired by these research questions, this project aimed to do two things:

- To examine the effects of small group deliberation on individual's political judgments;
- To study one of the potential causal mechanisms of the relationship between deliberation and improved political judgment. In this case, I theorized that one of the potential mechanisms of this relationship is *empathy*. Citizens participating in a face-to-face group discussion, after having spent some time together, and learned about different perspectives, may feel empathic toward people whose views differ from theirs. This realization may help them to overcome their biases, which may potentially lead to more inclusive and reflective political judgments.

Driven by these objectives, I fielded a laboratory experiment. I manipulated democratic deliberation by inviting the participants to engage in an hour-long, moderated discussion on a controversial topic of societal importance—"legalizing assisted dying"—and further asked them a set of questions in the form of a short survey. The rest of the participants in my experiment were randomly assigned either to a "control group" or to "information only" group. In the information condition, respondents read a short written information about assisted dying and were further presented with four arguments in favor and four arguments against its legalization. The same information was read by individuals in deliberation group, before they engaged in a discussion.

This case study endeavors to record the processes and challenges of conducting an experiment approximating normative expectations of democratic deliberation in laboratory settings.

## Research Practicalities

The experiment was conducted between January and March 2017 at a behavioral laboratory of one of the U.K. universities. My participants were U.K. residents and approximately half of them were students.

## Research Design

To examine my research questions, I opted for a laboratory experiment. Carefully designed laboratory experiments offer a set of advantages when it comes to studying group deliberation. First, they enable the researchers to better isolate the effect of different elements of complex concepts, such as *deliberation* from a set of other factors, and measure the variables of interest with more precision. Thus, they contain higher internal validity when compared with non-experimental and observational data. For example, in real-world group deliberation, it is almost impossible to estimate whether the effect of deliberation is due to the fact that participants receive new and unbalanced information during a small group deliberation, or to the group discussion per se. Conversely, controlled experiments offer ways of randomly assigning participants to either *information only* group or *deliberation* group, and thus estimate more exact effect of each element. In carefully isolating its different elements, experiments are able to "shed greater scholarly light on the complex and sometimes conflicting mechanisms that may drive the outcomes of various deliberative processes" (Karpowitz & Mendelberg, 2011, p. 258). Furthermore, in laboratory settings, it is possible to measure the actual behavior, as contrasted to only self-reported one. For example, in a recent study, Kimmo Grönlund, Herne, and Setälä (2017) examine how group deliberation could lead to more pro-social behavior, such as donating to a charity.

However, laboratory experiments have also disadvantages. They are much more expensive, which is challenging especially for junior researchers, most of whom struggle with research funding. Laboratory experiments on deliberation are also effortful not only for researchers but also for participants. They require time and commitment, and thus may lead to more reluctance to participate in them. This in turn diminishes the size of the potential participant pool significantly and leads to self-selection problems.

In spite of these shortcomings, controlled laboratory experiments are well equipped for studying psychological processes underlying group deliberation and political judgments. In this case, I examined the effect of face-to-face group deliberation on political judgments, and thus needed to recreate a real group discussion as a treatment. By conducting a lab experiment, I ensured that those assigned to deliberation group actually deliberated, those in the information group read information, and so on. Furthermore, for theoretical expectations which are causal in nature, lab experiments are best suited, due to their higher internal validity in estimating cause and effect relationship.

## Experimental Design

Experimental designs offer unique opportunities for studying causal relationship between group deliberation and its argued benefits for individuals. In designing my experiment, I built on a burgeoning body of work which uses experimental methods to systematically examine the effects of deliberation for individuals and societies

(Gastil, 2018).

My experiment consisted of two waves (=stages). In the first wave, I fielded a short survey in a pool of potential respondents with self-reported questions measuring their baseline political attitudes, their dispositional empathy levels, and their views on the legalization of assisted dying in the United Kingdom. In the Wave 2 stage, a subgroup of participants was randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions ($n$ = 127):

- In *deliberation* group, respondents were invited to discuss the issue of "legalising assisted dying in the UK" in a group of eight to 12 citizens, after having read a short and balanced text on the topic. The text featured a common informative part and eight arguments (four pro and four con) on the issue. Group discussions lasted between 45 and 70 min. Some 37 out of 60 invited participants showed up on their respective days for deliberation group. Participants in *information* group read the same short and balanced information without participating in a discussion ($n$ = 60). The objective of having an *information only* group was to be able to disentangle the effect of *receiving new information* from *group deliberation*.
- Those participants, randomly assigned to *control* condition, only took pre- and post-experimental surveys. The reason for having a control group was to capture any aggregate changes in individuals' attitudes on assisted dying, which might be due to other external factors, for example, media exposure.

After the experiment, I re-measured citizens' attitudes on legalizing assisted dying and asked them about the cognitive information processing steps taken during and after the deliberation. In addition, I measured whether they experienced empathic feelings during the discussion/information stage or not. My main outcome of interest was whether those who discussed the issue were more willing to take demanding steps of reflecting upon their posterior choices about the issue, compared with those in the information and control conditions. My second outcome of interest was if those randomly assigned to deliberate in a small group felt more empathic compared with those in other experimental conditions.

## Challenges in the Design Process

In this section, I will outline some of the most important challenges I encountered when designing a lab experiment on democratic deliberation. I will also describe the reasons behind some design decisions I made along the road.

## Conceptualization and Measurement

First, the experience of designing and fielding a laboratory experiment has taught me that the most crucial and determining part of the experimental study is its design stage. The first step for me was to carefully think about the concept I was trying to manipulate in my experiment (i.e., my main treatment) and to come up

with the best possible measure to capture it. But deliberation is a complex and multifaceted concept which renders its operationalization (i.e., measurement) for an empirical research challenging. The first difficulty is that there is no commonly agreed definition of deliberation among scholars. In political scientist Diana Mutz's (2008) words, "it may be fair to say that there are as many definitions of deliberation as there are theorists" (p. 525). For example, there are disagreements, among others, on whether deliberation should (a) end with a "consensus," (b) have an ultimate goal of "common good" or not, (c) be public or private, and (d) exclude or embrace emotions (see Mendelberg, 2002, for a review). This definitional inconsistency within the scholarship creates challenges for an empirical scientist examining interpersonal deliberation in experimental settings. For example, Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2011) demonstrate this difficulty by comparing two studies, both of which try to examine the effects of deliberation: (a) Luskin, Fishkin, and Jowell's (2002) *grand treatment* of deliberation, which consists of several deliberative stages, such as receiving expert information, having informal interactions among participants, group discussion, and so on, and (b) Simon and Sulkin's (2002) two-player "divide-the-dollar game" study, where deliberation is operationalized as a very short discussion before a participant is to divide the money between themselves and another player.

During the design stage, I thought about the following questions:

- Do I define democratic deliberation as a simple interaction between participants in my study? Or should it go beyond the simple interaction and incorporate the requirement for the central deliberative values, such as open-mindedness, honesty, and inclusiveness, in the design ?
- Do I need a facilitator to moderate the discussion to ensure that every participant is given an equal opportunity to express their thoughts in public? Or should it be a free-flowing discussion?
- Is there a need for strict discussion rules to be included in the design? Do I have to pre-define these rules or should citizens spend time defining them during the discussion?
- How small/big a discussion group should be?
- How diverse a discussion group should be? How to ensure this diversity without harming the full randomization of participants to experimental conditions?

I thought long and hard about these and other questions with respect to the design of deliberation as a treatment. I reflected upon a range of theoretical definitions and empirical approximations of deliberation. I spoke to real-world deliberation scholars, such as Prof. Jane Suiter, to get their advice on the matter and, finally, had to take into account the limitations of laboratory settings. In the end, I opted for reproducing deliberation in its minimal form: face-to-face discussions happening in small group settings (eight to 10 people in each group), where citizen deliberators (a) received balanced and unbiased information before engaging in a discussion, (b) had a facilitator, and (c) understood and agreed upon a list of rules of a good group deliberation before starting the discussion (see Mutz, 2006). I also tried my best to expose participants to cross-cutting views during group discussions, however not always successfully.

Once I decided how to operationalize my concept, I had to think about the exact design of the experiment. One of the first questions I asked myself was whether my study should have one-shot design (consisting of just one stage) or should I field it in two waves. Some experiments on deliberation consist of one wave

(=stage). In other words, the variables of interest, for example, political attitudes, are measured within the same study either before or after the experimental manipulation. Others have two waves. For example, a pre-experimental survey is fielded a few days (or months) before the experiment (Wave 1) and another survey right after the experiment (Wave 2) among the same individuals.

I thought long and hard on whether I should have one or two waves for my experiment. In the end, I opted for having two waves for the following reasons.

**Carryover Effect**

One of the shortcomings of one-shot experiments is that the questions posed prior to the experiment can condition the effect of the treatment in participants (Jones & Kenward, 2003). In other words, the fact that the participants read about legalizing assisted dying, for example, in a question right before the treatment, could affect how they *take* (i.e., perceive) the treatment. Thus, the observed effect of the treatment may contain some noise. Therefore, I decided to survey the participants about their baseline attitudes several days before the experiment. The assumption here was that given enough period between the Wave 1 survey and the experiment (in my case this period varied from 1 to 3 weeks), the respondents' responses to the treatment would not be influenced by prior questions, as they might have already forgotten what response they gave in the first wave.

**Ethical Issues**

The topic of the group discussions in my experiment, that is, legalizing assisted dying, was a sensitive one. Discussing this issue might have induced a certain degree of distress or discomfort in the participants, especially for those who may have been personally affected by this matter in the past. To account for this problem partially and to meet the requirements of the ethics board of the university where I conducted my laboratory experiment, in Wave 1 survey I asked the participants whether they had any family member/friend/acquaintance affected by the issue of assisted dying and if they would feel comfortable participating in a group deliberation on the topic. However, there was a trade-off involved in this. Although informing the participants about the topic of the discussion makes the whole study transparent in the eyes of the participants and thus ethically more correct way of conducting an experiment, this might lead to *self-selection problem* which is so common for experiments. Self-selection means that the individuals who opt for voluntary participation in a study may be systematically different from those who do not choose to participate. Self-selection problem in experiments sometimes makes the determination of the cause and effect relationship difficult, because the participants of the experiment may be those with specific characteristics (with political knowledge, high interest in discussions, etc.), which may create problems for generalizability of the found patterns to a larger population. However, in real-world deliberative events, we encounter the similar problem. Not everyone is willing or committed to participate in a public group discussion. Thus, generalizing the results of the lab experiment to citizen deliberators may not create such a substantive problem.

**Exposure to Cross-Cutting Views**

Some deliberative democrats argue that an authentic deliberation should ensure that the voices of all perspective holders are heard (Karpowitz & Raphael, 2016). In other words, deliberating in a group should entail hearing a diverse set of viewpoints and perspectives, including those which represent disempowered and/or minority groups of the society. Furthermore, a greater diversity within a group deliberation is argued to induce more equality, as well as learning and reflection in deliberators (Mansbridge, 1999). However, it is challenging to ensure this diversity within each small group randomly in lab settings. Therefore, another objective of my Wave 1 survey was to measure the participants' baseline attitudes on the issue, and then stratify them in two camps (pro and con) depending on their attitudes on assisted dying, prior to randomizing them to different experimental groups (for more information about the technique, see the following sections).

## Joys of Conducting a Lab Experiment on Democratic Deliberation

I was initially skeptical about the possibility of having a lively, but respectful discussion in laboratory settings, due to the superficial environment it contains. My lab experiment proved me wrong. With the help of a facilitator, and an initial small talk, the participants in the groups were engaged in dynamic discussions, where almost each member of the group eagerly expressed their perspectives on the issue, listened to others actively, and contributed to thoughtful discussions. I recorded some of these discussions for further qualitative analysis. The first learned lesson from these discussions was the important role of the facilitator for a lively, respectful, and inclusive discussion. The facilitator ensured that the conversations were not hijacked by a particular person in the group, that everyone got a chance to express their opinion, and that participants stuck to the topic of the conversation. In a similar vein, some participants were very enthusiastic in sharing their personal stories about the topic, which increased the engagement of other members of discussion groups.

Another positive aspect of group discussions was their diversity in terms of age, gender, and ethnicity of participants, which helped to bring diverse perspectives to the table.

## Challenges of Attributing the Effect of the Experiment to Deliberation

Deliberation is not a mere talk. It is a time-consuming and effortful endeavor. Public deliberation requires, *among others*, reason-giving, active listening, and internal deliberation from the participants. In other words, citizen deliberators are encouraged to justify their arguments publicly, listen to others actively, and engage with others' differing perspectives and viewpoints. Thus, it has many parts and many dimensions. This demanding nature of deliberation may therefore induce three kinds of problems for understanding the causal effects of deliberation. First, multifaceted character of the treatment (i.e., deliberation) makes it hard to understand which element of the deliberative interaction causes the observed effects. In other words, we do not know whether it is the fact that citizens publicly state their thoughts on the issue, or that they learn about different perspectives, or that they are exposed to inconsistent views that enables them to reflect more on their political decisions.

Second, due to effortful nature of deliberative experiment, some of the participants randomly assigned to participate in a group discussion might drop out of the treatment altogether, which may introduce some biases in our estimates. Indeed, the latter was the case for my laboratory experiment. A part of the participants randomly assigned to deliberation group did not show up for group deliberations. It may well have been due to severe weather conditions (heavy snow) in the United Kingdom at the time of the experiments. But it also may have been the case that the demanding character of group deliberation put some participants off from participating in the experiment.

Third, public deliberation happens in group settings. This means that the outcomes of deliberations may depend upon the group dynamics, which is in turn affected by the composition of the group. Indeed, prior research suggests that group-level variables, such as the gender composition and decision rule of the group, have consequential effects on the outcomes of the deliberation (Mendelberg & Karpowitz, 2007).

To account for group differences and thus make a more precise estimation of the effect of group discussion on empathy and citizens' political judgments, we could take the group as a unit of analysis and thus control for group-level differences. Yet, we would need a large number of groups for this purpose and thus larger sample size, which is an expensive and challenging endeavor, especially for a junior researcher.

In the absence of many groups in our experiments, we might try to ensure that groups are similar in terms of their composition. However, it is also a difficult task to undertake. I will demonstrate this challenge with an example from my laboratory experiment. In my experiment, I tried to create diversity in viewpoints within groups. To make the groups similar on this characteristic, I used the technique of *stratification* of the sample in the following manner. First, I divided the sample in two subsamples across previously measured attitudes on legalizing assisted dying: (a) those who were in favor of the legalization and (b) those who were against. Afterward, I randomly assigned the respondents to experimental conditions from these camps. However, it was still not perfect. First, the stratification happened across one characteristic: issue preference. It was impossible to sub-stratify participants along socio-demographic characteristics. Second, out of four discussion groups, only one group held a diverse mix of viewpoints presented. Other three groups consisted of mostly like-minded groups, with one or two participants each group holding a different view on the participant. This happened due to either unavailability of some participants on the chosen date of the experiment or due to dropout of some of the participants from the experiment.

## Practical Lessons Learned

The first laboratory experiment of my PhD project has taught me the following substantive as well as design-related practical lessons.

## Design

The most important stage of conducting a successful laboratory experiment is its design process. We, as

researchers, should take as much time as it is needed to engage in this creative process of designing and crafting our experiments conscientiously. Carefully well-thought-through manipulations and measures can ensure that you are manipulating and measuring what you intend to and not something else. Having said that, however, I realized that there is never a perfect experimental design and always some uncertainties, and trade-offs involved in the decisions we make.

## Experimental Diary

We make many decisions during the design process: choosing one question or treatment over another, choosing the lab, the day and time of the experiment, and so on. As time passes, we might forget about the rationales behind these choices. Some of them might be trivial, others consequential for interpreting our findings. Therefore, keeping a detailed experimental protocol or diary is essential for not only our own records but also for transparency of the research practices and replicability of experimental studies. When I designed this experiment, I was not well aware of preregistration practices within the social sciences, and thus I did not preregister my design and analysis plan. Preregistration involves describing your experimental design in a detailed manner and outlining your plan of analysis before fielding the experiment. This ensures that any other researcher is able to reproduce your experiment whenever needed. It also makes sure that we as researchers are transparent in our findings. Preregistration can be done online in different open-access platforms, such as Center for Open Science and E-gap (Evidence in Governance & Politics). Nowadays, whatever experiment I design, I tend to preregister it beforehand. Experimental diary could also be helpful for writing this plan, because you could understand why you opted for one design over another in the first place, for example.

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## Findings

In February to March 2018, I conducted a laboratory experiment with 127 U.K. residents to see whether deliberating in a group leads to more reflective individual political decisions and whether empathy comes into play in this process. The main manipulation involved a subgroup of participants being randomly assigned to a group discussion. With the help of a facilitator, participants engaged in an hour-long discussion about the pros and cons of legalizing assisted dying in the United Kingdom. I further measured citizens' empathy levels, their post-experimental attitudes on the topic of discussion, and cognitive information processing steps taking when deciding upon the issue. The findings of my lab experiment showed that respondents in the deliberation group indeed demonstrated higher willingness to reflect on their decisions about an issue, compared with those in the control or information conditions. Yet the difference was not statistically significant.

My results also demonstrated that as hypothesized, empathy comes into play in the deliberative reasoning process of citizens. Those participants who felt more empathy during the experiment were more willing to engage in reflective thinking. This relationship was strong and statistically significant. This demonstrated that emotions do not necessarily hinder deliberative reasoning, as argued by some scholars. On the contrary, as my findings indicate, empathy is associated with more reflective thinking in deliberative settings.

In the previous sections of this SAGE case study, I have detailed the joys and challenges of conducting a lab experiment in citizen deliberation and how the design stage is important in foreseeing potential issues with the experiment. I have also listed some of the theoretical and methodological choices I made during the design and fielding stages.

In sum, the project has been rewarding in providing me with invaluable insights into processes underlying group deliberation and served as a crucial learning experience for my current and future experiments in deliberation. The experience has also taught me to be critical of my own research, as well as those of others. If I had to mention two major takeaways from this process, they would be as follows: (a) take as much time as necessary to craft a detailed and well-thought-out experiment and (b) ensure transparency in reporting the experimental design and the findings of the research. Related to the latter topic, replication of research pieces should be widely encouraged, to examine whether our findings are contingent upon the context and specific design or mirror true patterns and relationships.

I hope this case study provides you with some useful insights for conducting your own laboratory experiment in citizen deliberation.

## Exercises and Discussion Questions

1. Why deliberation is a complex concept to manipulate? Can you think of ways of disentangling the true effect of deliberation?
2. What are the ethical issues related to deception in experimental settings? Why should we worry about misinforming the participants about the objectives of the study?
3. What role does transparency play in reporting the findings of the research?

## Acknowledgments

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (Grant Agreement No. 759736) and was supported by the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) under the Grant No. G075615N. The experiment was conducted at the Nuffield College Centre for Experimental Social Sciences (CESS), University of Oxford. The author gratefully acknowledges the support of the CESS in conducting her research. The author is also grateful to the editor and reviewers for their valuable comments, and to Sofie Marien and Jane Suiter for their support.

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## Web Resources

Irish Citizens' Assembly: https://www.citizensassembly.ie/en/

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# ARTICLE IV

 doi:10.1111/spsr.12405

# Scaling up Deliberation: Testing the Potential of Mini-Publics to Enhance the Deliberative Capacity of Citizens

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**Abstract:** *This paper tests the possibility of embedding the benefits of minipublic deliberation within a wider voting public. We test whether a statement such as those derived from a Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) can influence voters who did not participate in the pre-referendum minipublic deliberation. This experiment was implemented in advance of the 2018 Irish referendum on blasphemy, one of a series of social-moral referendums following the recommendations of a deliberative assembly. This is the first application of a CIR-style voting aid in a real world minipublic and referendum outside of the US and also the first application to what is principally a moral question. We found that survey respondents exposed to information about the minipublic and its findings significantly increased their policy knowledge. Further, exposing respondents to minipublic statements in favour and against the policy measure increased their empathy for the other side of the policy debate.*

Keywords: Deliberation, mini-publics, CIR, citizen participation, Referendum

Referendums ask an electorate to make the kind of policy decisions otherwise reserved for professional legislators. Deliberative democratic reformers have proposed that voters would benefit from the use of a special kind of citizen body—the "deliberative minipublic." When such a body communicates its findings to the full electorate, it could help voters make more informed and reflective choices on their ballots (Mackenzie and Warren 2012; Warren and Gastil 2015).

Minipublics consist of randomly chosen citizens who represent a wider population. Organizers ask these citizens to deliberate on important policy issues and offer impartial judgments based on good evidence and respectful deliberation across different viewpoints. Seminal cases include the Irish Constitutional Convention (Suiter et al. 2016a), Irish Citizens' Assembly (Farrell et al. 2018), Deliberative Polls (Fishkin 2009), and the Citizens' Initiative Review in Oregon (Gastil et al. 2018).

Much of the empirical research on minipublics examines micro-level processes and outcomes for participating citizens, but this leaves unanswered hard questions about their scalability and practical value for macro-level policymaking. Can deliberative minipublics influence the wider public, and if so, to what extent? Such questions are particularly

important at a time when researchers are using the Citizens' Initiative Review model to conduct experiments in new countries, such as Switzerland (Stojanović and Geisler 2019) and Finland (Setälä et al. 2019).

Prior research has studied how minipublics affect deliberating individuals' values and attitudes by boosting the coherence of their policy attitudes, democratic legitimacy beliefs, political efficacy, complexity of thinking, the quality of political knowledge and judgements (Fishkin 2009; Grönlund et al. 2010; Himmelroos and Christensen 2014; Jennstål 2019; Lindell et al. 2017; Luskin et al. 2002; Muradova 2020; Suiter et al. 2016b). More recently, attention has turned to whether such effects scale to the wider citizenry (Boulianne 2018; Felicetti et al. 2016; Ingham and Levin 2018; Knobloch et al. 2019).

We extend this growing line of research by asking whether reading a report from a deliberative minipublic can strengthen the *deliberative capacity* of an electorate. Deliberative capacity involves resources and skills that enable citizens to engage in interpersonal and intrapersonal deliberation before making political judgements (Burkhalter et al. 2002).

Although there is a scholarly debate on what specific capacities are the most important (Curato and Böker 2016), we focus on two: informational resources and emotional capacities. An abundance of the former provides necessary factual knowledge about politics and policy, whereas the latter affords one the empathy necessary for considering how collective decisions impact the full demos. Both are crucial components of the "enlightened understanding" that deliberation aims to create (Dahl 1989: 112; O'Flynn and Sood 2014).

More specifically, we examine whether reading about a minipublic and its recommendations can enhance citizens' factual knowledge and other-regarding empathic feelings toward the other side of a public policy debate. Our study investigates whether different ways of transmitting information about minipublics to the larger public yields different deliberative capacities. For example, does reading about the justification statement for minipublic recommendations (as opposed to mere recommendations, with no justification) have a differing effect on citizens? Does exposure to the counter-attitudinal arguments considered by the minipublic have a positive or a negative effect on knowledge gain and empathy?

To disentangle the effects of three different elements of informational exposure (recommendations, justifications, and pro-con arguments), we fielded a survey experiment ($N$ = 776) among Irish citizens in the run-up to 2018 referendum on blasphemy. The survey exposed citizens to statements on this issue from the Irish Constitutional Convention, which were adapted to resemble the voter guides produced by the Citizens' Initiative Review (Gastil and Knobloch 2020).

After providing a broader theoretical context for this study and laying out our research methods, we present the results of our experiment. At the cost of giving away the ending of this story, the main findings were as follows. First, reading information about the minipublic's key findings had the hypothesized positive effect on voter knowledge, though not in every case. Second, exposure to opposing viewpoints had a positive effect on empathy for the other side, but it dampened the knowledge gains. In our concluding section, we discuss the implications of these results, such as tension between providing factual information and foregrounding political disagreement in deliberation (Esterling et al. 2015; Guess and Coppock 2018; Mutz 2006; Nyhan and Reifler 2010) and offer new

insights to political psychological theories of how different information cues about citizen forums may influence voters' decisions.

## The Effect of Minipublics on Public Attitudes

Deliberative minipublics are institutions consisting of a (near) random sample of citizens who engage in structured discussion and deliberation on policy issues and make policy recommendations (for a review, see Setälä and Smith 2018: 300). The examples of minipublics include deliberative polling (Fishkin 2009), citizens' assemblies (Suiter et al. 2016a), citizen juries (Smith and Wales 2000), and Citizens' Initiative Reviews (Gastil et al. 2018). They are designed to involve citizens in political decision-making processes by providing them with unbiased and diverse viewpoints, expert information, and a safe space to deliberate and reason together (Goodin and Dryzek 2006).

### *Theorizing Minipublics' Broader Impacts*

Research suggests that deliberation in minipublics leads to higher-quality political attitudes, increased political efficacy and political knowledge and higher civic engagement among participating citizens (Farrar et al. 2009; Grönlund et al. 2010; Knobloch and Gastil 2015; Luskin et al. 2002). Although having merit on their own, these attitudinal effects are restricted to the small number of people who participate in minipublics. In practice it is challenging for all or nearly all citizens to have the opportunity to get engaged in small group deliberations (Goodin 2003). Proponents of a systemic approach to deliberation, such as Parkinson (2018: 433), acknowledge that unlike the Ancient Athenian demos, "it is impossible for everyone — or representatives of everyone — to gather together in a single room to hear all of the proposals for action and inaction and reason together to reach a joint conclusion."

To be of practical benefit for polities, minipublics must have impacts on the wider citizenry (Knobloch et al. 2019: 2). In the absence of this impact, minipublics are faced with the challenges of scalability (Chambers 2009). Various means of minipublic influence on macro politics been suggested (Goodin and Dryzek 2006). According to one argument, deliberative minipublics have the potential to inform and shape public opinion on a range of complex policy issues. Learning that a group of randomly chosen lay citizens arrive at conclusions after a careful deliberation can serve as informational proxies for the public who are uninformed about the policies (Ingham and Levin 2018; Mackenzie and Warren 2012; Niemeyer 2011; Warren and Gastil 2015).

The so-called *blind deference* to the recommendations by minipublics, however, may not be the best solution. Cristina Lafont (2015) argues that the use of deliberative minipublics in shaping public policymaking directly decreases democratic legitimacy, because it circumvents deliberation in the larger public. From this participatory standpoint, deliberative minipublics should enhance (rather than hinder) deliberation in the broader public sphere (Lafont 2020; see also, Curato and Böker, 2016; Chambers 2009).

This leads to the question at the heart of this article: How can deliberative minipublics motivate the wider public to become better informed and more empathic when making political judgments? We argue that minipublics can contribute to mass deliberation by enhancing the *deliberative capacity* of citizens, defined here as the ability of citizens to engage in deliberative political decision making. Deliberative capacity encompasses a set of resources and abilities that can aid people to deliberate with others and/or in their heads

before arriving at informed and reflective political decisions. *Informational resources* encompass factual information and knowledge which are necessary for interpreting and analysing political realities (Burkhalter et al. 2002). *Analytical capacities* include information processing skills, reflective and logical thinking, whereas *communication skills* entail the capacity to articulate one's views, construct persuasive arguments, frame these arguments around a common good, and engage in a discussion with others (Burkhalter et al. 2002: 417).

We believe that this list should also include *emotional capacity*. This includes being sensitive to others' feelings, thoughts, and life experiences, which can be best captured by the concept of empathy (Rogers 1980; Morrell 2010). Empathy is the "capacity to feel like others might feel (affective empathy) or to understand their feelings and perspectives (cognitive empathy)" (Wessler 2018: 145). Michael Morrell (2010) argues that without empathy it is impossible for deliberative democracy to fulfil its promise of equal consideration that is central to giving collective decisions their legitimacy. It should reduce the distance between citizens from different walks of life by promoting inclusiveness and strengthening mutual respect and reciprocity (Goodin 2003; Krause 2008; Morrell 2010). As Sharon Krause posits, deliberation that lacks empathy "cannot provide a basis for legitimate, justified democratic decision making that truly takes all into consideration" (2008: 83). Recent empirical research has shown that consideration of different perspectives on the issue, in particular those of the opposing side, requires being empathetic toward others' perspectives and feelings (Muradova 2020).

In this paper, we focus on two aspects of deliberative capacity: informational resources and emotional capacities. We explore whether reading about a minipublic and its consensus recommendation enhances informational resources and other-regarding, empathic capacities of citizens in the wider public.

## *The Citizens' Initiative Review Model*

Perhaps the best known of the consensus recommendation processes was established by the Oregon State Legislature in 2009, whereby a randomly selected group of citizens meet for four-to-five days as a Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) panel to write a one-page Citizens' Statement that is inserted into the official Oregon *Voters' Pamphlet* mailed to every registered voter by the Secretary of State (Knobloch et al. 2013). This Citizens' Statement has five parts: a description of the CIR process; a Key Findings statement of relevant information that a majority of panellists consider accurate and important; and statements in favour of and opposed to the measure. The process for writing these pro and con arguments has varied over the years, from subsets of panellists on either side writing them independently in the first year (2010) to a more recent collaborative approach that involves the whole panel (Gastil and Knobloch 2020). Though variants exist, statewide CIRs in Oregon also show how many panellists ended up in favour or against the ballot measure.

The CIR is designed to create a distinctive communication process through which the wider electorate can discover how citizens understood an issue following a period of deliberation (Gastil et al. 2014). The mechanism through which this happens may be facilitative trust (Warren and Gastil 2015). Minipublics can act as facilitative trust agents when such bodies are high in competence but low in motivated reasoning. The wider citizenry might use these facilitative trustees to make judgments on their behalf when they offer a consensus recommendation (Fishkin 2009; Landemore 2013). Indeed, evidence

from Irish minipublics finds that those who know more about the minipublic also have higher levels of subject knowledge and are more likely to vote in line with the minipublic recommendation (Elkink et al. 2017, 2020; Suiter and Reidy 2020).

This trustee model of the minipublic, however, raises objections from those who would prefer that a minipublic inspire—rather than replace—reflection and judgment in the wider public (Lafont 2015, 2020). The CIR model addresses this concern by foregrounding key information and arguments for the public to consider, rather than a recommendation to be followed. A review of survey experiments on the full set of CIRs held in the US since 2010 found that even when voters see a tally showing how the CIR minipublic itself voted, this alone did not predict changes in voters' judgments. As Gastil and Knobloch (2020: 130) conclude, "The bottom line is that how a CIR panel votes gives some indication of its likely effect on the electorate. What really matters, though, is the content of the panel's statement."

Building on this finding, we examine whether a CIR-type statement from a minipublic can enhance the deliberative capacity of citizens by increasing their knowledge gain on the issue and prompting other-regarding empathic feelings in them. We examine this in the context of a moral referendum on blasphemy in Ireland. Moral questions are associated with fixed attitudes; they are situated at a deeper level (Pearce and Littlejohn 1997: 51) and may "engage a distinctive mode of processing [...] [and] evoke certain negative emotions toward political disagreement, perhaps more powerfully than any other attitude characteristic" (Ryan 2014: 381). Acknowledging and gaining new and counter-attitudinal information on a moral issue may be more challenging for people. Therefore, a moral issue constitutes a hard test for our theoretical argument.

## Hypotheses and Research Questions

### *Impact on Informational Resources*

Learning about a deliberative process, such as a minipublic and its recommendations on a policy issue may increase citizens' factual knowledge about the policy issue. This may happen via the following possible mechanisms. Non-participating citizens may perceive a minipublic as a trusted and legitimate source of information and seek to learn from it and subsequently update their knowledge about an issue (Fournier et al. 2011; Warren and Gastil 2015). Others argue minipublic participants can be perceived by citizens in the wider public as more knowledgeable on the policy issue, due to the internal workings of minipublics which involve learning from the experts and from each other (Boulianne 2018; Warren 2009). In other words, individuals may "defer to more enlightened peers" when acknowledging the correct factual information (Fournier et al. 2011: 127). Alternatively, the wider public—upon reading the information about the consensus nature of the decision making by the minipublic—could view the information as non-partisan and less biased (Már and Gastil 2019: 4).

Either of the preceding mechanisms justify the expectation that being exposed to information about the minipublic and its findings may lead to knowledge gain, which could potentially lead the wider citizenry to reconsider policy preferences (Goodin and Dryzek 2006). Both could be obtained, for example, with the help of extensive media coverage of these events (Elkink et al. 2017, 2020). In this paper, we examine whether reading about the minipublic and its key findings can lead to factual knowledge gain among non-participating citizens. Building on the above-mentioned literature, we

hypothesize that being exposed to information about a minipublic would lead to factual knowledge gain among a wider public (H1).

### *Impact on Emotional Capacities*

Empathy is beneficial for making citizens "more enlightened about their own and others' needs and experiences" (Mendelberg 2002: 153), thus aiding the discovery of the common good (Mansbridge 1983). Empathy is important for political decisions, where it is vital to maintain a mutual respect among people with conflicting value priorities. Empathy helps people appreciate the arguments on opposing sides of a legitimate debate (Barber 1999).

Participating in deliberation within a minipublic has been found to generate more empathetic feelings and understanding among participating citizens toward others (Morrell 2010; Grönlund et al. 2017; Muradova 2020). What is unknown is whether these effects extend to individuals who did not participate directly in a minipublic or similar deliberative process.

We know from research in social psychology that at the heart of the processes of empathy lies the perceived similarity between the target of the empathy (toward whom the empathizer feels empathy) and the empathizer (e.g. Davis 1994). Batson et al. (2005: 15) argue that individuals "feel for a stranger [...] to the degree that they perceive the stranger to be similar to themselves." People may perceive the members of the minipublic as more similar to themselves – ordinary, laypeople with similar needs and interests. This perception of similarity can engender more empathic feelings in people toward other citizens whose lives may be different from theirs, particularly toward those in a disadvantaged position (Grönlund et al. 2017). Nevertheless, these processes may be limited to face-to-face interactions, wherein empathic emotions can be easier to elicit. The question that arises is whether informational exposure to minipublics can increase people's other-regarding empathic responses to the other side in a referendum question (RQ1).

### *Exposure to Different Kinds of Information from Minipublics*

Next, we examine what amount of information about a minipublic is sufficient for the wider public to experience the aforementioned theorized beneficial effects. Surely different informational exposures about the same minipublic could have different impacts.

We look at varied combinations of three elements of the standard CIR-style information: (a) brief information about the minipublic and its policy stance; (b) its main findings (i.e. a paragraph justifying its policy stance); (c) in addition to a and b, a list of statements in favour of and against the policy measure, considered by the minipublic prior to arriving at a decision.

The little empirical research that looks at the effect of information about the minipublic on the wider public's political attitudes mainly relies on the combination of a and b (e.g. Boulianne 2018). Meanwhile, the real-world Oregon process includes CIR statements as a part of its *Voters' Pamphlet*, and studies looking at the impact of this information has not yet tried to unravel which elements of the statements account for observed effects.

To disentangle the different elements of statements emanating from minipublics, we return to deliberative theory itself. At the heart of a deliberative discourse lies the *justification* of claims and assertions. Justifications involve "offering reasons that are acceptable to citizens" (Chambers 2010: 894) and constitute crucial elements which "stimulate[e] the deliberative process" (Steenberger et al. 2003: 25). As Burkhalter et al.

(2002: 411) argue, "In the end, deliberation requires not just a final decision but also a justification of that choice". The Key Findings of the CIR informational exposure were designed to convey the justification claims for the main recommendation of the constitutional convention. Relying on this, we test whether being exposed to information about a minipublic together with its key findings (i.e. justification) will have a greater effect on deliberation in the wider public than an information exposure that lacks such a justification (H2).

Further, we examine whether statements juxtaposing arguments in favour of and against a policy measure (hereafter called "Pro-Con statements") have distinct effects. Democratic theorists argue that being exposed to opposing viewpoints in everyday political talk engenders more reflective and considered political judgments, and more positive evaluation of the other side (Arendt 1982; Gutmann and Thompson 2009). First, being exposed to opposing views can expand one's understanding of different others' perspectives (Price et al. 2002) and can encourage a greater awareness of rationales for counter-attitudinal views (Mutz 2006). Second, exposure to heterogeneous political views can evoke more positive, and empathetic evaluation of people who hold viewpoints different from one's own. This may be particularly relevant for minipublic context, the members of which are chosen randomly to represent a diverse group of people with different backgrounds. Consistent with this thinking, reading about oppositional statements generated by members of the minipublic would have a positive effect on citizens' knowledge gain (H3a) and other-regarding attitudes (H3b).

Others contend that exposure to political disagreement can backfire (Esterling et al. 2015; Guess and Coppock 2018; Mutz 2006; Nyhan and Reifler 2010). Humans have a range of cognitive biases which affect their reasoning systematically (Taber and Lodge 2006). Exposure to disagreement in the form of opposing statements would produce a cognitive dissonance and subsequent discomfort and confusion in individuals. In the face of such disagreement, citizens tend to act as motivated reasoners, as psychologists argue (Kunda 1990; Lodge and Taber 2013). They tend to search for more arguments and justifications for their existing views and end up with more (not less) polarized policy attitudes. Nyhan and Reifler (2010) find that factual information does little to decrease misperceptions about political issues. Quite the contrary, in some cases, hearing factual corrections can boost misperceptions.

Consistent with this way of thinking, we expect that reading about factual knowledge emanating from a minipublic could have a negative effect on citizens' knowledge gain (H4a). Furthermore, recent research has found that people who are politically polarized also happen to score high on trait empathic concern toward others (Simas et al. 2020). In this case, we may predict negative relationship between exposure to counter-attitudinal viewpoints and other-regarding attitudes (H4b). An alternative hypothesis holds that pro-con statements may have heterogeneous effects on individuals' reasoning processes and thus effects emanating from two mechanisms may offset each other (H4c). Our study will try to adjudicate between these mutually exclusive expectations.

## Research Methods

### *Study Context: The Irish Constitutional Convention*

The Irish Constitutional Convention (ICC) of 2012-14 (www.constitutionalconvention.ie) was a mixed-member deliberative forum, including lay citizens and members of parliament

as members. The citizen members were selected at random by an independent market research company, which had a brief of ensuring that the membership was a reasonable reflection of the population in terms of sex, age, region, and socio-economic status (Arnold et al. 2019; Farrell et al. 2019). The ICC was given a brief to report within 12 months on eight matters: review of the Dáil (parliament) electoral system; reducing the presidential term to five years (from its current seven); provision for marriage equality; amending the clause on women in the home; measures to encourage greater participation of women in politics and public life; removing blasphemy from the Constitution; reduction of the voting age; and votes for emigrants (and Northern Ireland residents) in presidential elections.

Space was given for the ICC to consider other possible areas of amendment, once their work on these items was complete: in the event the ICC members considered two other areas: parliamentary reform, and whether to insert a clause into the Constitution recognizing economic, social and cultural rights (See Suiter et al. 2016a for a full description). The government proposed that the recommendations of the Convention would be debated in the lower house of the Irish parliament (a portion of whose members were themselves Convention members), with the possibility of constitutional referendums to follow (dependent ultimately on the government's reaction to the proposals).

The focus of this article is on the Convention's report on blasphemy, which addressed the question of whether to remove an existing ban on blasphemy from the Irish Constitution. Blasphemy was one of a number of moral issues which had found their way into the 1937 Irish Constitution reflecting the country's traditional religious traits (O'Brien 2002). As far back as 1991 the Irish Law Reform Commission recommended that the constitutional prohibition be removed, yet the Defamation Act 2009 made blasphemy a crime punishable by a €25,000 fine. The law came to prominence in 2017 when a Garda (police) inquiry began after a complaint was made over British actor Stephan Fry making critical comments about God during an interview on state broadcaster RT. No prosecution was brought in the case (McMahon 2017).

When the Convention examined the issue in 2013, it heard from proponents and opponents of the measure. Sixty-one of the 100 convention members voted to remove the provision from the Constitution. It recommended that the current constitutional ban should be replaced with a new general provision which would make incitement to religious hatred an offence to be defined by law. The ICC presented its report on the matter to the Irish parliament in January 2014. The referendum that is the focus of this paper was held on October 26, 2018: it passed with 69 percent of the vote, thus removing the offence of publishing or uttering blasphemous material from the Constitution.

The ICC is not an exact replica of the CIR: the current authors summarized the Convention's 39-page report onto one-page presenting the Key Findings and the pro/con arguments – replicating the type of material produced in an Oregon-style CIR. This was shown to a core group of ICC citizen-members who agreed it was a fair reflection of their report. This core group was made up of the 15 members of the ICC members who had agreed to follow up email correspondence. Some 13 members replied and all agreed this summary version of their final report.

### *Experimental Survey Design*

We conducted our survey from October 12-25, 2018 and received 776 surveys from volunteers recruited by the online survey firm Qualtrics. A plurality of respondents (48%) completed the survey on a smart phone, with the rest using laptops (23%), desktop

computers (17%), or tablets (13%). The majority of respondents (35%) required 11-20 minutes to finish the survey, with all but 6% of the sample requiring more time to finish. Age of respondents ranged from 18 to 87, with the mean age of 45 years old. 47% of the sample self-identified as female, with 12% of them having at least a bachelor's degree (see appendix for more descriptive statistics).

Every respondent saw the following description of the blasphemy referendum:

> This October's ballot referendum (the 37th Amendment) proposes to amend the Irish Constitution to remove the word "blasphemous" from Article 40.6.1(i). That Article currently reads:
>
> The publication or utterance of blasphemous, seditious, or indecent matter is an offence which shall be punishable in accordance with law. The proposal is to remove the word "blasphemous." All other words in this Article would remain.

Afterwards, random assignment broke our larger sample into experimental treatment groups. A control group consisted of 184 respondents, who saw no information about the CIR-style statement. The rest of the sample saw a statement describing the ICC minipublic:

> Now that you have read the official summary of this year's referendum, we would like you to consider a Statement from the Convention on the Constitution. Please read the description of this statement carefully.

As part of a year-long Convention on the Constitution, sixty-six randomly selected registered Irish voters and thirty-three members from the Dáil, the Seanad and the Northern Ireland Assembly gathered to discuss and make recommendations on key constitutional provisions. Over the weekend of November 2, 2013, the Convention heard evidence from experts in the field, legal representatives, advocacy groups, and laypeople to make recommendations on the removal of the offence of blasphemy from Article 40.6.1(i) of Bunreacht na hÉireann. This statement is a product of those deliberations and recommendations.

These respondents were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions: exposure to Key Findings only ($n$ = 200), pro and con statements only ($n$ = 188), and Key Findings followed by pro and con statements ($n$ = 204). Those seeing the Key Findings saw this text:

> The Convention produced these KEY FINDINGS regarding the removal of the offence of blasphemy from the constitution.

- The European Court of Human Rights grants member states a certain level of autonomy to determine their own religious and moral standards and laws.
- Blasphemy laws, or similar 'hate crime' laws, exist in many Western democracies; however, it is unusual to find such matters included in constitutions.
- Ireland's Constitution proclaims that speech and publication of blasphemous materials are criminal acts.
- The Supreme Court ruled in Corway v Independent Newspapers (1999) that the wording in the Constitution regarding blasphemy was too vague.
- Blasphemy will remain a crime in Ireland even if the constitutional provision is removed. The Defamation Act of 2009 provides legislative guidance on criminal prosecutions for blasphemy.

These findings were supported by members of the Convention.

For those seeing pro and con arguments, a tailored transition statement read, "The Convention summarized what its members considered the strongest ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST the referendum"). The arguments in favour were presented as follows:

Arguments IN SUPPORT of REMOVING the Offence of Blasphemy from the Constitution

- Religion has no place in the constitution of a modern state like Ireland.
- Previous court cases show that the wording of the offence is too vague and unworkable for criminal prosecution.
- Ireland's blasphemy law is used by repressive regimes in the middle-east to support more repressive measures there.
- The rights of both religious and non-religious groups can be protected by legislation, without the need for a Constitutional provision. The Defamation Act of 2009 currently provides more protections for religion than the constitutional provision against blasphemy.

This position was supported by 61 per cent of Convention voters.

And the arguments opposing the referendum were these:

Arguments OPPOSED TO REMOVING the Offence of Blasphemy from the Constitution

- Removing the offence of blasphemy would be yet another step in the downgrading of religion in Irish society; it could be seen as an attack on religious beliefs.
- Religion is a sacred and personal aspect of our society – it needs constitutional protection.
- Retaining this clause in the constitution will make people think before they act or speak.
- Blasphemy laws protect offence against all religions; they deter people from disrespecting any religion, which is important in Ireland's multi-faith society.

This position was supported by 38 per cent of Convention voters.

## *Outcome Variable Measurement*

*Objective knowledge* of respondents was measured on the basis of responses to a series of statements. Respondents were instructed to indicate whether each of the given statements was definitely true, probably true, probably false, or definitely false. They also had an option of choosing the "don't know" response. The statements were as follows:

(1) The European Court of Human Rights grants member states considerable freedom to set their own laws regarding religion".
(2) The Irish Constitution prohibits speaking or publishing blasphemy.
(3) The Defamation Act of 2009 provides more protections for religion than the constitutional provision against blasphemy.
(4) Blasphemy laws can be found in the constitutions of many western democracies.

(5) The Irish Supreme Court has ruled that the wording in the Constitution regarding blasphemy is too vague to be enforceable.
(6) Irish blasphemy laws protect all religions from offence.

A dichotomous variable for each item was created with values of false (0) or true (1). We did not create a summative measure of objective knowledge because the internal consistency of a six-item knowledge index would have been low ($\alpha = 0.57$).

To capture respondents' *other-regarding attitudes*, we measured individuals' empathic reactions of *compassion* and *sympathy* for other people. We captured the affective (rather than cognitive) dimension of empathy (Davis 1983), as it comes the closest to the popular understanding of the term. It also has been found to be the strongest predictor of prosocial and other-oriented attitudes and behaviours (for a review, see Simas et al. 2020). We asked the following question: "Sometimes people feel emotions when thinking about a referendum, and other times they do not. Please tell us if you felt any of the following emotions when considering how blasphemy might affect people whose lives are very different from your own". Among other listed emotions there were also compassionate and sympathetic. Respondents indicated their response on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 ("did not feel this emotion") to 5 ("felt this very strongly"). Using these items, we created a two-item summative index for empathy ($M = 5.3$, $SD = 2.4$) that had scores ranging from 2-10 ($\alpha = 0.87$).

## Results

We estimated the effect of our treatments on outcomes of interest by running a series of regression analyses. The effects are visualized with the help of coefficient plots.

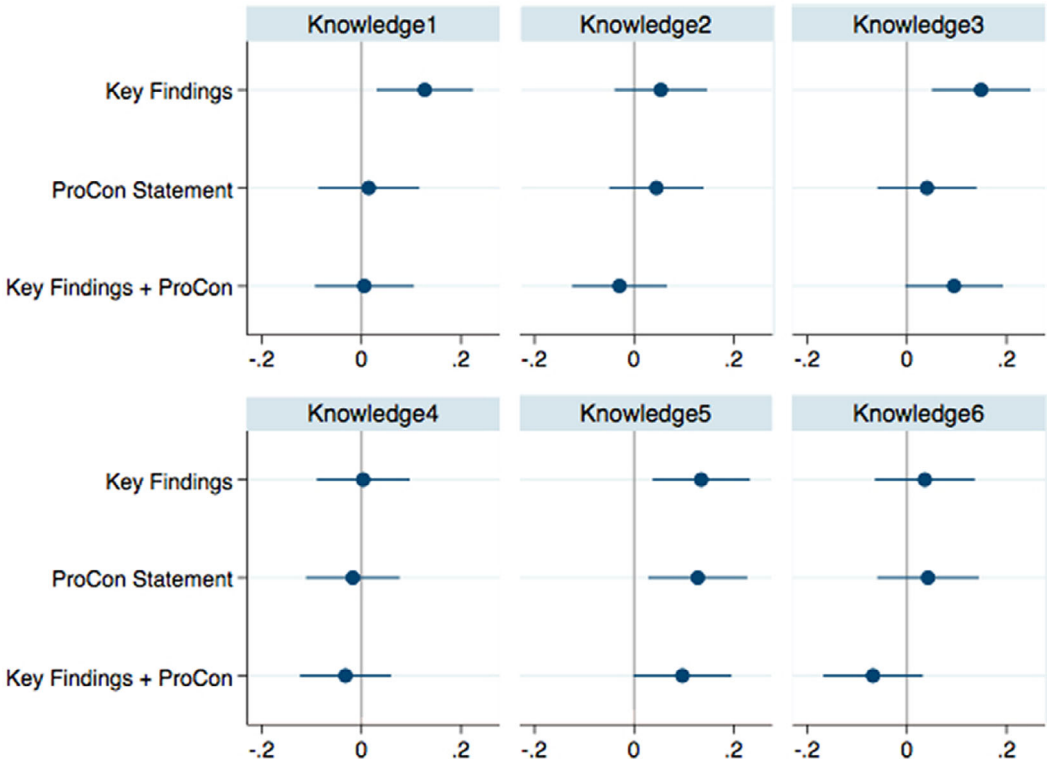
### *Knowledge Effects*

Figure 1 visualizes coefficient plots showing the effect of exposure to separate or combined sections of a CIR-style statement on the six factual knowledge questions. The baseline is the control condition, where respondents are not exposed to information about the Irish minipublic. Knowledge1, Knowledge2, and so on refer to the numbers in the Methods section for corresponding knowledge items. The point estimates are depicted with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). Point estimates to the right of the baseline indicate a positive effect, whereas those to the left show a negative effect. Those that touch the vertical line indicate non-significant effects. For three out of six factual knowledge statements, reading information about the minipublic together with key findings had a positive and significant effect on knowledge acquisition.

Next, we tested the effect of exposing respondents to Pro-Con statements by comparing the knowledge acquisition across three experimental conditions: Key Findings, Pro-Con, and the combination of two (KeyFindings + Pro-Con). Figure 2 depicts the effects with 95% CIs. The baseline in these regression models is the KeyFinding condition. In four out of six knowledge questions, exposure to Pro-Con statements (either separately or in combination with KeyFindings) had a negative and significant effect on factual knowledge acquisition. In other words, those who were assigned to read about Pro-Con acquired less factual knowledge.

Figure 1: Factual Knowledge Effects from Exposure to Separate or Combined Sections of a CIR Statement. Baseline: Control Group (No information on CIR)




*Other-Regarding Attitudes*

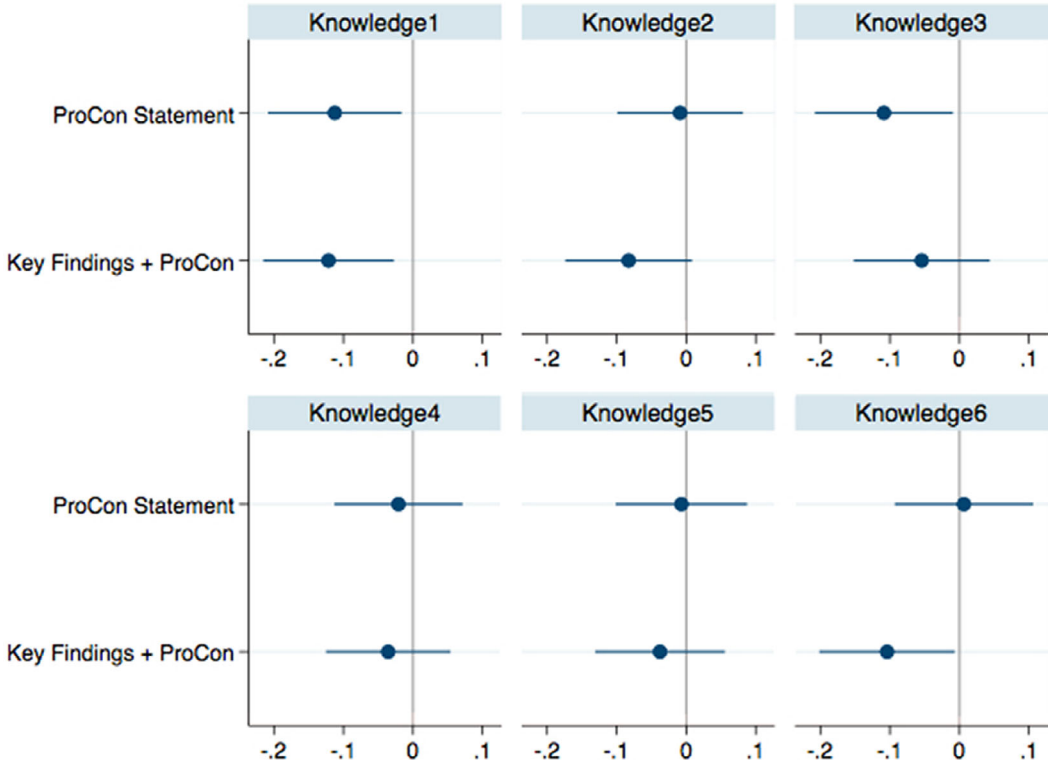
A regression analysis, summarized in Figure 3, found that exposing citizens to more comprehensive information about the constitutional convention – i.e. Key Findings and pro and con arguments – exerted a positive and significant effect on the levels of empathy respondents felt towards "people whose lives are very different from" their own. Information about key findings of the minipublic on its own, or Pro-Con statements separately, however, had no effect. This suggests that being exposed to views inconsistent with one's own in combination with Key Findings can be beneficial for inducing more empathic feelings towards the other side.

## Discussion

Is it possible to scale up the deliberative effects of a minipublic? To answer that question, we empirically examined whether minipublics can reinforce deliberative practices by strengthening the deliberative capacity of citizens in a wider society. We tested these predictions by designing and conducting a survey experiment with the Irish public in the run-up to 2018 referendum on blasphemy in Ireland. We used a CIR-style statements on the issue of blasphemy taken from a real-world minipublic, the 2012-2014 Irish

Figure 2: Factual Knowledge Effects from Exposure to Separate or Combined Pro-Con Statements. Baseline: Key Findings




Constitutional Convention. We sought to test two key propositions—whether minipublics connected to macro-level decision making can foster increased objective levels of knowledge and other regarding attitudes. Further, we tested the impact of varying transmission mechanisms including being exposed to key findings and/or diverse viewpoints.

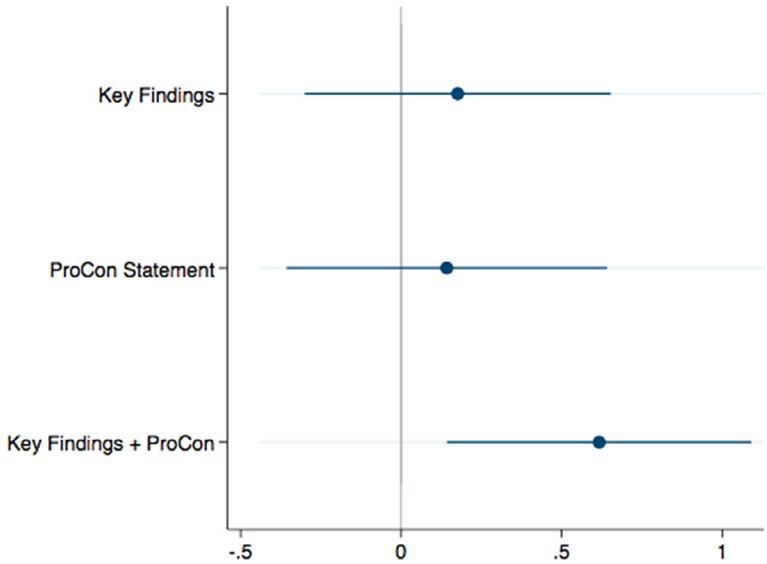
## *Summary of Results*

First, we tested whether information about the minipublic allow the wider pubic to vote in a more informed fashion, thereby increasing the likelihood of correct voting (Lau and Redlawsk 1997) or voting in line with values (Hobolt 2007) and a possible reconsideration of policy preferences (Goodin and Dryzek 2006). We found that there were significant knowledge increases among voters who read the information about the minipublic's findings, although this increase was not consistent along all knowledge items.

Second, we tested whether being exposed to information about a minipublic will lead to stronger other-regarding attitudes among the wider public. Here we also found that being exposed to mere information about the minipublic and its findings did not *per se* lead to an increase in empathy among the wider public. However, being exposed to balanced information from both sides of the issue (Pro-Con statements) exerted a positive and

Figure 3: The Effect of Informational Exposure on Other Regarding Attitudes




significant effect on people's empathy among the wider public. It is possible that learning about balanced and diverse perspectives that a minipublic considered before arriving at a decision is particularly important for a moral and values-driven decision, such as blasphemy, where it is crucial to consider arguments on the other side. But even on issues with a less prominent moral framing, it is unclear whether deliberation is even possible without a modicum of empathy (Mansbridge 1983; Mendelberg 2002; Morrell 2010).

Third, we examined whether being exposed to those diverse viewpoints has an impact on people's deliberative capacities. From a deliberative democratic perspective, being exposed to opposing viewpoints should engender more reflective and considered political judgments. We found, however, that including diverse viewpoints in a minipublic statement (i.e., representing both sides of the issue) dampened the minipublic statement's impact on voters' factual knowledge. One explanation could be potential backfire effects of being exposed to opposing views. Some scholars assert that upon being exposed to political disagreement people cling onto their prior thoughts even more strongly, and thus this exposure reinforces their initial beliefs and attitudes (Mercier and Landemore 2012). Interestingly, however, exposure to opposing perspectives increased individuals' empathic feelings towards those on the other side of this debate.

### *Theoretical and Empirical Contributions*

This paper makes three contributions to the growing literature on how deliberative minipublics impact the wider public. First, being exposed to information about a minipublic and its findings lead to an increased knowledge gain among people. The sizes of these effects are modest, but they are in line with other research into the effects of small-scale deliberative processes on attitudes of wider publics in the US (e.g. Boulianne 2018; Knobloch et al. 2019). This is important as these information statements are a

relatively cheap and easy way to convey information about a minipublic to the wider public and hence provide a potential for the perennial problem of scaling up deliberation.

Second, our research design allowed us to disentangle different elements of informational exposure. Reading about key findings of the minipublic, which lists the justification for the minipublic's policy recommendation together with a brief information about the minipublic, is beneficial for individuals' knowledge gains. This is consistent with the expectations of deliberative democrats about the value of expressing reasons and justifications for a held political position. The CIR Citizens' Statement in Oregon also provides pro-con arguments. We included them in this experiment to see whether such an innovation would boost—or hinder— transmission effects. We found that reading the pro and con statements on the policy issue appears to potentially confuse voters and largely dampens the positive effect of the exposure to information about the CIR and its key findings. This finding speaks to the literature arguing about the potential negative effects of exposure to counter-attitudinal viewpoints (Nyhan and Reifler 2010) by showing that the Pro-Con statements have a dampening effect on their factual knowledge gain, the implications of which we discuss in the concluding section of the paper.

This study's third contribution is the finding that being exposed to opposing statements has a positive effect on people's other-regarding attitudes. It increases empathy for the other side on the referendum question. This is consistent with previous literature which suggests that a greater awareness of viewpoints of the opposing side may have a positive effect on the levels of political tolerance respondents feel toward the other side (Mutz 2002). Although the concept of political tolerance is different from the concept of empathy, the latter may constitute one of the affective mechanisms underlying the relationship between exposure to counter-attitudinal views and improved intergroup positivity, such as political tolerance (Todd and Galinsky 2014). This study also speaks to the findings of the contact theory, which posits that interpersonal contact across lines of nationality, race and social class results in more empathetic, and less prejudicial attitudes and heightened ability for perspective taking – seeing the world from someone's else vantage point (Pettigrew and Tropp 2011; Reich and Pubhoo 1975). In a similar vein, the latest research finds that one of the crucial features of interpersonal deliberation eliciting and facilitating the processes of empathetic imaginings during deliberations is the presence of diverse and opposing viewpoints (Muradova, 2020). The present study expands on these findings with an evidence that mere exposure to counter-attitudinal attitudes that a minipublic considered during deliberations can evoke empathic feelings toward the other side, also among non-participants.

Finally, our study expanded the range of CIR-type minipublics that have been studied. Our case was distinctive because it occurred outside the US, and it focused on a policy issue that foregrounded values over technical knowledge. Our findings support the generalizability of previous results produced in Oregon on CIRs principally analyzing more complex public policy issues (e.g. Gastil et al. 2014; Knobloch et al. 2019; Már and Gastil 2020). That said, there is no simple way to replicate the CIR model because even in Oregon, the official CIR Commission has authorized significant changes in the process, such as reducing its length, altering the structure of its agenda, and even--most recently--removing from the CIR Statement template the official tally of how the panellists intend to vote on the issue they studied (Gastil and Knobloch 2020).[1]

[1] Current details on the Commission and its rulemaking regarding the Oregon CIR can be found online at https://secure.sos.state.or.us/oard.

### *Study Limitations*

Our study, however, had its limitations. In the first instance, it was based on a single process on a single referendum in one country. Ireland shares many characteristics with other western democracies; however, it differs from most of them in its experience with referendums and deliberative forums. Over the past six years, Ireland has experimented with two deliberative forums, the Irish Constitutional Convention and Irish Citizens' Assembly, with a third such process currently underway. The earlier forums were influential in shaping the public opinion on important moral issues, most notably marriage equality and abortion. The Irish public may thus be more acquainted with deliberative processes than their other European counterparts. In other words, a country-context may moderate the relationship between informational exposure to a minipublic and citizens' perceptions about the process, and their knowledge acquisition. It would be helpful if future research could attempt to replicate our findings in other countries.

Second, although this study had a high ecological validity by studying a real-world referendum issue using recommendations generated by an actual minipublic, the minipublic itself did not produce the CIR-style statement used in our research. Rather, the authors adapted documents produced by the Irish minipublic, though our study materials were reviewed and approved by a sub-group of the minipublic members themselves.

### *Concluding Remarks*

In spite of these shortcomings, these findings show that minipublics can boost the deliberative capacities of citizens beyond the small number of participants serving on the minipublic itself. We also showed that exposure to opposing viewpoints can have both positive and negative effects. Whereas reading about counter-attitudinal arguments dampens the positive effect of CIR statement on factual knowledge, it increases people's empathy towards the other side. Future research should study this question more systematically and in relation to other deliberative capacities, such as future motivation to deliberate, and political efficacy.

At this juncture, the practical takeaway is clear: the content of a minipublic's report can have real impact on a wider public, but thought must be given to the purpose of such a statement. Readers may process neutral information on an issue quite differently from pro and con arguments, and pairing the two together can yield mixed results. With solid evidence of overall impact for such statements, future research could examine how crafting them can best achieve the deliberative goals that motivate such processes.

## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to acknowledge funding by The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Dublin City University; the Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO) (grant n° G075615N) and the Pennsylvania State University's Department of Communication Arts & Sciences

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Replication Data for: Scaling up Deliberation: Testing the Potential of Mini- Publics to Enhance the Deliberative Capacity of Citizens (view at https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/FAZUZ0) was published in Harvard Dataverse (view at https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/harvard).

## Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article:
Supplementary Material

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**SPSR Manuscript No 2019-085**

# Scaling up Deliberation: Testing the Potential of Mini-Publics to Enhance the Deliberative Capacity of Citizens

Jane Suiter
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Appendix

*Descriptive Statistics*

| **Descriptive Statistics (n=780)** | |
|---|---|
| Variables | Percentage |
| *Gender* | |
| Male | 53.09 |
| Female | 46.78 |
| Other | 0.13 |
| *Age* | |
| 18-24 | 17.01 |
| 25-39 | 26.80 |
| 40-60 | 30.93 |
| 60 plus | 25.26 |
| *Employment Status* | |
| Decline to indicate | 0.52 |
| Working full-time | 45.23 |
| Temporarily laid off | 0.52 |
| Working part-time | 15.46 |
| Unemployed | 3.87 |
| Retired | 19.97 |
| Permanently disabled | 2.32 |
| Homemaker | 5.93 |
| Student | 6.19 |
| *Income* | |
| Decline to indicate | 8.76 |
| Don't know | 4.90 |
| less than 20.000 | 13.79 |
| 20.000-40.000 | 26.93 |
| 40.000-60.000 | 19.33 |
| 60.000-80.000 | 11.98 |
| 80.000-100.000 | 8.25 |
| 100.000-150.000 | 4.25 |
| 150.000 or more | 1.80 |

# ARTICLE V

# DISAGREEING EMPATHETICALLY:

# PERSPECTIVE TAKING AND REFLECTIVE POLITICAL REASONING

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Working Paper

10/06/2020

## Abstract

An increasing concern about democracies is that most citizens do not engage in reflection when making political decisions. In particular, people are unwilling to appreciate and consider the viewpoints of those who disagree with them. How to motivate people to reason reflectively? Extant studies have largely studied trait-level differences in the ability and inclination of individuals to engage in reflection. Most of these studies focus on observational moderators, which makes it difficult to make strong claims about the effects of being in a reflective state on political decision making. In this article, we build on insights from social psychology and motivational theories of reflection and investigate the efficacy of one approach: perspective taking. Using a survey experiment with a large and heterogeneous sample of UK citizens (n=2014), we demonstrate that actively imagining the feelings and thoughts of someone one disagrees with prompts more reflection in political reasoning. Taking the perspective of the other also elicits empathic feelings of concern in individuals toward their issue opponents. Empathic concern, in turn, increases the probability of overriding one's prior attitudes on a policy issue.

**Keywords:** reasoning, attitude polarization, disagreement, empathy, perspective taking, attitude change

There is mounting concern that as democratic societies become increasingly divided and people become less willing to talk and listen to each other across political divides, a vicious cycle will fuel hostility and uncivility toward political opponents, bolster biased political thinking, and ultimately undermine democracy (Lelkes 2016; Mason 2018). Recent research argues that *reflective reasoning* – careful consideration and integration of multiple and opposing thoughts and perspectives on an issue – could ameliorate political polarization and promote democratic accountability by decreasing partisan-motivated reasoning (Arceneaux and Vander Wielen 2017; Baron 2018; Brader and Tucker 2018). This finding is consistent with the normative expectation of many democratic theorists that reflective reasoning should be conducive to more sound political judgements and less polarized societies (Dryzek et al. 2019).

Is it possible to motivate citizens to engage in *reflective* political thinking? So far, scholars have largely studied trait-level differences in the ability and inclination of individuals to engage in reflection (Bakker, Lelkes, and Malka forthcoming; Baron 2019; Arceneaux and Vander Wielen 2017). As a result, most of these studies focus on observational moderators, which makes it difficult to make strong causal claims about the effects of being in a reflective state on political decision making. Another strand of literature shows that different situational contexts can evoke more or less reflection in people's reasoning (see Kuklinski et al. 2001 for a review), but it yields mixed results. For example, there is some evidence that structured deliberative discussions create an environment in which a group of citizens learn about different perspectives, discuss the policy issue at length with others and arrive at more reflective political decisions (e.g. Fishkin 2009; Neblo, Esterling, and Lazer 2018), as well as conflicting evidence that inducing people to deliberate carefully about their decisions does not alter their political choices (Barker 2018). Furthermore, it is unclear if induced deliberation – when it works – causes people to adopt less biased attitudes because it increases reflection, or whether it merely increases levels of

information (Brader and Tucker 2018), or decreases the motivation to appear partisan (Bullock et al. 2015; Prior, Sood, and Khanna 2015).

In this article, we build on insights from social psychology and motivational theories of reflection and investigate the efficacy of another approach: *perspective taking* – actively imagining the thoughts, feelings, and other mental states of others (Todd and Galinsky 2014, 374). This approach tries to harness human beings' ability to empathize with others as a route to reflection. We also seek to open the black box by measuring the degree to which people engage in the kind complex cognition that is the hallmark of reflection.

Using a pre-registered survey experiment with a descriptively representative sample of UK citizens ($n$=2014) and two proxies for reflection (cognitive complexity and attitude change), we find that perspective-taking motivates individuals to engage in reflection. While the effect sizes of 0.09-0.14 standard deviations (SD) are relatively modest, it is roughly equivalent to the difference in reflection scores between politically conservative and liberal citizens in the control group and in line with the effect sizes of real-world interventions aimed at changing people's minds (Kalla and Broockman 2020). Results also show that perspective-taking elicits other-oriented empathic feelings of concern in individuals toward their issue opponents, with an effect amounting to about a third SD [95% CI: (0.20 to 0.42)].

This study makes important theoretical and empirical contributions to scholarship across multiple disciplines. First, it contributes to a recent debate in psychology on the conditions under which individuals engage in more reflective political reasoning (MacKuen et al. 2010; Arceneaux and Vander Wielen 2017) by offering an unobtrusive strategy for inducing reflection in political thinking. Second, the results speak to the literature investigating the positive and negative effects of perspective taking on a range of intra- and interpersonal outcomes, such as inclusionary behaviour, political polarization, and intergroup prejudice (Adida, Lo and Platas 2018; Simas, Clifford, Kirkland 2020; Simonovitz, Kezdi and Kardos 2018). We find that in addition to

making citizens' reasoning more reflective, perspective taking elicits the other-oriented empathic feelings of concern in individuals. Empathic concern, in turn, increases the probability of overriding one's prior attitudes on a policy issue. Third, our findings have implications for the scholarship on backlash effects of exposure to political disagreement (see Guess and Coppock 2018 for a recent review). Our findings lend no empirical support to the hypothesis that being exposed to counter-attitudinal views has a negative effect on the quality of political judgements. Neither do we find support for the opposing argument prevalent among deliberative democrats that exposure to political disagreement leads to more considered political attitudes. However, if accompanied by the process of active perspective taking, it can motivate people to consider and integrate opposing perspectives in their judgements.

Taken together, our findings provide evidence of the potential to motivate more reflective political reasoning by encouraging people to take the perspective of someone they disagree with. We also cast some existing findings into a new light, by suggesting a more complex and nuanced relationship between political disagreement and the quality of political judgements.

## PERSPECTIVE TAKING AND REFLECTION

Empathy is the mental act we go through when we put ourselves in some else's place and imagine how the person is feeling. It encourages people to engage in prosocial behaviour to help others (Waal 2008). Empathy has an affective component – actually feeling what another person feels – and a cognitive component – being able to consciously recognize people's mental states (Davis 1980).[1]

[1] There is also a smaller camp which argues that perspective taking itself has affective (i.e. imagining the feelings) and cognitive (i.e. imagining the thoughts) components (Healey and Grossman 2018), the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper.

One approach to reducing people's biases against those who espouse different opinions or ways of life is to encourage people to actively take the perspective of the other person (see Todd and Galinsky 2014 for a review). These *perspective taking* interventions are designed to activate cognitive empathy by encouraging people to understand the mental states of people who are different from them. Because humans can generate empathic responses spontaneously (Bufalari et al. 2007), it is possible that this approach will do a better job at encouraging people to be reflective than cognitive deliberation interventions (Barker 2018) that ask people to engage in mentally taxing tasks.

Many democratic theorists argue that imagining the world from someone else's perspective during political disagreement enhances one's understanding for the other side and breeds commonality, mutual respect and affection between disagreeing sides (Barber 1984; Habermas 1981; Mansbridge 1983; Morrell 2010). In a similar vein, studies from social psychology show that bias in attitudes, especially those relating to intergroup evaluations, can be attenuated by actively taking the perspective of outgroup members. Having engaged in the process of perspective-taking, individuals report more positive and less prejudiced intergroup evaluations in relation to people who are different from them. These effects also extend to implicit outgroup evaluations and actual behavioural outcomes, such as altruism (Batson et al. 1997; Faulkner 2018; Tuller et al. 2015) Several different affective and cognitive causal mechanisms have been suggested. Some studies suggest the effect of perspective taking may operate via increased empathic feelings toward the target (Todd and Galinsky 2014, 378–80). The bias-reducing benefit of the effect of perspective taking can also accrue via an increased self-other overlap between the perspective taker and the target, in which the target becomes included in one's self-representation (e.g. Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000). Another cognitive mechanism identified in the literature is assigning greater weight to non-dispositional (as opposed to dispositional) factors in evaluating an outgroup member (e.g. Todd, Bodenhausen, and Galinsky 2012). Consistent with this literature, we expect that perspective taking would have a positive effect on

reflectiveness of citizens' political reasoning (H1). Further, we examine one of the suggested causal mechanisms of this relationship, the argument that affective empathic reaction elicited by the process of perspective taking can lead to more reflective thinking (H2).

Yet the beneficial effects of perspective taking are not universal. Prior research suggests that perspective taking may backfire, by leading to more negative evaluations about the outgroup, especially when the perspective taker strongly identifies with her own in-group (Catapano, Tormala, and Rucker 2019; Tarrant, Calitri, and Weston 2012). Recent observational work in political science suggests that higher levels of *dispositional* empathy (more specifically, empathic concern) can facilitate, rather than alleviate, political polarization (Simas et al. 2020)[2]. This research demonstrates that encouraging people to take the perspective of someone with whom they disagree may not lead them to be reflective, but rather defensive. Previous research does not speak to this question because scholars have not directly measured the way in which people deliberate when they are asked to take the perspective of someone with whom they disagree. Moreover, while Simas et al. (2018) focus on individual differences in tendency to be empathetic and take others' perspectives, we focus on situational perspective taking, an explicit stimulus to take different others' perspectives.

Further, some posit that perspective taking and affective empathy are partial and intrinsically biased, emphasizing the *similarity/dissimilarity* argument in empathy literature (e.g. Prinz 2011; Scudder 2016; Bloom 2016). The claim is that the human beings are less likely to take the perspective of and feel empathic toward the people who are dissimilar to them, and more likely so when there are similarities between the empathizer and the target of empathy. Due to this kind of bias, as Scudder (2016) posits, the process of empathy is carried out "selectively and unevenly depending on the relationship of the observer to the target" (2016, 531).

[2] The authors find no evidence for the relationship between perspective taking and inparty favoritism or outparty favorability (266).

Similarity/dissimilarity has been defined along different characteristics in prior literature, e.g. gender, age, race, occupation information, nationality, ethnicity, life experiences, and partisan groups (Spaulding 2017, 17; see Batson et al. 2005 and Israelashvili et al. 2020 for reviews). In this paper, we focus on gender. To the extent that the gender of the target could lead to differences in perceived similarity between the perspective taker and the target, we predict that gender may moderate the effect of perspective taking on reflective thinking. Further, a body of research in psychology shows that there are systematic gender differences in empathy (Davis 1996; Baron-Cohen and Wheelwright 2004 for a review) and that perspective taking could be inherently a feminine ability (Bosacki 2007; Flannery & Smith 2017). Socialization theory scholars argue that these differences may be due to differing, gender-specific socialization practices happening early in the development of girls and boys, which encourage girls towards caring behaviors, and boys towards instrumentality, and assertion (Van der Graaff, Carlo, Crocetti, Koot, & Branje 2018, 1088). Prior research, for example, suggests that parents (mothers in particular) socialize emotional communication with daughters differently than with sons, where the former receive more than the latter (e.g. Fivush, Brotman, Buckner, & Goodman 2000). In a similar vein, Devine and Hughes (2013, 1000) suggest that "conversation and emotional closeness […] [is] much more typical of girls' play than of boys' play". Women may internalize these socially constructed expectations in early development stage and thus conform to this behavior during their lives. Building on both strands of literature, we hypothesize that the effect of perspective taking on reflection may be moderated by gender of respondents. More specifically, the relationship would be stronger among female respondents (H3).

## CONCEPTUALIZING AND MEASURING REFLECTION

The question of how to conceptualize and measure reflective political reasoning is an important, but challenging one. Thinking is not synonymous with reflection. People can engage in effortful thinking as a way to concoct justifications for what they want to believe (Kunda 1990).

Reflection is the willingness to second-guess one's prior views and beliefs by considering alternative solutions and perspectives (Stanovich 2011).

Current approach to capturing the influence of reflection on political attitudes has been to measure it with dispositional variables (Bakker, Lelkes and Malka forthcoming; Baron 2019; Arceneaux and Vander Wielen, 2017). This approach allows researchers to observe whether trait-level differences in the penchant for engaging in reflection moderates how people make political decisions. While this offers circumstantial evidence for the thesis that reflection leads people to consider opposing opinions, it does not offer firm causal evidence for this claim. The next step in this line of research should be to actually measure reflection in how people reason about political arguments. It is this step that we take here.

We use two proxies for capturing reflection. First, we measure *cognitive complexity* of reasoning, which captures "a combination of flexibility, high levels of information search, and tolerance for ambiguity, uncertainty, and lack of closure" (Suedfeld 2010, 1669–70; Suedfeld and Tetlock 1977) and brings two crucial components of reasoning together: *differentiation* and *integration*. Differentiation concerns the number of dimensions of a problem that a citizen acknowledges in her judgement. In Owens and Wedeking's (2011, 1038) words, it "indicates whether an individual perceives and explains events in black and white or sees the world in shades of grey." The integration dimension captures how a person "structures his or her thoughts and organizes decision-relevant information" (Owens and Wedeking 2011, 1039). They make one unidimensional score that ranges from least complex to most complex. The least complex language indicates that individuals rely on one-dimensional thinking, whereas the most complex refers to a language that incorporates a diverse set of evidence in decision making processes. Second, we complement this measure with the *mean attitude change*, the raw difference between pre- and post-intervention attitudes on an issue. The underlying assumption is that engaging in

deep thinking should increase the willingness to override one's previously-held attitudes (Stanovich 2011).

## DATA AND METHODS

To test our hypotheses, we fielded a survey experiment in a sample of UK subjects (n=2014), recruited by Dynata in March 2019.[3] The sample was matched on census age, gender and region to make it nationally representative. The design was pre-registered before data collection (see app H). For departures from the pre-analysis plan, see app I.

The study proceeded as follows. After having consented to take part in the study, participants were asked some basic socio-demographic questions (e.g. gender, age, education) and a question gauging their attitudes on a controversial policy issue in the UK: a universal basic income (UBI).[4] Respondents were then randomly assigned to one of three treatment conditions - a control group, a placebo group and a treatment group. We induced perspective-taking via a writing assignment (Todd and Galinsky 2014). Those in the *perspective-taking condition* read a short text about a fictitious character – Sarah – who is either in favour of or against the UBI, and provides an argument for her approval or disapproval. All participants were exposed to Sarah with views that run counter to their own view. Next, individuals were instructed to imagine Sarah's feelings and thoughts and write what they imagined. Those randomly assigned to the *placebo condition* were exposed to the same vignette, but were not instructed to take Sarah's perspective. Respondents

[3] Dynata implements the sourcing mainly online from a diverse range of panels (e.g. traditional research panels, loyalty programmes, social media, mobile channels). Its samples are continuously measured, monitored and audited by external auditors against external benchmarks (e.g. telephone sample studies and industry measures).

[4] UK public is divided about the UBI: 50% of British citizens favour it, while the rest is against it (ESS, 2016).

in the *control condition* were neither exposed to Sarah nor were instructed to take her perspective. To employ their time, they were instructed to write about their last weekend (online app B).

After the survey, empathic concern participants experienced toward their issue opponent was measured. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt sympathetic, empathic, concerned, moved, compassionate, warm and soft-hearted toward Sarah (response scale 1–5) (McCullough et al. 1997). The items were summed to form an index measure (alpha=0.91; M = 16.7; SD = 6.7; range: 7 to 35), which was further standardized to facilitate interpretation and comparison of effects (M=0; SD=1; range: -1.4 to 2.7). Next, to *capture attitude change*, participants were again inquired about their attitudes on UBI and saw an open-ended display item that asked them to provide justifications for their choice on the issue.

Respondents' qualitative responses to this question were used to calculate cognitive complexity of their reasoning, by using a computerized text analysis software package called Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC)[5]. LIWC builds on the belief that 'natural language use provides important clues as to how people process information and interpret it to make sense of their environment' (Tausczik and Pennebaker 2010). As opposed to human coders, LIWC provides researchers with a less biased and more objective measure for cognitive complexity. Cognitive complexity is concerned with the *structure* of the processes underlying reasoning, rather than its specific content. Human coders can be highly susceptible to the content of the arguments, and biased by "for instance, playing favourites and assigning higher scores" (Tetlock et al. 2014, 626) to the arguments they like, and underscoring those they dislike. Relying on human coders is also

[5] See Tausczik and Pennebaker (2010) for the discussion of the validity and reliability of LIWC.

time-consuming and expensive. Third, LIWC provides researchers with more replicable and transparent ways of coding texts[6].

LIWC scores are based on LIWC dictionaries with psychometrically validated groups of words. The software analyses the text and categorizes each word into psychologically relevant groups. It, further, provides the researcher with an output showing the percentage of words in the essays that belongs to each identified LIWC category. Following Owens and Wedeking (2011) we employed 10 LIWC indicators (e.g. *causation, insight, tentativeness, certainty*) that link both the differentiation and integration dimensions of cognitive complexity. We put these categories into a formula and calculate one quantity of interest – cognitive complexity score (M=25.3; SD=24.6; range: -150 to 200) (see online app D); and further standardized it (M = 0; SD = 1; range = -7.1 to +7.1).

**ANALYSIS**

To test the hypotheses H1 and H3, we estimate simple linear regression models first without and then with covariates, that include gender, education, age, region, partisanship, and ideological self-identification, and where appropriate, the interaction with experimental conditions. We exclude unusually extreme outliers on the cognitive complexity score - the observations which lie 3 times median absolute deviation (MAD) below and above the median - before running the analyses (Leys et al. 2013)[7].

[6] For a discussion of advantages and disadvantages of automated and human coding of cognitive complexity see Tetlock et al. (2014).

[7] MAD is "the most robust dispersion/scale measure in presence of outliers" and this strategy is the least biased and conservative method for removing the outliers (Leys et al. 2013, 766). Eighty-eight observations from the total of n=2014 were excluded. For robustness, we rerun the analyses together with outliers, and the main results remain robust.

We are aware that conducting a causal mediation analyses entails holding strong assumptions about causal ordering and the lack of omitted variables (Imai and Keele 2010). Therefore, the H2 is examined by regressing treatment on empathic concern and further empathic concern on reflection scores. The results of full causal mediation models are the same and can be found in online app F.

We conduct all analyses first with cognitive complexity score and then with raw attitude change as a dependent variable.

## RESULTS: COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY

Figure 1 presents simple linear regression models with robust standard errors (SE). As Model 1 and Model 2 show, perspective-taking intervention exerts a positive and significant effect on respondents' cognitive complexity score, with effect sizes amounting to 0.08 SD (compared to placebo) and 0.10 SD (compared to control) respectively. Taking the perspective of someone with counter-attitudinal views leads individuals to evaluate the issue from multiple and opposing perspectives.

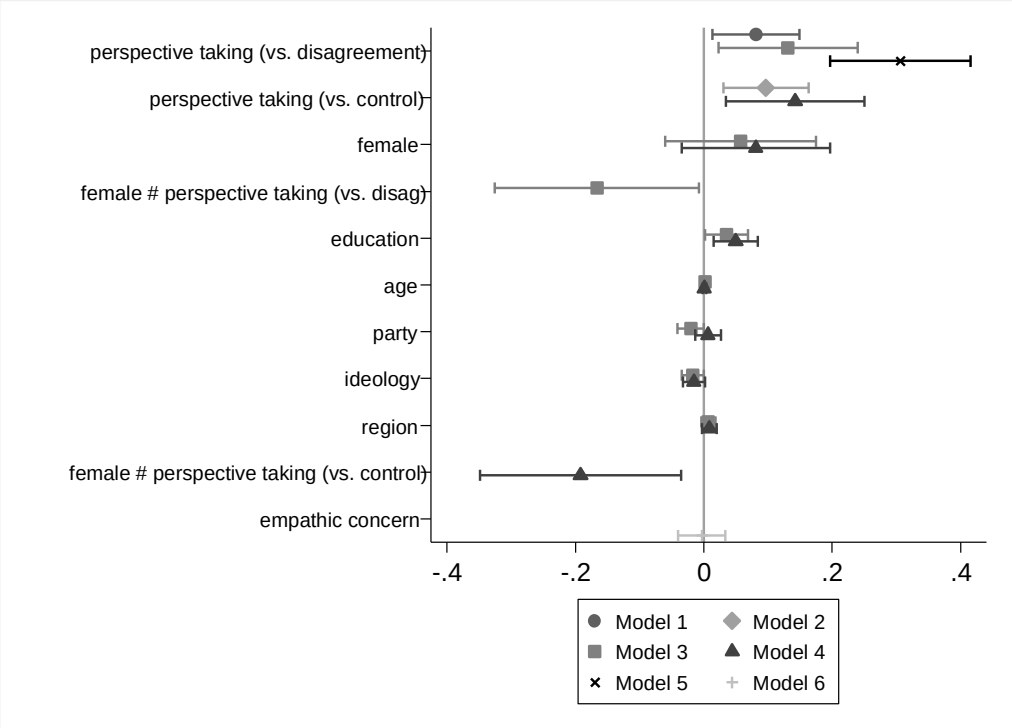


Figure 1. Effect of Perspective-taking on Cognitive Complexity. Model 1 (ref: placebo) and Model 2 (ref: control) represent models without covariates. Models 3 and 4 control for gender, the interaction term between gender and the treatment, age, education, party identity, ideology and region. Model 5 estimates the effect of perspective-taking on affective empathy, and Model 6 shows the bivariate relationship between empathic concern and cognitive complexity.

The mere exposure to incongruent information, however, has no significant effect on cognitive complexity (i.e. placebo compared to control) (online app. J). Next, we add the interaction term between gender and the treatment to test the H3. The coefficient of the interaction term between female and the perspective-taking treatment is negative and significant. However, as the Figure 2 shows, the CIs coincide; and, thus, the effect of perspective-taking on reflection does not vary by gender of respondents (see also app K).

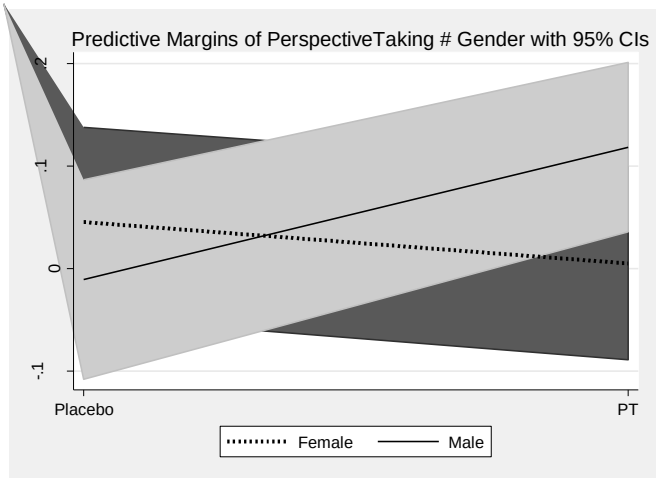



Figure 2. Conditional Effect of Perspective-taking (vs. placebo) on Reflection

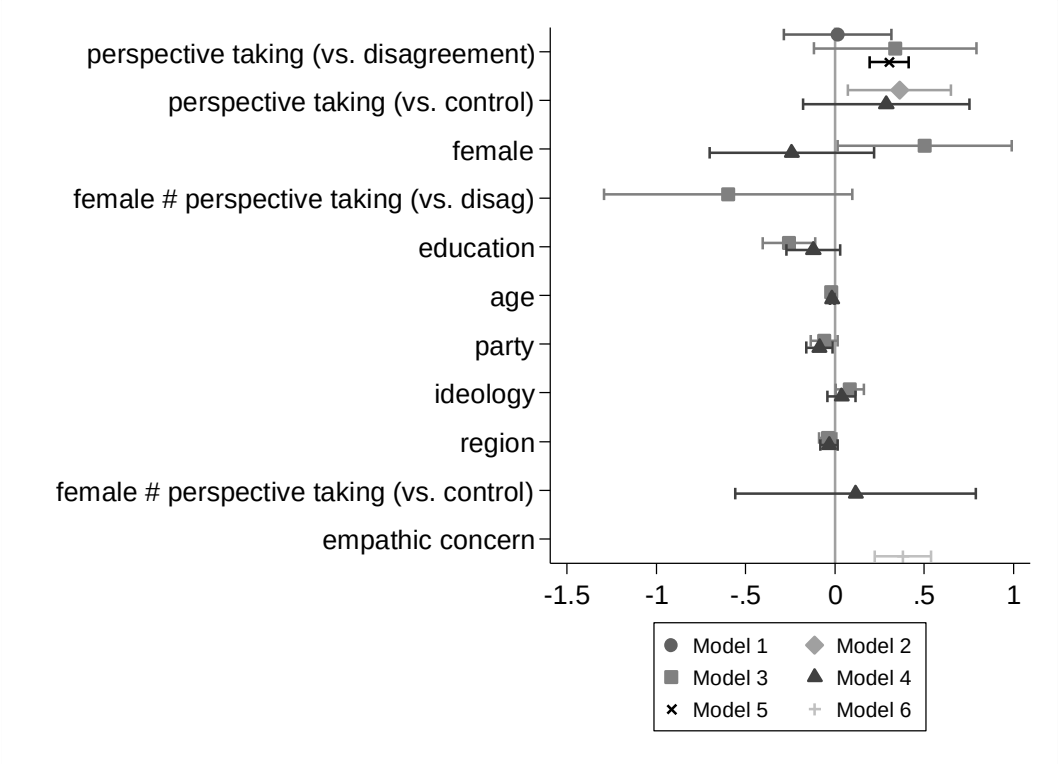
These results remain robust to the inclusion of covariates (Model 3 & 4). The effect sizes, however, increase to 0.13 SD [95% CI: (0.02 to 0.24)] and 0.14 SD [95% CI: (0.03 TO 0.25)] respectively (as compared to placebo and control conditions). Substantively, these effects are roughly comparable to the difference in mean cognitive complexity score between liberals and conservatives in the control group (0.19 SD; 95% CI: (0.05 to 0.32))[8].

[8] We coded the length of the written essays and tested if their length differed across the treatment conditions; no empirical evidence was found (online app G).

Model 5 (Figure 1) shows taking the perspective of Sarah has a positive, significant and large effect on the levels of empathic concern respondents felt toward Sarah; and this effect equals to about a third SD [95% CI: (0.20 to 0.42)]. Consistent with prior literature (Todd and Galinsky 2014 for a review), perspective-taking intervention elicited the feelings of empathic concern in respondents toward their issue opponents. This also demonstrates that our treatment worked successfully. Empathic concern, however, has no significant effect on respondents' cognitive complexity score, suggesting that another mechanism is at work[9].

## RESULTS: ATTITUDE CHANGE

Next, we examine how perspective-taking affects people's attitudes on UBI, by running similar linear regression models (with robust SEs) with raw mean attitude change as a dependent variable (Figure 3).




[9] A causal mediation analysis shows similar results (online app F).

Figure 3. Effect of Perspective-taking on Mean Attitude Change. Note: Model 1 (ref: placebo) and Model 2 (ref: control) estimate models without covariates. Models 3 and 4 control for gender, an interaction term between treatment and gender, age, education, party identity, ideology and region. Model 5 estimates the effect of perspective-taking on empathic concern, and Model 6 estimates bivariate relationship between empathic concern and attitude change.

Model 1 shows that perspective-taking has no direct effect on the probability of changing one's attitude on UBI. However, when compared against control condition (Model 2), it exerts a positive and significant effect (0.36 SD; $p<0.05$). Those respondents who were instructed to take the perspective of their issue opponent on average shifted their attitudes on UBI more than those in the control condition. Including covariates to the model dilutes the effect somewhat and increases the size standard errors. Furthermore, gender has no moderating effect on the relationship between perspective-taking and attitude change (Model 3 and 4).

Empathic concern, induced by the process of perspective-taking, on the other hand, exerts a positive effect on the probability of shifting one's attitudes on UBI ($\beta=0.38$; $p<0.00$). Full mediation model (online app F) shows that perspective-taking exerts an indirect positive effect on attitude change. The average effect of perspective taking on attitude change that operates through the increased empathic concern is 0.12 [95% CI: (0.06 to 0.19)].

In sum, our results suggest a more complex and nuanced relationship between perspective-taking and reflection. It shows that taking the perspective of someone with counterattitudinal views can increase one's cognitive complexity, and yet this relationship is not mediated by feelings of empathic concern. The same is not true for attitude change. While perspective-taking exerts no direct effect on probability of shifting one's attitudes on UBI, it has an indirect positive effect which passes via increased empathic concern respondents felt toward their issue opponents.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

How can people be motivated to reflect? This study investigated one strategy: perspective-taking. Findings offer several important contributions to the extant research. First, we contribute to a

nascent scholarship that studies the conditions under which citizens are motivated to think reflectively (Arceneaux and Vander Wielen 2017; Bakker et al. forthcoming), by showing a causal evidence for the claim that irrespective of individual predispositions, people can be induced to reason reflectively: asking people to imagine the world from the vantage point of someone who has an opposing viewpoint has a positive causal effect on cognitive complexity of their reasoning: the effect sizes of 0.09-0.13 SD is roughly equivalent to the difference in cognitive complexity scores among politically liberal and conservative citizens in the control condition. Second, the results speak to the body of research devoted to understanding the positive and negative effects of empathic concern and perspective-taking on a range of intra- and interpersonal outcomes, such as inclusionary behaviour, political polarization, and intergroup prejudice (e.g. Adida, Lo and Platas 2018; Simas, Clifford, Kirkland 2020). It shows that perspective-taking elicits the other-oriented empathic feelings of concern in individuals, which in turn, increases the probability of changing their prior attitudes.

Future studies could advance this research in the following ways. Here we opted for a salient, but a less contentious policy issue. People may have stronger views on more emotion-laden and contentious issues and the effect of the intervention on reflection may vary. Further, this study does not provide empirical evidence on the mechanism(s) via which perspective-taking increases complexity of reasoning, which opens up avenues for future research. Lastly, future research should supplement the automatized cognitive complexity measure with other proxies to capture reflection.

These limitations notwithstanding, this study constitutes a starting point for future research on affective and cognitive strategies for mitigating increasingly polarized and biased political reasoning by citizens in democracies. Our results show that a simple instructional manipulation to take the perspective of someone one disagrees with has the potential to motivate people to consider and integrate the views of others in their reasoning processes and be empathic toward

their issue opponents. Future research should evaluate similar interventions in real-world context, for example, during referendums.

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# SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION (ONLINE APPENDIX)

## DISAGREEING EMPATHETICALLY

Contents

## A. Descriptive Statistics

**Descriptive Statistics, N=2014**

| Characteristics | Percentage |
|---|---|
| *Gender* | |
| Female | 53.59 |
| Male | 46.41 |
| *Education* | |
| No qualifications | 4.83 |
| GSCE/O-level/CSE/NVQ1/NVQ2 or equiv | 34.48 |
| NVQ4/NVQ5 or equiv. | 15.78 |
| Degree/HNC/teacher training/nursing or equiv | 38.53 |
| PhD/Dphil or equiv. | 4.21 |
| Other | 2.18 |
| *Age* | |
| 18-24 | 4.77 |
| 25-39 | 29.44 |
| 40-60 | 34.81 |
| 60 plus | 30.98 |
| *Political ideology* | |
| Left | 33.81 |
| Centre | 25.41 |
| Right | 40.78 |
| *Partisanship* | |
| Labour | 27.24 |
| Conservative | 28.90 |
| Liberal Democrat | 7.62 |
| UKIP | 5.25 |
| Green | 1.66 |
| SNP | 1.66 |
| None/Don't know/Other | 27.68 |
| *Prior Attitudes* | |
| Oppose | 34.42 |
| Favour | 65.58 |

## B. Design Choices and Treatments

*Manipulating Perspective taking*

We follow the footsteps of the socio-psychological studies conducted by Batson and colleagues in manipulating the perspective taking (Batson et al. 1997; Batson 2011; Todd and Galinsky 2014) and adapt it to our study. There are, of course, other ways of measuring or manipulating empathy. Some scholars rely on dispositional empathy measure by David (1994) which captures a stable trait, a disposition (see for example Clifford and Simas 2019). In this study we are interested in the causal relationship between the process of perspective taking and political reasoning and therefore follow Batson and colleagues in designing the manipulation.

**Perspective taking Intervention**

Now we would like for you to engage in a brief imagination exercise, which is aimed at testing the strength of human imagination**.**

*Version 1*

This is Sarah. She is in favour of introducing a basic income scheme in the UK, mainly because she thinks that it will enhance personal freedom. She believes financial insecurity usually limits our ability to make the right choices in life. For example, this is sometimes the case for people in oppressive or exploitative relationships, like she was once.

Now we would like for you to imagine how Sarah likely feels and thinks about introducing basic income in the UK. Imagine also how insecure she must have felt when trying to escape from her oppressive relationship in the past.

Take about one minute for this imagination exercise, getting as clear a sense as possible of how Sarah likely thinks and feels. Then, at the end of the minute, write in the space below what you imagined.

*Version 2*

This is Sarah. She is against introducing a basic income scheme in the UK, mainly because she thinks that it might limit people's likelihood of finding friends through work and gaining meaning to their lives. She believes this in turn might increase the levels of loneliness in society, especially among those who have difficulty starting face-to-face conversations, like herself.

Now we would like for you to imagine how Sarah likely feels and thinks. That is, imagine how scared she must feel of potentially losing her contact with the world.

Take about one minute for this imagination exercise, getting as clear a sense as possible of how Sarah likely thinks and feels. Then, at the end of the minute, write in the space below what you imagined.

*Placebo Condition*

*Version 1*

This is Sarah. She is in favour of introducing a basic income scheme in the UK, mainly because she thinks that it will enhance personal freedom. She believes financial insecurity usually limits our ability to make the right choices in life. For example, this is sometimes the case for people in oppressive or exploitative relationships, like she was once.

*Version 2*

This is Sarah. She is against introducing a basic income scheme in the UK, mainly because she thinks that it might limit people's likelihood of finding friends through work and gaining meaning to their lives. She believes this in turn might increase the levels of loneliness in society, especially among those who have difficulty starting face-to-face conversations, like herself.

*Control Condition*

Now we would like you to think about your last weekend. Take about one minute to think about your last weekend and use the space below to describe it in about 4 or 5 sentences.

Take about one minute to think about your last weekend and use the space below to describe it.

## C. Measures

**Attitudes on universal basic income (ESS, 2016)**

Some countries are currently talking about introducing a basic income scheme. In a moment, we will ask you to tell us whether you are against or in favour of this scheme. First we will give you some more details. A basic income scheme includes *all* of the following: - The government pays everyone a monthly income to cover essential living costs. - It replaces many other social benefits. - The purpose is to guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living. - Everyone receives the same amount regardless of whether or not they are working. - People also keep the money they earn from work or other sources. - This scheme is paid for by taxes. Overall, would you oppose or favour having this scheme in the UK?

**Open-ended question used for calculating cognitive complexity**

You indicated that you **${D_1/ChoiceGroup/SelectedAnswers/3}** *introducing a basic income scheme* in the UK.

Why do you think so? Please justify your choice in one paragraph (about 4 or 5 sentences).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

**Empathic Concern**

Now please indicate the extent to which you felt the following emotions *when reading about Sarah*: (a battery with the following emotions being listed: sympathetic, empathic, concerned, moved, compassionate, warm and soft-hearted)

**Spillover effect**

You indicated that you **${D_1/ChoiceGroup/SelectedAnswers/1}** *legalising assisted dying* in the UK.

Why do you think so? Please justify your choice in one paragraph (about 4 or 5 sentences).

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

## D. Calculation of Cognitive Complexity Score

We employed 10 LIWC indicators for the cognitive complexity scale (similar to Owens and Wedeking 2011; Wyss, Beste, and Bächtiger 2015). The CC score is created by putting the LIWC categories into the following formula:

CC = Sixl + Discr + Tent + Incl + Cause + Insig + Inhib - Cert – Negate- Excl.

The below explanation of each indicator is adapted from Tauscik & Pennebaker , Pennebaker (2010), Owens and Wedeking (2011) and Wyss and colleagues (2015).

*Causation* taps into the extent to which the person sees links between different components and dimensions of the issue and in terms of causal processes, how changes in one may affect the change in another. It is measured by identifying the words like *because, effect, affect* and *hence, etc.* in the text. The score captures the percentage of words per speech act. Higher scores indicate greater cognitive complexity.

*Insight* captures the percentage of words in the language about generating insight. LIWC calculates the score by identifying words such as *think, consider, know, believe* in the text. This identifies the extent to which people are able to have an in-depth understanding of the issue. Higher scores are indicative of higher cognitive complexity.

*Sixl* denote the percentage of words in the text which are greater than six letters. Their increased use indicates higher complex language. Higher numbers are indicative of higher scores of cognitive complexity.

*Discrepancy* is measured by identifying the words such as *should, would,* and *could* and it captures the extent to which a person "identifies discrepancies, differences, or inconsistencies between, for example, situations or cases" (Owens and Wedeking 2011, 1056). Higher scores are indicative of higher levels of cognitive complexity.

LIWC measures *inhibit* by identifying the words such as *block, interfere, constrain, stop, obstacle.* It denotes the "degree of inhibition displayed by the decision maker" (Owens and Wedeking 2011, 1056). The higher is the words of inhibition in a speech act, the higher is the cognitive complexity.

*Tentativeness* is a percentage of words per speech act denoting the "tentative nature of a topical aspect", such as *maybe, perhaps, guess, fairly* (Wyss, Beste and Bächtiger 2015). It is meant to capture how "hesitant or unsure one is about something" (Owens and Wedeking 2011, 1056). Higher scores are associated with higher levels of cognitive complexity.

*Exclusive* indicator shows the percentage of words per speech act about exclusive nature of a topic aspect. Exclusive words are measured by identifying the words such as *but, without, exclude* and are useful for making distinctions. Individuals seem to use these expressions when trying to make a distinction between what it is and what is not in the category. Higher usage is associated with lower levels of cognitive complexity.

LIWC measures the *certainty* by identifying words such as *always, absolutely, inevitable* and is meant to measure the confidence of the individual. Increased amounts are linked to lower levels of cognitive complexity.

LIWC searches for words *with,* and *and* for *inclusiveness* dimension and captures the percentage of words per text denoting the inclusive nature of a topical aspect. Higher the number of *inclusive* words in the speech act, higher the levels of cognitive complexity.

*Negations* indicate the percentage of words per text expressing negations. It identifies words, such as *no* and *never* and it is meant to "measure to what extent an individual acknowledges the absence or opposite of something that is positive or affirmative" (Owens and Wedeking 2011, 1056). It is positively associated with lower levels of cognitive complexity.

*Face Validity*

To illustrate the face validity of our measure, consider, for example, the following, randomly-chosen examples. Respondent A expresses their reasoning about the basic income scheme with this short sentence: "*I think it is an excellent concept but not sure whether we have enough people of working age going forward to fund his through taxes*", which clearly includes two opposing arguments in one sentence. For this respondent the cognitive complexity score is relatively high (unstandardized 12). Now consider Respondent B's response: "*it will help those who work hard but are on a low income*". This opinion is clearly unidimensional and fails to show how the opposing side of the argument. This opinion receives a complexity score of -7,69 which indicates a low complexity score.

## E. Excluding Outliers

Figure E1 visualizes the distribution of standardized cognitive complexity score among subjects.

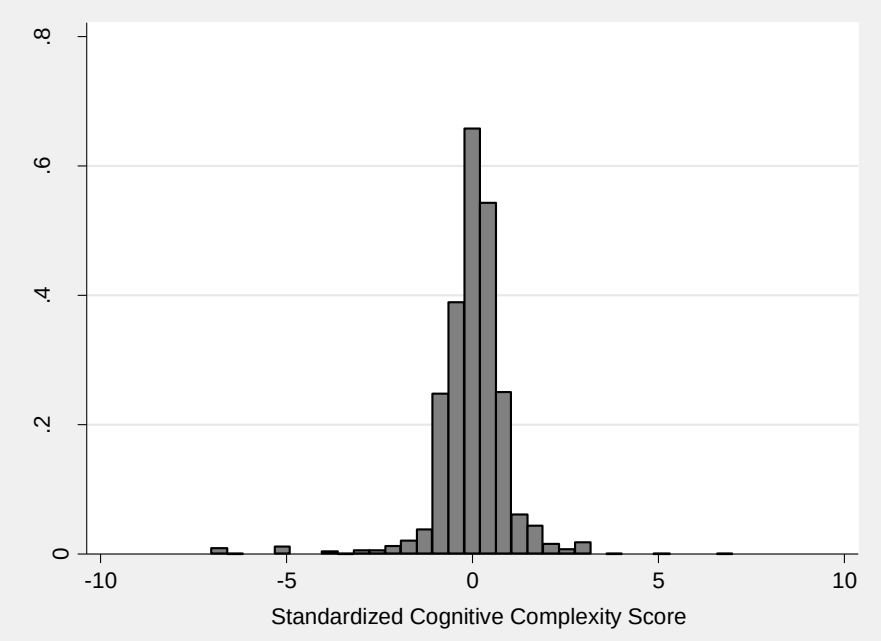



Figure E1. Distribution of (Standardized) Cognitive Complexity Scores (n=2014)

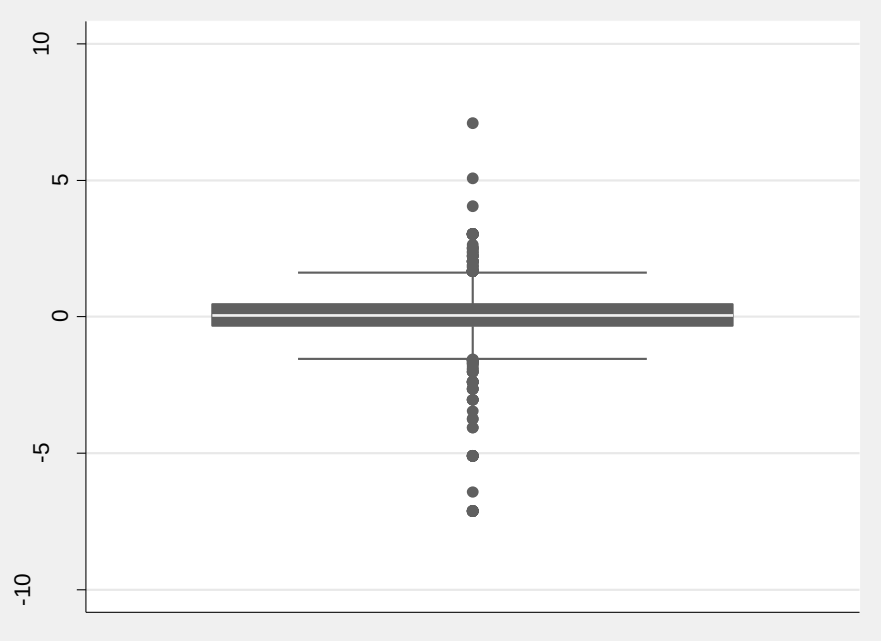



Figure E2. Boxplot of (Standardized) Cognitive Complexity Scores (n=2014)

Figure E1 and E2 visualize the distribution of the cognitive complexity score in our data with the help of a histogram and a boxplot. As it can be revealed from these figures, there are extreme outliers in our data, which can substantively bias our estimates. Therefore, we decided to exclude the extreme outliers from

our analysis. We opt for a procedure proposed by Leys et al. (2013), widely-cited and applied strategy for detecting and excluding outliers. Leys et al. (2013) argue that standard practice of detecting an interval between the mean plus/minus of three standard deviations is problematic, as both the mean and the standard deviation are sensitive to outliers. Consistent with Leys et al., (2013) we calculate the most robust dispersion measure, the Median Absolute Deviation (MAD), and detect and exclude those under and above the median plus and minus 3 times the MAD.

As a result, we remove eighty-eight observations from the total of n=2014. The commands implementing the calculation of the MAD and the steps for removing the outliers can be found in the replication materials.

However, we also rerun the analyses together with outliers. As the figures E3 and E4 demonstrate, most effects remain robust. However, in E4, models estimating the effect of perspective taking on attitude change, and which include covariates, are statistically significant when the outliers remain in the model. When we exclude outliers, these effects lose statistical significance.

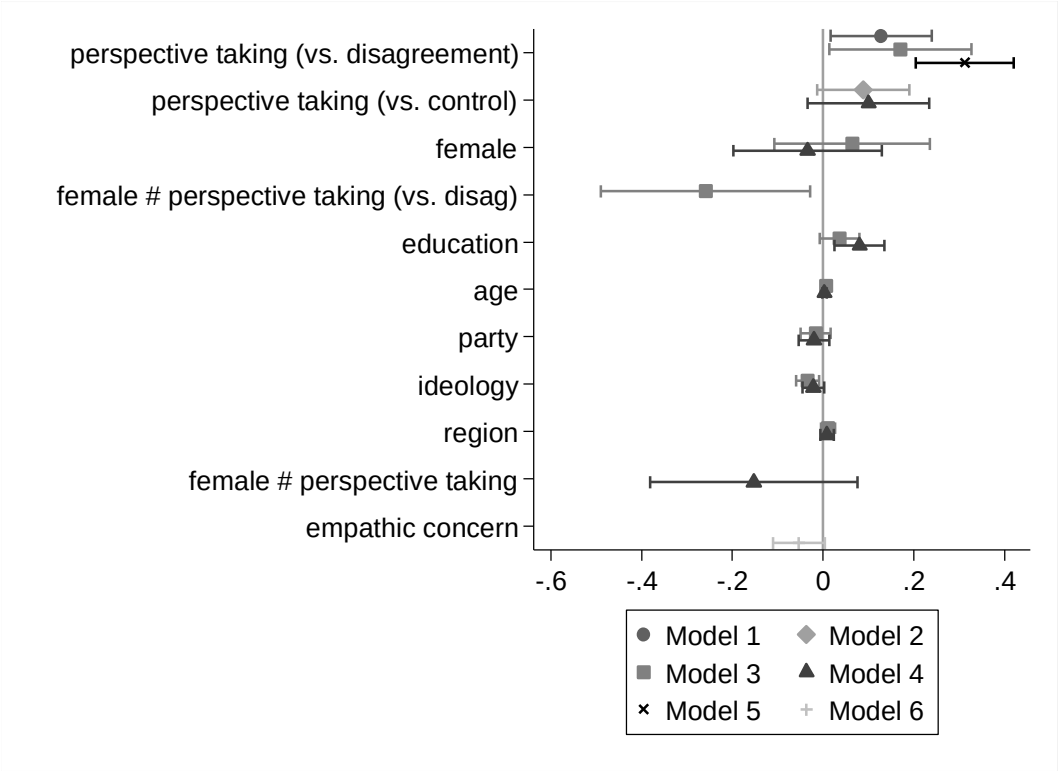



Figure E3: The Effect of Perspective Taking on Cognitive Complexity (With Outliers)

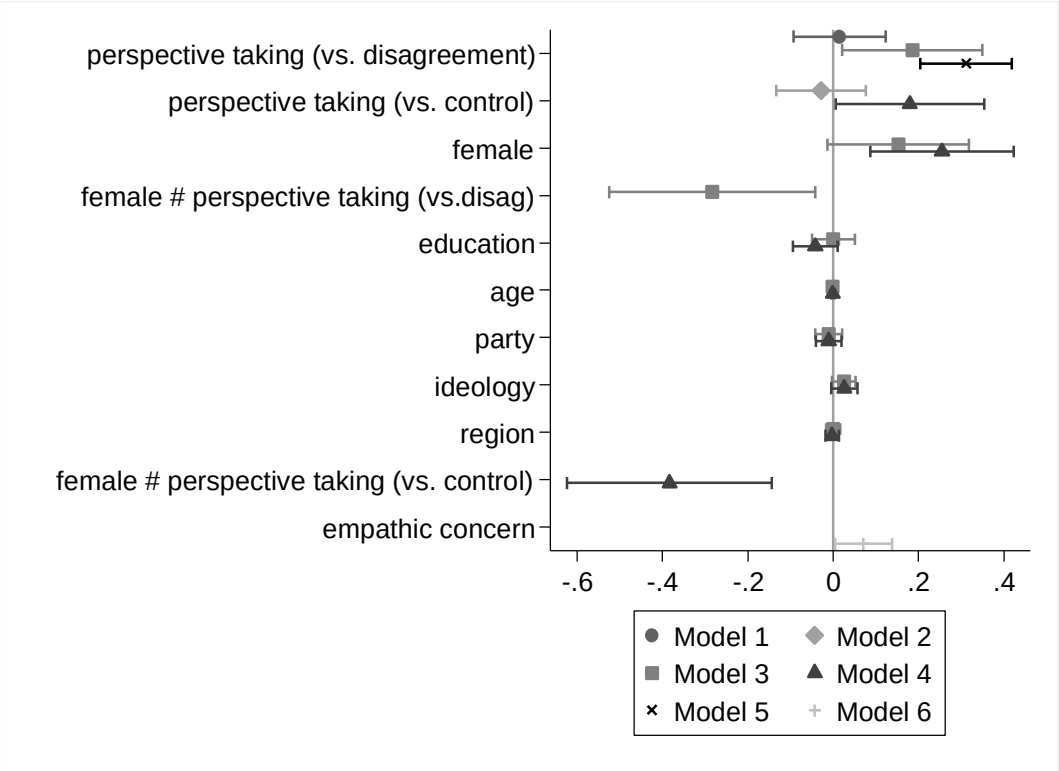



Figure E4: The Effect of Perspective Taking on Attitude Change (With Outliers)

## F. Empathic Concern as a Mediator

Consistent with the PAP, we also conducted a causal mediation analysis (Imai et al. 2011). We are aware that mediation analyses require to make strong assumptions about causal ordering and the lack of omitted variables (Imai and Keele 2010, 312–13), which are challenging to meet satisfactorily. Therefore, in the main text, we limited ourselves to running simple linear regressions.

The causal mediation analysis was conducted with a medeff package in Stata (Hicks and Tingley 2011).

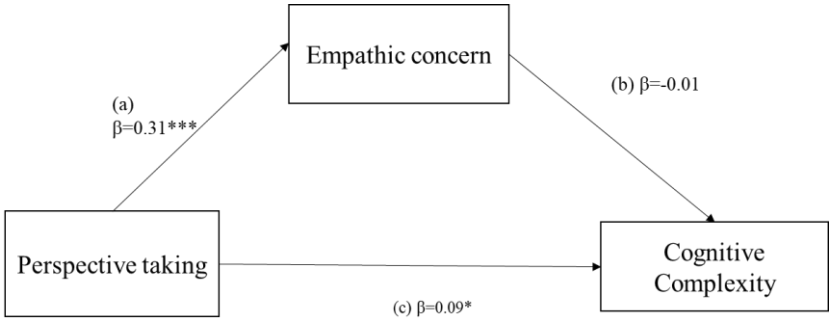



Figure F1. Mediation Analysis (DV: Cognitive Complexity)

The results of the causal mediation analysis indicate that the intervention has no indirect effect on cognitive complexity. In other words, empathic concern does not transmit the effect of our intervention to cognitive complexity. This suggests that another mechanism is at work.

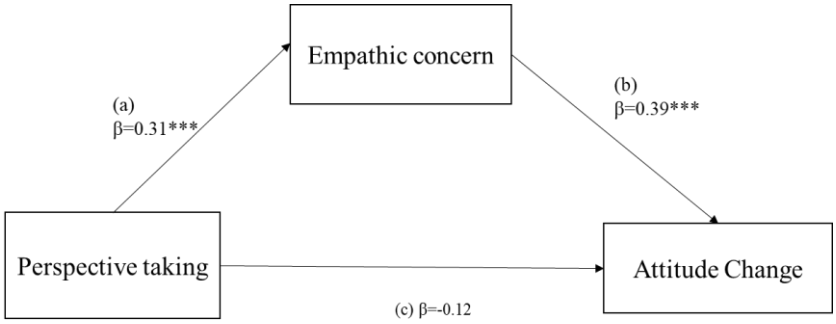



Figure F2. Mediation Analysis (DV: Attitude Change)

Figure F2 shows that perspective taking has an indirect effect on attitude change, which passes via empathic concern. It does not, however, seem to have a direct effect. The average effect of perspective taking on attitude change that operates through the increased empathic concern is 0.12.

## G. Text Length

Similar to any other computerized text analysis software, LIWC analysis is sensitive to the length of the texts. Thus, an alternative explanation for the findings could be that those individuals who were randomly assigned to the perspective taking condition wrote longer essays. I tested this assumption, by coding the length of the essays. The text length ranged from 1 to 202, with overall mean M=24 and SD=22. I further conducted difference-in-means t-tests to examine if the text length differed along the experimental conditions. There is no difference across experimental conditions ($M_{placebo}$=24.9; $SD_{placebo}$=22.5; $M_{perspective}$=25.8; $SD_{perspective}$=20.8; difference= 0.94; $p$<0.44).

## H. Pre-registration

The experiment was preregistered at egap and has been recently imported to osf platform.

The link is as follows: https://osf.io/7qs92/

## I. Departures from pre-analysis plan

All analyses specified in the PAP were implemented in the paper. Below are the full list of departures from the PAP.

1. Terms for experimental conditions have been changed in the manuscript. In the PAP, control group was named placebo, placebo was named disagreement group, which created some confusion. In the manuscript, we name these conditions as control, placebo and treatment.
2. The PAP was ambiguous about the exclusion criteria. It did not explicitly specify a strategy on extreme outliers. Studying the data, and visualizing its distribution on the main outcome variable, we detected extreme outliers which may have confounded the effect. Eventually, we decided to remove them from the analyses, using the most robust and conservative strategy, proposed by Leys et al. (2013). However, we have also rerun the analyses together with outliers, and report them in this appendix (Figure E3 and E4 in app E).
3. We had 4 hypotheses in the PAP and in the short letter we focus on 3 of them, because of the space restrictions. However, we report the H4 hypotheses and all analyses in this document (here, app K) .
4. In the PAP, we divided the H1 in three parts (H1a, H1b and H1c), when writing the paper we do not explicitly mention these hypotheses, due to space restrictions. However, we conducted the analyses consistent with these predictions.
5. The PAP mentioned that we would analyse the essays written by respondents to see if they successfully took the perspective of Sarah. We later realized that it was impossible because people in other conditions did not write an essay about Sarah's feelings and thoughts. Thereby, it was not possible to conduct a manipulation check test relying on this essay. Subsequently, we also could not conduct the CACE (Complier Average Causal Effect) analysis.
6. The PAP mentioned that we would conduct a causal mediation analyses (Imai et al., 2011) and report it in the paper. However, mediation analyses require that we make strong assumptions about causal ordering and the lack of omitted variables. Therefore, we decided to limit ourselves to reporting the results of simple linear regression analyses in the main text. Nevertheless, consistent with the PAP we report the results of causal mediation analyses in the online appendix F, which are almost exactly the same.
7. The PAP said that our cognitive complexity measure calculated by LIWC software would be of 7-point scale. We realized that it was an error from our part. The 7-point scale only refers to the human coding version of the cognitive complexity scale. We report the correct ranges of our measure in the paper.

## J. Effect of Exposure to Disagreement

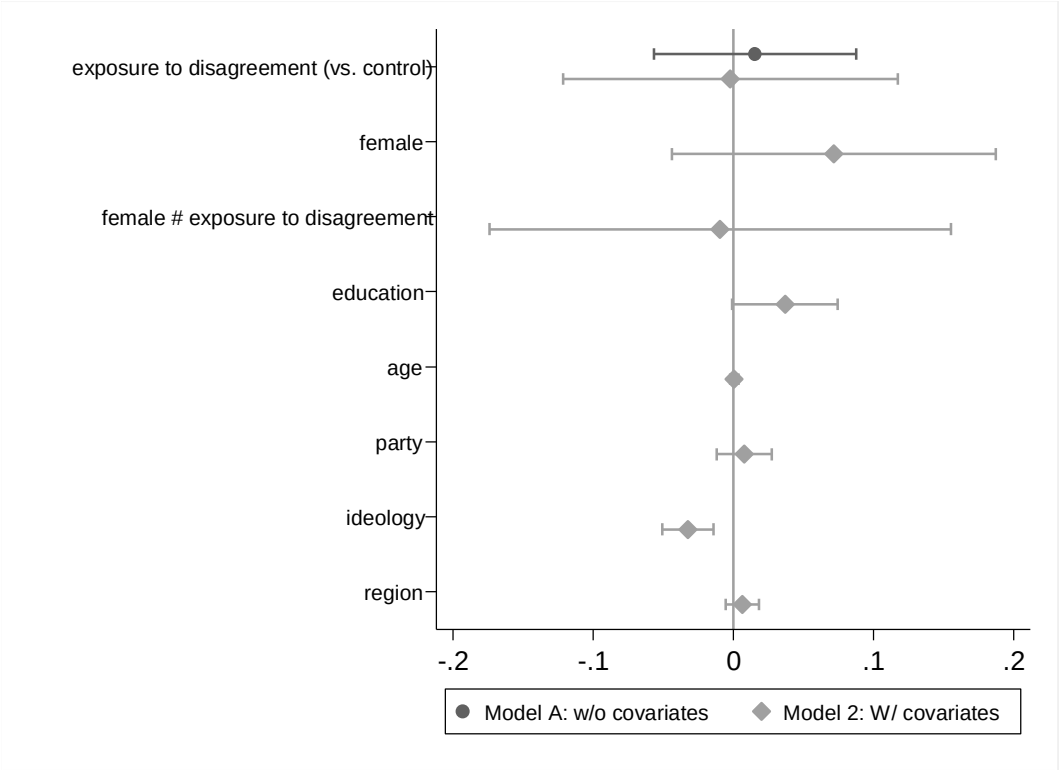



**Figure J1. DV: cognitive complexity**

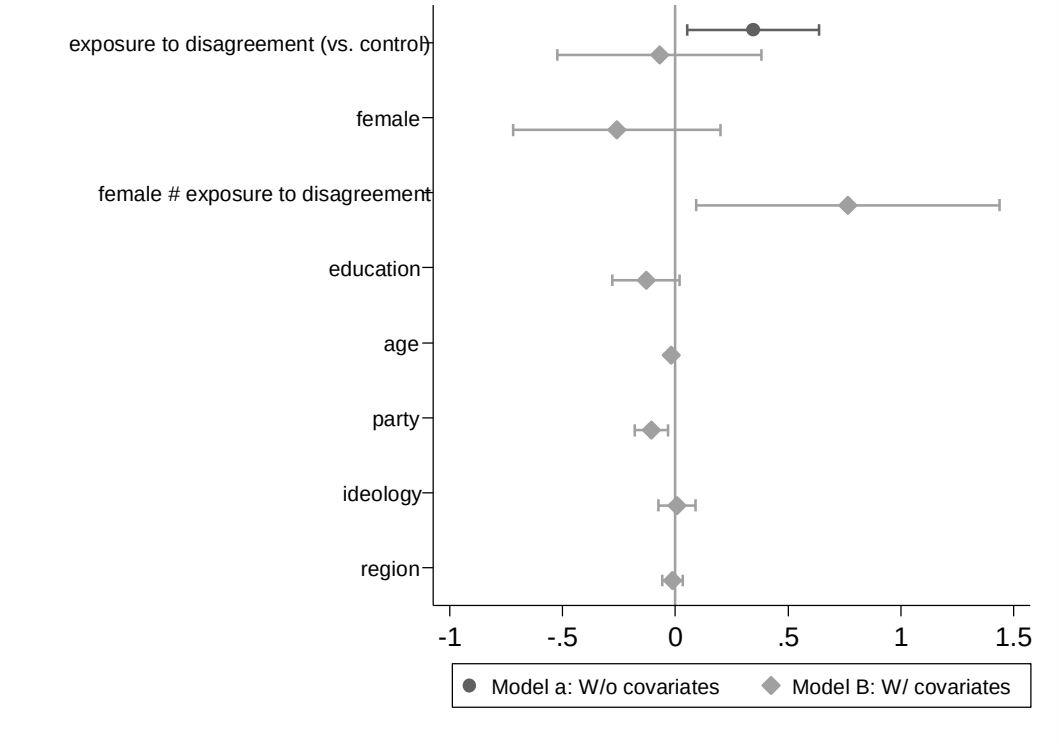
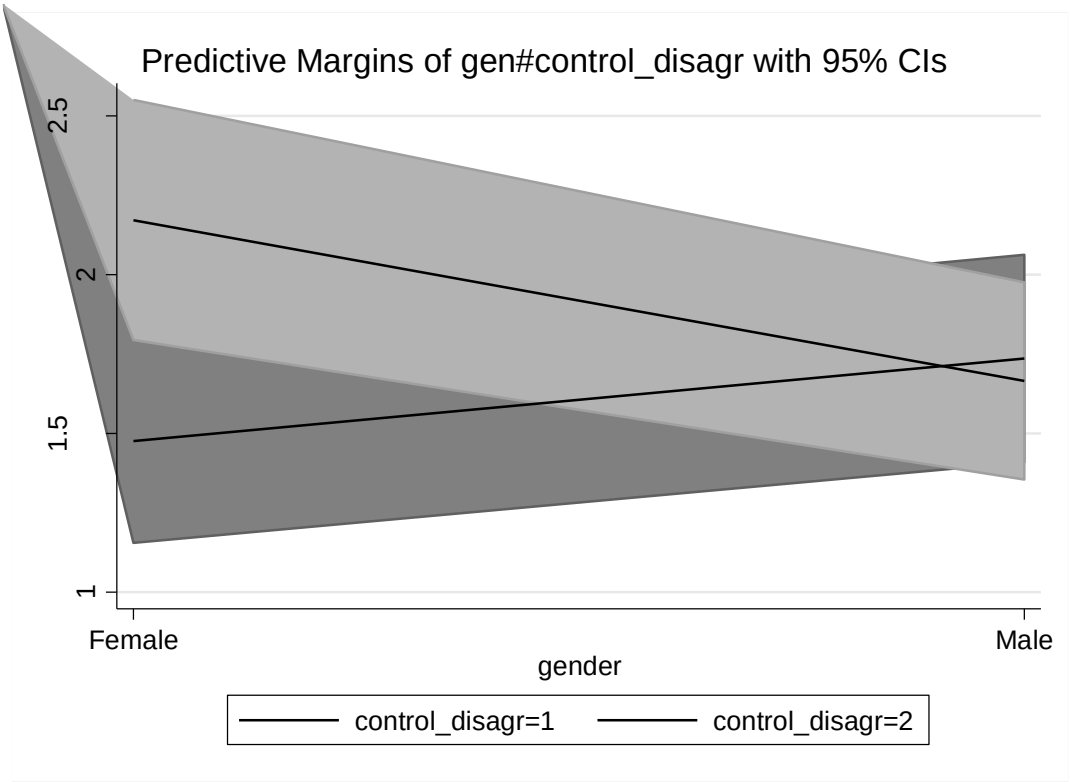



**Figure J1. DV: attitude change**




## K. Spill-over effects

Finally, we examine the spill-over effect of perspective taking, by estimating its effect on reasoning processes of individuals on another issue - legalizing assisted dying. Assisted dying is illegal in the UK and it is a contentious and dividing policy issue among British political elites. Public support for it, however, is strong, according to many polls (Bowcott 2019), although some warn that the level of supports varies depending on specific conditions of this law (Sleeman 2017). Results plotted in Figure K1 shows that perspective taking has no significant spill-over effect on people's cognitive complexity score on the issue of legalizing assisted dying. This finding is consistent with a social psychology literature, which finds no empirical support for transfer effects of perspective taking (Todd and Galinksy, 2014) and goes counter to Simonovits and colleagues' (2018) study. We did not ask pre-treatment question measuring attitudes on legalizing assisted and therefore cannot rerun the same analysis with the second proxy for reflection.

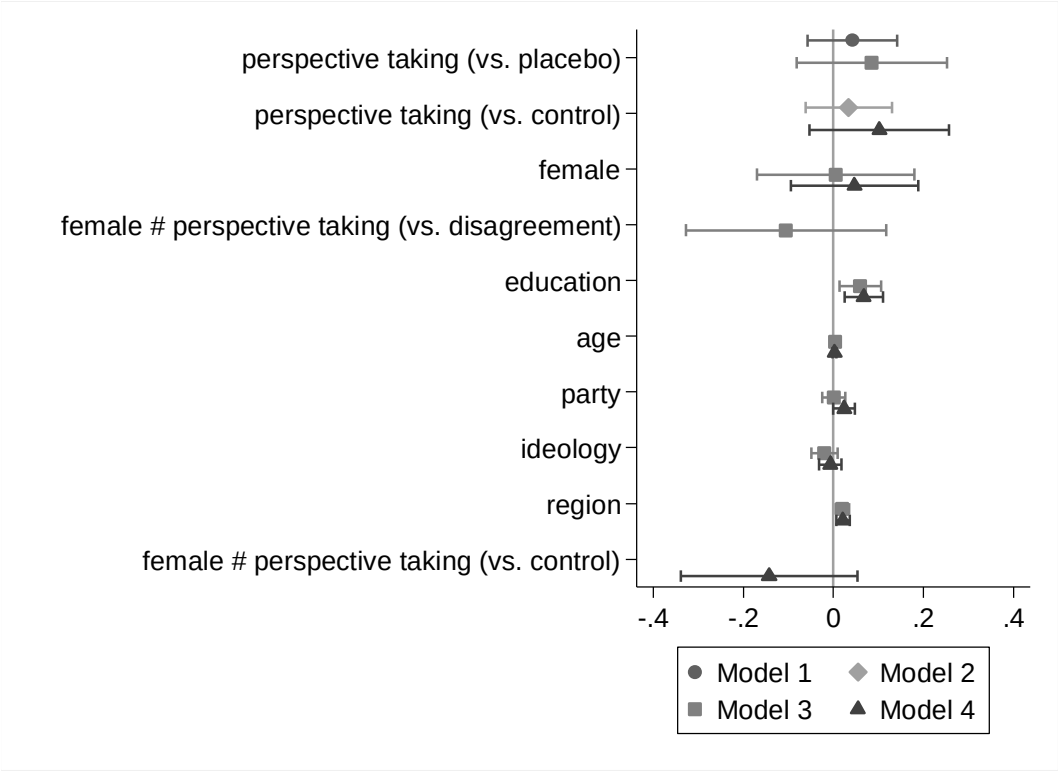



**Figure K1.**

## L. Ethical Considerations

Participants were recruited from Dynata (former Research Now SSI) survey platform subject pool. Dynata provides the subjects with monetary and in-kind payments. Participant pool was diverse along different socio-demographic characteristics, e.g. gender, age, education, race, etc. The sample did not include only the subjects from marginalized or vulnerable groups of the society. Furthermore, we do not expect our research to have differentially benefitted or harmed a subgroup of participants compared to others.

The experiment received the official approval of the Ethics Board of the University of the first author. We obtained informed consent for participation twice. First, Dyanata, the survey company, obtains the informed consent from its participants to engage in the study. Second, at the start of the survey, the first thing the participants read is an informed consent which informs the participants of the aims and practicalities of the study; how we will process the data, anonymize it and save it; their rights to withdraw from the study without justifications; specific and relevant national and EU laws; contact details of the person to be contacted for any questions, complains or further information on the study. We also listed the contact information of the ethical committee of the university of the first author for possible complaints and other concerns. Only after having consented to voluntarily participate in the study, individuals can continue with the study. Those who does not will be thanked for their time and will be able to exit the study on a voluntary basis.

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# ARTICLE VI

# EXPOSURE TO POLITICAL DISAGREEMENT AND REFLECTIVENESS OF POLITICAL ATTITUDES

*Lala Muradova (KU Leuven)*

Working Paper

20/08/2020

**Abstract**

Democratic theorists argue that exposure to opposing viewpoints in political talk leads to more reflective political judgements. Three issues remain unaddressed. First, the claim has mostly been theoretical in nature. Little empirical research tested whether and under what conditions exposure to disagreement fosters more reflective public opinion. Second, scarce existing studies have mainly relied on indirect and self-reported proxies for reflective attitudes. Third, most of these studies use observational data, which pose challenges related to making valid causal inferences about the effect of political disagreement on the quality of public opinion. This study addresses these gaps by studying the extent to which political disagreement contributes to reflectiveness of citizens' attitudes with two studies, a pre-registered cross-national survey-experiment (N=423) where we manipulate political disagreement; and a quasi-experiment (N=75) where respondents are exposed to disagreement during group discussions. Counter to theoretical expectations, our results show that exposure to political disagreement exerts null effects both on cognitive complexity of political reasoning and the probability of transforming one's previously-held attitudes. We conclude discussing the findings in light of their implications for democratic theory.

**Key words:** political disagreement, deliberation, reflection, political reasoning, perspective taking

## Introduction

What is the impact of political disagreement on the quality of political attitudes? Political disagreement can be defined as "interaction among citizens who hold divergent viewpoints and perspectives regarding politics" (Huckfeldt, Johnson, and Sprague 2004, 3–4); and is argued to engender more reflective political judgements. Encountering views unlike one's own, as the argument goes, induces greater understanding of the perspectives diverse others hold and "prompts reflection about and formation of better-reasoned, higher quality opinions" (Nir 2017, 2; Gutmann and Thompson 2004).

Despite these theoretical expectations, empirical studies have so far yielded mixed results. While some scholars show that exposure to disagreement leads to more considered political attitudes (Mutz 2002; Price, Cappella, and Nir 2002), others find it can have erosive consequences for the quality of political attitudes (e.g. Wojcieszak and Price 2010)[1].

Furthermore, the literature extolling positive benefits of disagreement relies mostly on self-reported cross-sectional data, which is not devoid of methodological concerns such as self-selection, endogeneity, reciprocal causation and spurious relationship (Klofstad, Sokhey, and Mcclurg 2013). Much of this literature also focuses on political disagreement emanating from strong ties, such as, family and friends. Consequences of being exposed to incongruent information coming from weak ties (e.g. colleagues and neighbours) and strangers are under-explored (but see Wojcieszak and Mutz 2009; Schmitt-beck and Grill 2020).

Studying the extent to which disagreement impacts their political decisions is important for understanding the role of interpersonal political communication in democratic societies. Individuals are regularly exposed to different others in their everyday life (Mutz and Mondak 2006). However, these informal talks are mostly characterized by homogeneity in viewpoints (Minozzi et al. 2020). If exposure to political disagreement enhances citizen competence and improves the quality of political judgements, real world political decision making could undeniably benefit from it. Deficiencies in cross-cutting exposure can be alleviated, for example, with the help of new

[1] This latter finding is consistent with biased information processing models which suggest that upon encountering political disagreement, most people tend to dismiss it and cling on to their prior attitudes even more strongly (see Guess and Coppock 2018 for a review). Much of this literature focuses on correcting factual misperceptions, which is not the objective of this paper.

institutions that encourage expression of multitude of perspectives and viewpoints, such as deliberative citizen forums (Dryzek et al. 2019).

We expand on the extant literature by shedding more light on the above mentioned limitations. More specifically, we study the relationship between disagreement and reflectiveness of political choices, which we operationalize with two variables: cognitive complexity of political reasoning and opinion transformation. We rely on two uniquely designed studies. Study 1 is a cross-national survey experiment fielded in the UK and Chile (*N*=423), where we experimentally manipulated individuals' exposure to political disagreement on a policy issue of introducing *a universal basic income scheme* (UBI)[2]. Study 2 brings the interactive part of political talk into play. It is a pre-test post-test quasi-experiment, involving face-to-face interactions on the issue of *legalizing assisted dying* (N=74).

Across two studies and two policy issues, we find that, counter to all theoretical expectations, exposure to political disagreement *per se* exerts a null effect both on cognitive complexity of citizen's political reasoning and the probability of transforming their previously-held attitudes.

## Theoretical Expectations

There are at least two causal mechanisms underlying the theorized relationship between disagreement and reflection. First, people can learn about diverse perspectives when exposed to different others. Acquisition of new information can motivate them to engage in reflection (cognitive mechanism). Second, being exposed to people with counter-attitudinal views may evoke empathetic feelings in individuals towards different others' lives and perspectives and encourage them to consider and include these opposing perspectives in their thought processes (affective mechanism). Political agreement, on the other hand, is argued to amplify cognitive errors inherent in our political reasoning and lead to more consolidated, and polarized political judgements. Sunstein (2002) proposes two explanations for this phenomenon: social comparison and limited argument pool. First, people want to be perceived positively by other members of the group; and therefore may adapt their viewpoints towards the dominant position of the group. Second, a like-minded group may have a limited number of arguments at its disposal. These arguments may be predominantly homogenous in nature which would lead individuals to strengthen their previously-held attitudes.

[2] We pre-registered the experiment before collecting the data (online app D).

Hence, we expect that,

H1: Exposure to political disagreement (as opposed to political agreement) will increase reflectiveness of individuals' political reasoning.

Others argue that understanding opposing perspectives may necessitate being sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of your issue opponent. Cognitive dimension of empathy, perspective taking, i.e. *a general tendency or ability to actively imagine the thoughts and feelings of the other* (1994) has been found to be particularly important in these processes. Research in psychology shows that perspective taking is associated with other-regarding attitudes and behaviors (Todd and Galinsky 2014). Those who score high on perspective taking are better at resolving conflicts and unearthing hidden agreements during negotiations (Galinsky et al. 2008). In effect, Diana Mutz suggested that the beneficial effect of counter-attitudinal messages on political attitudes, such as political tolerance, is stronger among high perspective takers (Mutz 2002, 121). Hence,

H2: Positive effect of political disagreement on reflection will be stronger among high perspective takers.

Moreover, previous research shows that gender influences how people react to political disagreement and these differences may be consequential for political attitudes and behaviors (see Wolak 2020 for a review). While men find disagreement enjoyable, women find it uncomfortable and are more likely to avoid conflict as a result . Recent research suggests that these differences may be due to gendered socialization practices. While girls are expected to value cooperation and compromise, boys are more likely to behave in assertive and adversarial ways when encountered with interpersonal conflicts (Wolak 2020). Building on this literature, we expect that,

H3: Effect of political disagreement on reflective thinking will be moderated by gender of respondents.

**Conceptualizing and Measuring Reflection**

Reflective thinking is defined as the one which involves a careful revaluation of one's viewpoints and beliefs in the light of opposing arguments and perspectives (Dewey 1933). We operationalize reflection with two proxies. First, *cognitive complexity* of political thinking (Tetlock 1983; Owens and Wedeking 2011) concerns the degree to which a person's thinking (expressed via a verbal or written text) conveys a multidimensional as opposed to unidimensional reasoning. It consists of two components of reasoning: *differentiation*, i.e. "the extent to which someone differentiates between multiple competing solutions" and *integration* "the extent to which someone integrates among solutions" (Tausczik and Pennebaker 2010, 35). Higher scores indicate more multidimensional

thinking, while lower scores mean more unidimensional reasoning. Cognitive complexity is captured and analyzed with the help of a widely-used and validated automated text analysis software, LIWC. LIWC converts the words (or word stems) of the text into psychologically meaningful categories. Cognitive complexity index is calculated from ten different LIWC categories, utilizing a formula (Owens and Wedeking 2011; Wyss, Beste, and Bächtiger 2015). These categories aim to capture both differentiation and integration dimensions of the cognitive complexity score and include *causation, insight, discrepancy, inhibition, tentativeness, certainty, inclusiveness, exclusiveness, negations,* and *percentage of words containing six or more letters* (online app. E)

We complement this with the measure for attitude change (raw difference between pre- and post-test attitudes on a policy issue), a widely used proxy for capturing opinion transformations as a result of exposure to political disagreement (e.g. Luskin et al. 2002).

**Study 1**

*Research Design*

Study 1 employs a treatment-placebo vignette design in which participants are exposed either to political disagreement or political agreement. The experiment was a part of a larger study by Nuffield College Comparative Time Sharing Experiments (CTSE) and was fielded in the spring of 2019 (UK) and winter of 2020 (Chile) in two online subject pools of the Centre for Experimental Social Sciences (CESS). Both samples, UK ($N$=215) and Chile ($N$=208)[3], are descriptively diverse, but non-probability samples (online app).

*Experimental Design*

After having completed a short pre-experimental survey, respondents were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions. In disagreement condition, respondents received a vignette describing a hypothetical couple (Sarah and John / Maria Jose and Miguel Angel) who hold attitudes incongruent with the respondent's own view on UBI (programmed in qualtrics). In agreement condition, individuals read the same vignette, but with pro-attitudinal views (online app C). To test if the treatment was taken correctly, we embedded a manipulation check question in the survey. Respondents were asked if they "remember if [the names of the couple] were against or in favor of introducing a basic income scheme in [UK/Chile]?". The t-test shows that political

[3] Power calculations, performed using Stata 14.2, reveal that assuming 5% alpha-level, and the statistical power of 0.80, the power analysis yielded the sample size estimate of 100 person per experimental group ($f$=0.40).

disagreement was manipulated successfully in both samples ($M_{agreeUK}$=0.02;$M_{disagreeUK}$=0.95; $p$ < 0.00;$M_{agreeChile}$=0.11;$M_{disagreeChile}$=0.87; $p$<0.00).

*Measures*

*Outcome variables:* Respondents were asked about their attitudes on introducing UBI scheme in their countries (preceded by a short description of the scheme) ($M_{uk}$=4.33; $SD_{uk}$=1.66; $M_{chile}$=4.05; $SD_{chile}$=1.8; response scale: 1"strongly"- 6"strongly favour") (ESS, 2016). Next, they were asked to provide justification for their choice with an open-ended question: "You indicated that you ${D_1/ChoiceGroup/SelectedAnswers/3}[4] introducing a basic income scheme in [UK/Chile]. Why do you think so? Please justify your choice in one paragraph". Their essays were further coded for cognitive complexity score (standardized M=0; SD=1; range -1.8 to 2.5).

*Perspective taking*: Respondents were instructed to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the following statements (Davis 1994): "I sometimes find it difficult to see things from other person's point of view" (pt 1) ($M_{pt1UK}$=6.68; $SD_{pt1UK}$= 2.1; $M_{pt1Chile}$=5.39; $SD_{pt1Chile}$=2.10) and "When I am upset at someone, I try to put myself in her/his shoes for a while" (pt 2) ($M_{pt2UK}$=6.30; $SD_{pt2UK}$=2.22; $M_{pt2Chile}$=6.21; $SD_{pt2Chile}$=2.18). The response scaled from 1 "I do not agree at all" to 10 "I totally agree".

*Analyses and Results*

We estimated the effect of political disagreement on reflection, with simple linear regression models. We pooled the data and clustered the standard errors by country. For ease of interpretation we standardized cognitive complexity score (M=0.00; SD=1; range: -1.84 to 2.46). Figure 1 visualizes the results of the OLS regression analyses.

Model 1 estimates the effect of exposure to political disagreement on cognitive complexity score, controlling for gender, age, and education (H1). To examine H2, we add an interaction term between dispositional perspective taking and the treatment to the main model (Model 2). H3 is tested with Model 3, which includes an interaction term between gender and the treatment. The estimates are shown with 95% confidence intervals (CIs). Point estimates to the right of the baseline indicate a positive effect, and those to the left show a negative effect. Estimates that touch the vertical line indicate non-significant effects.

[4] Their chosen response was generated by piped text function of the Qualtrics.

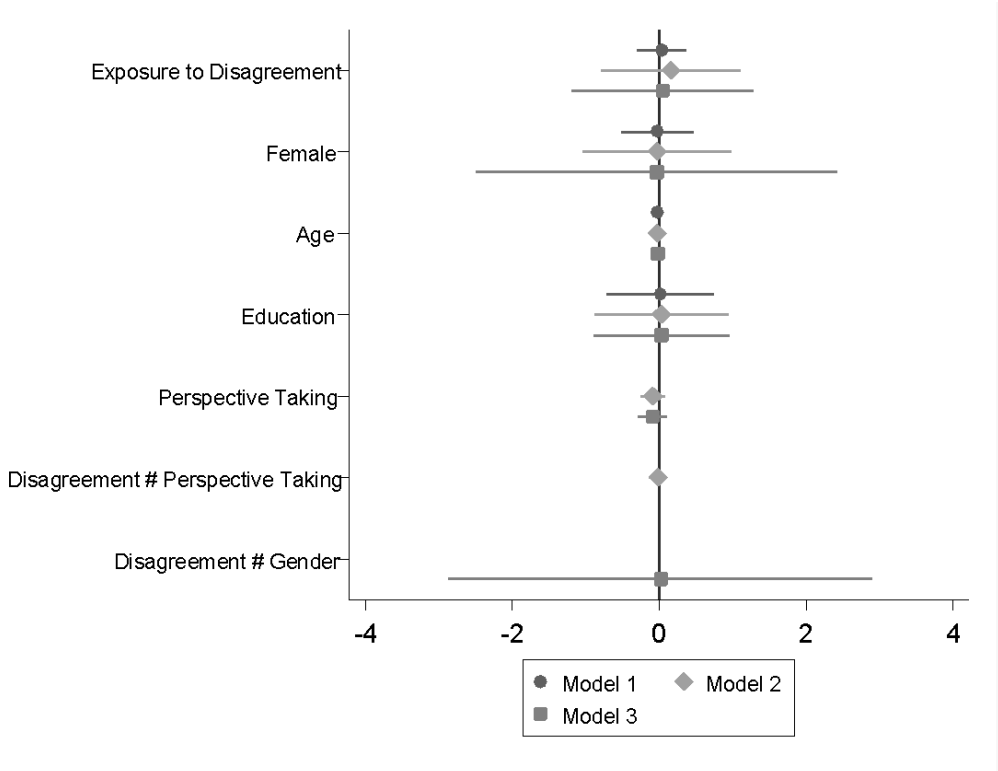


Figure 1. Effect of Exposure to Disagreement on Cognitive Complexity

As the models show, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the effect of political disagreement on cognitive complexity is different from zero. Furthermore, neither perspective taking nor gender has a moderating effect.

Next, we replicate the same analyses with our second variable – mean attitude change (Figure 2). Exposure to political disagreement has no significant effect, and the lack of effect is robust to the inclusion of covariates.

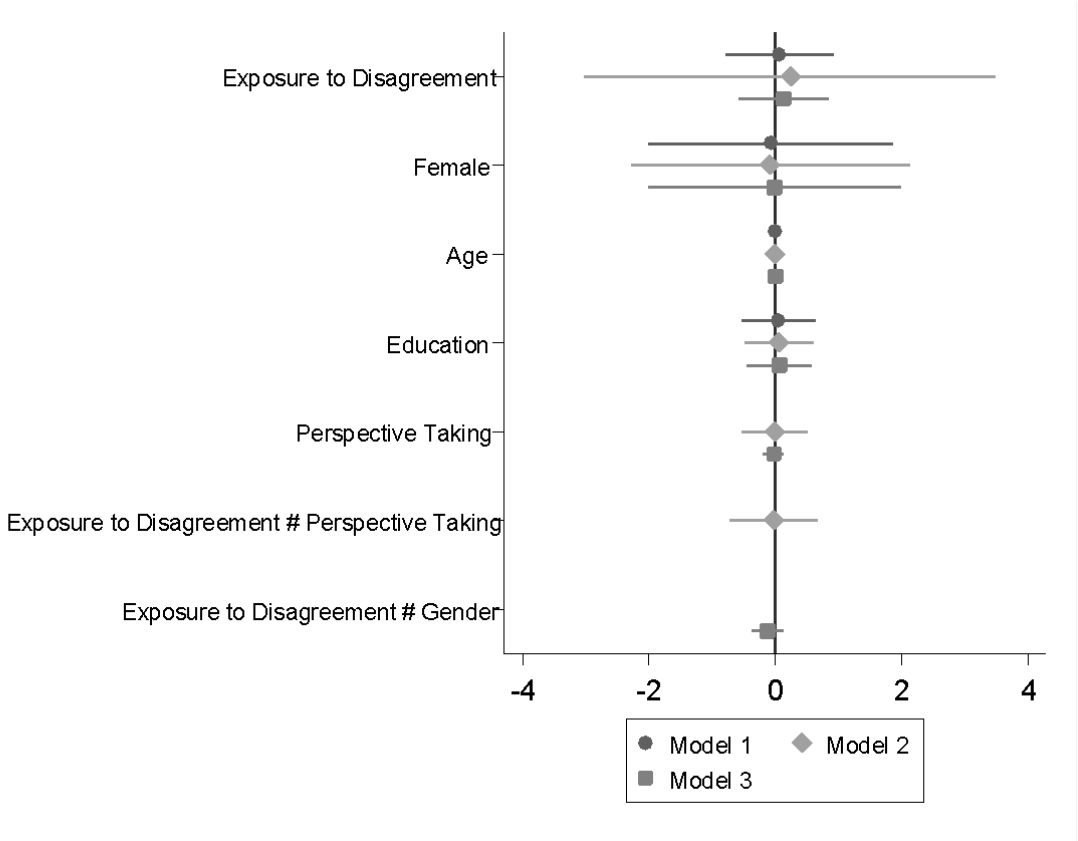


Figure 2. Effect of Exposure to Disagreement on Attitude Change

In sum, exposure to political disagreement (as opposed to political agreement) exerts null effects on reflectiveness of citizens' political judgements as well as the probability of citizens changing their attitudes post-exposure.

**Study 2**

Political disagreement in Study 1 is isolated from its communicative part. It may be a different experience to be merely exposed to a political disagreement than to have the opportunity to interact with your issue opponent(s). Therefore, we designed and conducted a quasi-experiment, which involved moderated face to face discussions in heterogeneous small groups.

Discussions were about legalizing assisted dying, one of the most important and controversial moral questions of our times. Public interest and support for legalizing assisted dying has grown over the years in western democracies (Cohen et al. 2014), although the same is not true for other regions of the world. Only Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Victoria of Australia and some parts of the US legalized assisted dying, under specific legal conditions.

Participants for discussion groups were students, recruited via the international center of a Belgian university. They had diverse educational (e.g. mathematics, humanities, biology, economics) and country (e.g. Turkey, India, Spain, Greece, South Africa) backgrounds. The rationale for opting for international (as opposed to local) students was to assure variance in issue attitudes.

The study consisted of two waves. Ninety-five respondents took part in the first wave ($M_{age}$=26.3; $SD_{age}$=5.8; range: 18 to 47; 65% self-identified as female).

*Measures*

Wave 1 (Oct-Nov 2018) measured respondents' dispositional perspective taking (M=11; SD=2.1; range: 5 to 15; sum of 5 items) (Davis 1994), socio-demographics, their baseline attitudes on legalizing assisted dying (M=6.9; SD=3.1; range: 0 to 10), and cognitive complexity of their reasoning (standardized M=0; SD=1; range: -4.2 to 3.2)

In the Wave 2 (Nov 2018-Mar 2019), respondents were invited to participate in small group discussions. Seventy-four participants took part ($M_{age}$=26.6; $SD_{age}$=6.4; range: 18 to 47; 63% self-identified as female) [5]. Twelve small groups were organized. Discussions were audio-recorded. Next, respondents filled out another survey, which measured the outcomes of interest.

*Measuring Political Disagreement*

In Study 2, disagreement is captured via content analysis of the discussions, following Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger (2009). Two human coders coded the discussions. A 'thought', "a unique idea signaled by orienting talk from the speaker" (Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger 2009, 181) was adopted as a unit of analysis. After having defined 'thoughts' (n=1792), the coders coded these thoughts for individually-expressed disagreements and agreements. Disagreements were operationalized as thoughts that indicate divergence with what a prior discussant expressed, and either included phrases like 'I disagree', 'I don't agree' or were expressed with contrasting conjunctions, such as 'but', 'however', etc. Agreements were "thoughts that expressed alignment with what a prior speaker said" (Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger 2009) and were measured with the phrases like "I agree", "true", "that's right" or inferred from the context.

[5] Twenty-one respondents dropped out from the second part, either because they had left Belgium at the end of their exchange program, or the proposed dates/times of group discussions were inconvenient for them. Post-hoc analyses show that dropout was not systematic either along socio-demographic factors, or attitudes on legalizing assisted dying.

Next, coders calculated individual exposure to disagreement (i.e. experienced disagreement) and individual exposure to agreement by summing disagreement and agreement expressed by others.

*Results*

First, we examine within-subject change in cognitive complexity scores by running paired t-tests comparing (standardized) pre- and post-cognitive complexity scores. The results of t-tests show that respondents' mean cognitive complexity score increased post-discussions ($M_{pre}$=0.04; $SD_{pre}$=0.96; $M_{post}$=0.48, $SD_{post}$=0.53, p<0.00). The effect is large, equaling to nearly half a standard deviation (0.44 SD). However, due to the absence of a control condition in our design, the effect cannot be causally attributed to the discussion.

Furthermore, the finding is not necessarily indicative of the effect of political disagreement. Group discussion is a complex treatment comprising different elements (e.g. information, communication). In order to estimate the separate effect of exposure to political disagreement on reflection, we regress the coded individual exposure to political disagreement on cognitive complexity (and attitude change) with the help of linear regression analyses. Because individuals are inside discussion groups, we use group-robust Huber-White standard errors in our linear regression analyses and cluster the errors by discussion groups[6].

Figure 3 visualizes the results of linear regression analyses. Model 1 presents the results of the main model, which also controls for individually expressed disagreement, and agreement, age, gender and pre-treatment cognitive complexity scores. To test H2 we add perspective taking and its interaction term to the main model (Model 2). Model 3 also controls for interaction effect between gender and disagreement, to test H3.

[6] We do not use hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) for a simple reason: we are interested in the extent to which individual reflection is affected by the amount of disagreement one experiences during discussions, which is at individual level (Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger 2009).

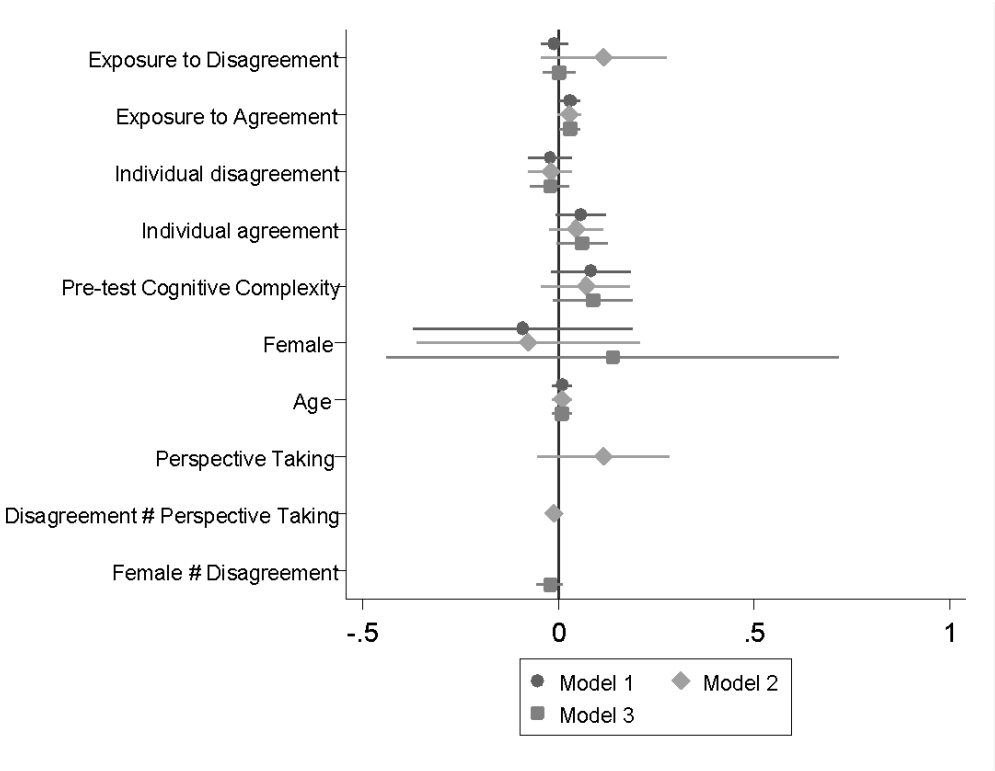


Figure 3. Relationship between Exposure to Disagreement and Cognitive Complexity

Model 1 shows that neither exposure to disagreement, nor individually expressed disagreement during deliberations has a significant effect on respondents' cognitive complexity score. What seems to matter, however, is exposure to political agreement, which is positively associated with citizens' reflection scores. However, the effect is small, and is not robust to the inclusion of covariates.

Next, we run the same models with the attitude change as a dependent variable (Figure 4).

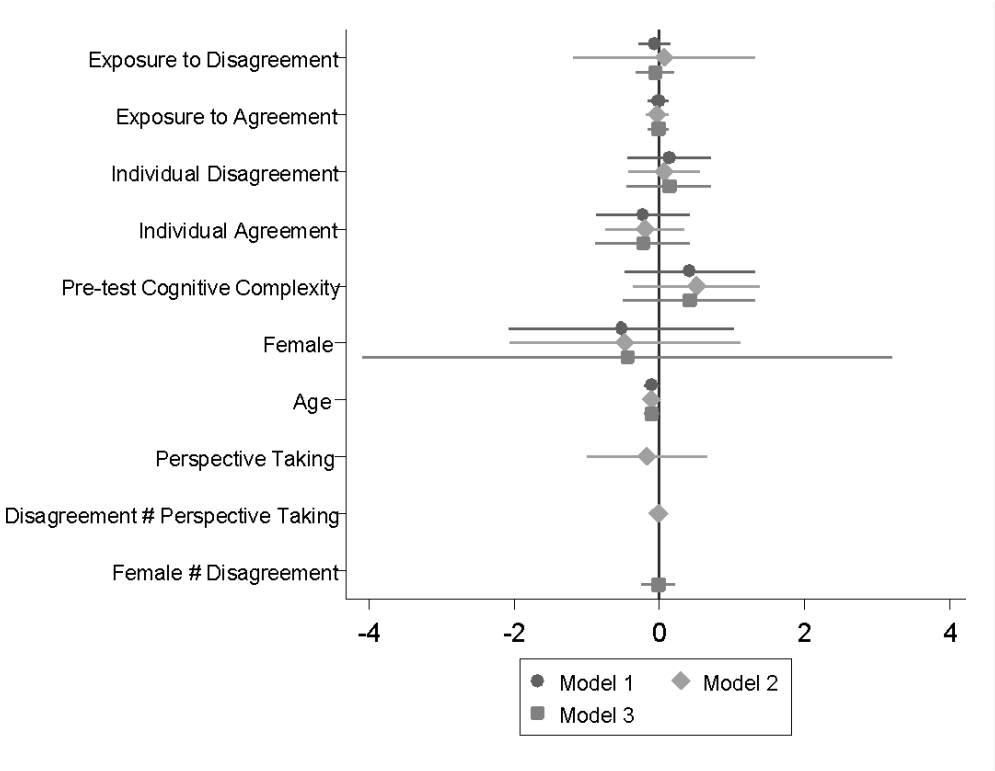


Figure 4. Relationship between Exposure to Disagreement and Attitude Change

Results stay the same: exposure to disagreement has a null effect on the probability of changing one's attitudes on legalizing assisted dying post-deliberation.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Democratic theory argues that political disagreement engenders reflective political reasoning. In this paper, we test this claim empirically, by exposing individuals to a dissonance producing information (Study 1) and heterogeneous small group discussions (Study 2). The findings show that exposure to disagreement *per se* does little to the quality of citizens' political choices. It increases neither cognitive complexity of their reasoning, nor the probability of changing their prior attitudes on two important policy issues, UBI and legalizing assisted dying.

These findings are not at odds with other work. For instance, Stromer-Galley and Muhlberger (2009, 186) show that, it is political agreement (rather than disagreement) that exerts a positive effect on perceived reevaluation of one's beliefs and assumptions about an issue. In a similar vein, Grönlund et al. (2015) show that individuals in heterogeneous discussion groups do not learn more than those in homogenous groups.

This study, however, has several limitations. First, democratic theorists may argue that positive effects of political disagreement may be contingent upon deliberativeness of small group

discussions. Future studies could address this shortcoming by measuring, for instance, deliberative quality index (DQI) of political talk (Steenbergen et al. 2003) and examine if it moderates the effect of political disagreement on political judgements. Second, the sample size of Study 2 is relatively small, which could mean that some of our analyses for Study 2 are underpowered. Future research should replicate it with a bigger sample. Third, in our vignettes we opted for describing issue opponent(s) as a couple, in order to keep the similarity between the issue opponent(s) and respondents constant, along the gender dimension. However, people's reactions to a couple and their opposing viewpoints may be different from their reaction to a person. Future research could endeavor to test this assumption.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, we believe we provide a tentative evidence for the lack of effect of political disagreement *per se* on the quality of citizens' political judgements. The findings raise serious questions about political disagreement from the normative point of view. If being exposed to disagreement does little to the quality of people's judgments, then which specific element(s) of interpersonal political talk is responsible for the theorized benefits? Future research should endeavor to further unpack this black-box of interpersonal communication. One fruitful avenue for future research would be to study the impact of emotions such as empathic concern, anger and enthusiasm experienced during a political talk on the quality of people's political choices (Neblo 2020).

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**ONLINE APPENDIX**

## A. Descriptive Statistics – UK Sample

**Descriptive Statistics for UK Sample (n=215)**

| Characteristics | Percentage |
|---|---|
| *Gender* | |
| Male | 47,64 |
| Female | 52,36 |
| *Age* | |
| 18-24 | 11,44 |
| 25-39 | 26,01 |
| 40-60 | 47,36 |
| 60 plus | 15,09 |
| *Education* | |
| GCSEs/O-levels | 15.54 |
| A-Levels | 20.21 |
| Bacherlor's degree | 31.61 |
| Trade/Technical/Vocational | 11.40 |
| Postgraduate Degree | 19.17 |
| Don't know/Don't wish to answer | 2.07 |
| *Income* | |
| Less than £10,000 | 10,36 |
| £10,000 - £19,999 | 15,54 |
| £20,000 - £39,999 | 33,68 |
| £40,000 - £59,999 | 15,54 |
| £60,000 - £99,999 | 8,81 |
| £100,000 and over | 4,66 |
| Don't know/Don't wish to answer | 11,4 |
| *Ideology* | |
| Left | 48,19 |
| Centre | 19.17 |
| Right | 32,65 |
| *Party* | |
| Labour | 55,32 |
| Conservative | 17,02 |
| Liberal Democrat | 6,38 |
| Scottish National Party (SNP) | 5,32 |
| Green Party | 9,57 |
| UKIP | 3,19 |
| Other | 3,19 |

## B. **Descriptive Statistics – Chile Sample**

**Descriptive Statistics for Chilean Sample (n=208)**

| Characteristics | Percentage |
|---|---|
| *Gender* | |
| Male | 47,60 |
| Female | 51,92 |
| *Age* | |
| 18-24 | 13,04 |
| 25-39 | 29,6 |
| 40-60 | 37,67 |
| 60 plus | 19,32 |
| *Education* | |
| Secondary education | 24.39 |
| Primary Education | 0.49 |
| Bacherlor's degree | 6.34 |
| Master/PhD | 14.15 |
| Postgraduate Degree | 19.17 |
| Technical training | 54.63 |
| *Income* | |
| Less than $3,000 | 43.32 |
| $3,000-$5999 | 10.16 |
| $6,000-$8,999 | 11.76 |
| $9,000-$11,999 | 9.09 |
| More than $12,000 | 25.67 |
| *Ideology* | |
| Left | 40,87 |
| Centre | 32,69 |
| Right | 26,98 |
| *Party* | |
| Partido Socialista de Chile | 19,23 |
| Partido Demócrata Cristiano | 11,54 |
| Partido por la Democracia | 7,69 |
| Renovación Nacional | 15,38 |
| Unión Democrática Independiente | 7,69 |
| Other | 38,46 |

## C. Vignettes and Questionnaire

**Table 1. UK Vignettes**

| Anti-Basic Income | Pro-Basic Income |
|---|---|
| These are Sarah and John. They advocate **not** introducing **a basic income scheme** in the UK, mainly because they think that it might undermine incentives for individuals to participate in society. They believe that by rewarding people for staying at home, it might limit their chances of getting jobs, finding friends through work and gaining meaning in their lives. | These are Sarah and John. They advocate introducing **a basic income scheme** in the UK, mainly because they think that it will enhance personal freedom. They believe financial insecurity usually constrains our ability to make the right choices in life. For example, this is sometimes the case for people in oppressive or exploitative relationships. |

**Table 1. Chilean Vignettes in English**

| Anti-Basic Income | Pro-Basic Income |
|---|---|
| These are María José and Miguel Ángel. They advocate **not** introducing **a basic income scheme** in the UK, mainly because they think that it might undermine incentives for individuals to participate in society. They believe that by rewarding people for staying at home, it might limit their chances of getting jobs, finding friends through work and gaining meaning in their lives. | These are María José and Miguel Ángel. They advocate introducing **a basic income scheme** in the UK, mainly because they think that it will enhance personal freedom. They believe financial insecurity usually constrains our ability to make the right choices in life. For example, this is sometimes the case for people in oppressive or exploitative relationships. |

Study 1

These are Sarah and John.

They advocate **for not** introducing **a basic income scheme** in the UK, mainly because they think that it might undermine incentives for individuals to participate in society. They believe that by rewarding people for staying at home, it might limit their chances of getting jobs, finding friends through work and gaining meaning in their lives.

These are Sarah and John.

They advocate **for** introducing **a basic income scheme** in the UK, mainly because they think that it will enhance personal freedom. They believe financial insecurity usually constrains our ability to make the right choices in life. For example, this is sometimes the case for people in oppressive or exploitative relationships.

## Chilean vignettes (in English version)

These are María José and Miguel Angel.

They advocate **for** introducing **a basic income scheme** in Chile, mainly because they think that it will enhance personal freedom. They believe financial insecurity usually constrains our ability to make the right choices in life. For example, this is sometimes the case for people in oppressive or exploitative relationships.

These are María José and Miguel Angel.

They advocate **for not** introducing **a basic income scheme** Chile, mainly because they think that it might undermine incentives for individuals to participate in society. They believe that by rewarding people for staying at home, it might limit their chances of getting jobs, finding friends through work and gaining meaning in their lives.

## Outcome variables:

Some countries are currently talking about introducing **a basic income scheme**. In a moment we will ask you to tell us whether you are against or in favour of this scheme. First, we will give you some more details.

A basic income scheme includes all of the following:

- The government pays everyone a monthly income to cover essential living costs.
- It replaces many other social benefits.
- The purpose is to guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living.
- Everyone receives the same amount regardless of whether or not they are working.
- People also keep the money they earn from work or other sources.
- This scheme is paid for by taxes.

Overall, would you be against or in favour of having this scheme in the UK?

| strongly oppose | somewhat oppose | slightly oppose | slightly favour | somewhat favour | strongly favour |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

You indicated that you **introducing a basic income scheme** in the UK. Why do you think so? Please justify your choice in one paragraph (about 4 or 5 sentences).

Now we would like to test your memory. Do you remember if Sarah and John were against or in favour of having a basic income scheme in the UK?

- ○ Against
- ○ In favour
- ○ I do not remember

## Covariates

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ○ GCSEs/O-Levels
- ○ A-Levels
- ○ Bachelor's degree
- ○ Trade/Technical/Vocational Training
- ○ Postgraduate degree
- ○ I don't know / I do not wish to answer

In what year were you born?

Which best describes your gender?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Other
- ○ I do not wish to answer

When I am upset at someone, I usually try to **put myself in his/her shoes** for a while.

I do not agree at all — I totally agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please read the following statements and indicate the extent you agree with each of them.

I sometimes find it difficult to **see** things from the **other person's point of view**.

I do not agree at all — I totally agree

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Study 2

Pre and post treatment

Assisted dying involves doctors *prescribing* a lethal dose of drugs to the *terminally ill*, but *mentally competent* patients with less than six months to live. It is legal in some countries (e.g. Belgium, Netherlands) and illegal in others. Some citizens are in favour of legalising assisted dying in their countries, while others strongly oppose it.

We are interested in your opinion. On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means "strongly disapprove" and 10 means "strongly approve", please indicate whether you approve or disapprove of legalising assisted dying in your country of origin?


Please justify your position in one paragraph (4/5 sentences):

Perspective Taking

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate **how well it describes you** by choosing the appropriate answer. Please read each item carefully before responding.

| | not well at all | slightly well | moderately well | very well | extremely well |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Before criticizing those **who think differently from me**, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to **other people's arguments**. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I sometimes try to understand my friends better by **imagining** how things look **from their perspective**. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I sometimes find it difficult to **see** things from the point of view of **those people who think differently from me.** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to **"put myself in their shoes"** for a while. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

## D. Calculation of Cognitive Complexity Score

Consistent with previous research (Owens and Wedeking 2011), we used 10 LIWC indicators, in order to construct the cognitive complexity scale. LIWC scans the text and categorizes each word and word stem in different categories. The categories we used are as follows: causation, insight, sixl, discrepancy, inhibition, tentativeness, exclusive, certainty, inclusiveness and negations.

The explanations for each indicator are adapted from Tausczik & Pennebaker (2010), Pennebaker, Boyd, Jordan & Blackburn (2015), Owens & Wedeking (2011) and Wyss et al., (Wyss, Beste, and Bächtiger 2015).

*Causation* tries to capture the extent to which the person sees connections between different dimensions of the issue and the extent to which changes in one may affect the changes in another. It is captured via identification of words like *because, effect, affect* and *hence.* The score captures the percentage of words per speech act. Higher scores on causation is correlated with greater cognitive complexity.

*Insight* captures the percentage of words in the language about generating insight. LIWC calculates the score by identifying words such as *think, consider, know, believe* in the text. This identifies the extent to which people are able to have an in-depth understanding of the issue. Higher scores are indicative of higher cognitive complexity.

*Discrepancy* is measured by identifying the words such as *should, would,* and *could* and it captures the extent to which a person "identifies discrepancies, differences, or inconsistencies between, for example, situations or cases" (Owens and Wedeking 2011, 1056). Higher scores are indicative of higher levels of cognitive complexity.

LIWC measures *inhibit* by identifying the words such as *block, interfere, constrain, stop, obstacle.* It denotes the "degree of inhibition displayed by the decision maker" (Owens and Wedeking 2011, 1056). The higher is the words of inhibition in a speech act, the higher is the cognitive complexity.

*Tentativeness* is a percentage of words per speech act denoting the "tentative nature of a topical aspect", such as *maybe, perhaps, guess, fairly* (Wyss, Beste, and Bächtiger 2015). It is meant to capture how "hesitant or unsure one is about something" (Owen and Smith 2015, 1056). Higher scores are associated with higher levels of cognitive complexity.

*Exclusive* indicator shows the percentage of words per speech act about exclusive nature of a topic aspect. Exclusive words are measured by identifying the words such as *but, without, exclude* and are useful for making distinctions. Individuals seem to use these expressions when trying to make a

distinction between what it is and what is not in the category. Higher usage is associated with lower levels of cognitive complexity.

LIWC measures the *certainty* by identifying words such as *always, absolutely, inevitable* and is meant to measure the confidence of the individual. Increased amounts are linked to lower levels of cognitive complexity.

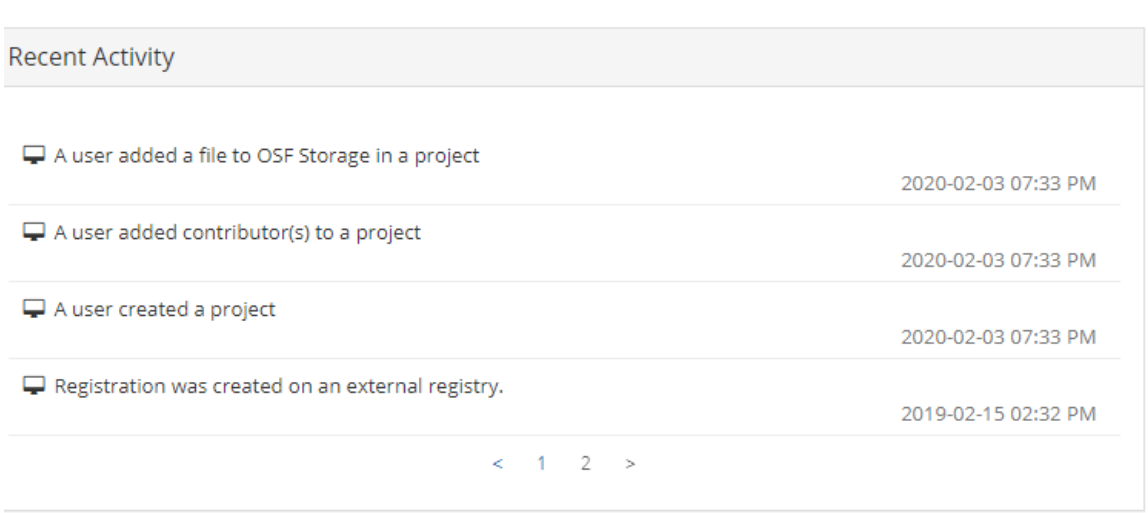
LIWC searches for words *with,* and *and* for *inclusiveness* dimension and captures the percentage of words per text denoting the inclusive nature of a topical aspect. Higher the number of *inclusive* words in the speech act, higher the levels of cognitive complexity.

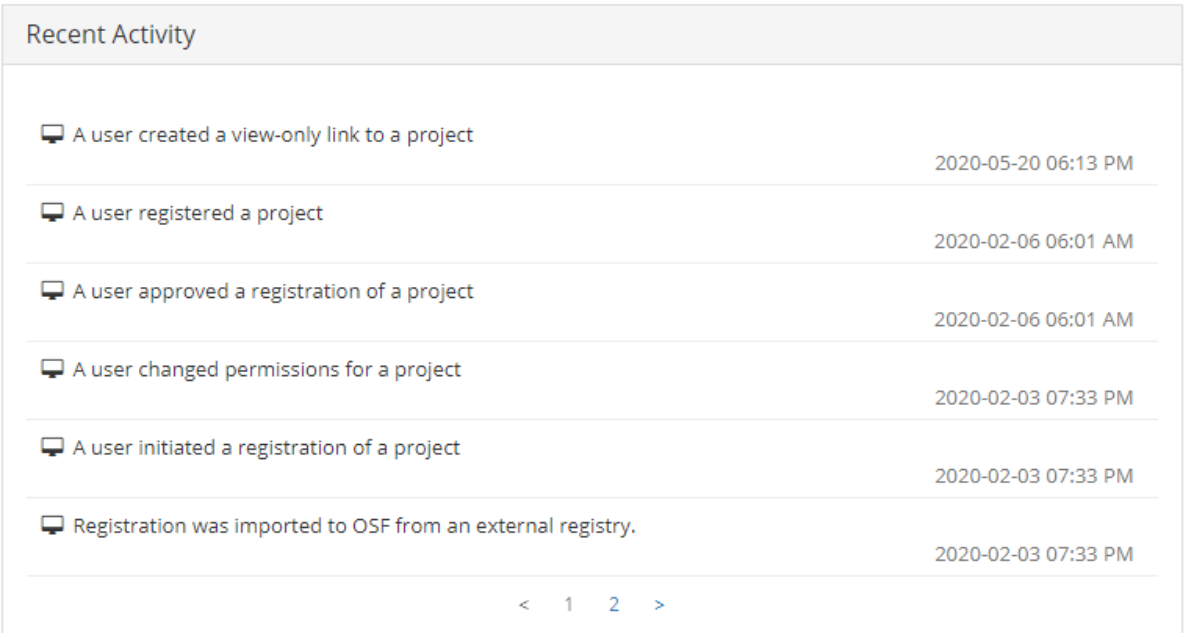
*Negations* indicate the percentage of words per text expressing negations. It identifies words, such as *no* and *never* and it is meant to "measure to what extent an individual acknowledges the absence or opposite of something that is positive or affirmative" (Owen and Smith 2015, 1056). It is positively associated with lower levels of cognitive complexity.

*Sixl* denote the percentage of words in the text which are greater than six letters. Their increased use indicates higher complex language. Higher numbers are indicative of higher scores of cognitive complexity.

## E. Pre-registration

Before data collection, we preregistered the experiment for Study 1 at egap. It has been recently exported to osf platform. The preanalysis plan file has our names on it, and thus we cannot reveal the link to the preregistration plan. Instead, we have included the screenshot of the anonymized details of the registration and the full pre-analysis plan.




**Does Exposure to Disagreement Induce More Considered Political Judgement?**

**Abstract**

In this proposal I describe the design and the pre-analysis plan for a survey experiment to be conducted with UK & Chilean citizens. The survey experiment is aimed at testing the effect of exposure to disagreement on reflectiveness of citizens' political judgements, more specifically with respect to their thoughts on introducing basic income in the UK. Respondents are randomly assigned either to a disagreement condition, where they read about a couple (with a stock photo) who hold a view on basic income, which is very different from their own views, or to an agreement condition, where they read about a couple (with a stock photo) who hold views consistent with their own thoughts on the issue. My main proxy for reflectiveness of political judgements is Tetlock's *integrative cognitive complexity* measure, and I complement it with *opinion transformation* measure, which is the change in the attitudes on basic income after experimental stimuli. Relying on the predictions of the deliberative democratic theory, I hypothesize that exposure would increase the reflectiveness of citizens' political judgements with respect to basic income.

**Background**

For political outcomes to be legitimate, political decisions taken by democratic citizens should echo their *reflected* opinions, not top-of-the-head judgements (Barabas 2004; Chambers 2003). However, against the backdrop of well-documented and burgeoning literature arguing about the biased nature of public opinion (Leeper and Slothuus 2014), one wonders about the feasibility of this democratic objective. Proponents of deliberative democracy theory argue that they have a solution to this problem. Deliberative democrats contend that, engaging in public deliberation, i.e. "communication [that] induces reflection on preferences in non-coercive fashion" (Dryzek 2000, 76), where they can share arguments, narratives and stories with diverse others can lead citizens to come to more informed, considered, and reflective judgements. Although this assumption has been widely prevalent within the scholarship, it has mostly been theoretical in nature. There has been scarce attempts at empirically testing the validity of this claim. It is understandable, given some serious empirical challenges related to testing the assumptions of deliberative democracy. Some scholars argue that the biggest challenge is to near impossibility of creating a political talk which meets all the normative requirements of deliberative democrats in order to be called a deliberation (Mutz 2006; Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2011). Even in cases where a set of quasi-deliberative discussions are carefully constructed for the purposes of empirical research, it is challenging to disentangle the effects of different elements of the "grand treatment" (Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2011, 263), when the components constituting the deliberation are varied at the same time (Mutz 2006, 58). Therefore, in this project, rather than studying an ideal deliberation per se with all its normative components, and requirements, consistent with Mutz (2002, 2006), Hwang et al. (2018) and others, I will focus on one component of deliberation, which constitutes

an integral part of almost all of its definitions: citizens' exposure to political disagreement. Although I understand it cannot fully reflect the whole idea of deliberative democracy of what public deliberation entails, examining one separate component I believe can be useful for uncovering the "blackbox" of deliberation.

Prior empirical research examined other putative benefits of exposure to disagreement, such as political tolerance (Mutz, 2002), open-mindedness (Hwang et al., 2018), political participation (Ikeda and Boase 2011) and citizens' ability to generate reasons (Price, Cappella, and Nir 2002). However there have been scarce attempts at testing its effect on considered judgements. Although the seminal work by Price et al. (2002) is theoretically close to my conception of reflective political judgement, it does not necessarily capture the concept empirically. The authors use 'argument repertoire', the number of arguments individuals can give in favour and against the issue - as a proxy for the quality of public opinion. I believe merely knowing about different arguments is not a precise indication of considered political opinion. For the opinion to be reflective, citizens need to integrate these differing perspectives in their judgements, when weighing pros and cons and coming to more thought-through political opinions.

Consequently, in this project, by using a better proxy for considered political judgement – Integrative Complexity measure (Tetlock 1983)- I examine the effect of exposure to differing political viewpoints on the reflectiveness of individual's political judgement with the help of an online survey experiment.

Thus, the **research question** I endeavor to respond by this experiment is the following:

*Does exposure to differing political viewpoints lead to more reflective political judgements?*

**Hypotheses**

H1: Exposure to oppositional political viewpoints leads to more considered political judgements (compared to placebo group – exposure to consistent political viewpoints)

H2: This effect is moderated by dispositional perspective-taking abilities of citizens. In this, I predict a nuanced relationship.

H2(a): Those citizens who score high on visual (less-demanding type of) perspective-taking is more affected by this relationship

H2(b): There is either smaller or no moderating effect for spatial perspective-taking.

H3: There are gender differences in the effect of exposure to disagreement on the considerateness of political judgements.

**Experimental Design**

Respondents will be randomly assigned either to agreement condition or disagreement condition.

Pre-experimental question:

Some countries are currently talking about introducing **a basic income scheme**. In a moment I will ask you to tell me whether you are against or in favour of this scheme. First, I will give you some more details.

A basic income scheme includes all of the following:

- The government pays everyone a monthly income to cover essential living costs.
- It replaces many other social benefits.
- The purpose is to guarantee everyone a minimum standard of living.
- Everyone receives the same amount regardless of whether or not they are working.
- People also keep the money they earn from work or other sources.
- This scheme is paid for by taxes.

Overall, would you be against or in favour of having this scheme in the UK?

Strongly against Strongly in favour

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10


*Experiment*

**Start of Block: Agreement_Condition_LM**

*Display This Question:*

*If Some countries are currently talking about introducing a basic income scheme. In a moment I will... [ 1 ] > 5*

Q2 These are Sarah and John.
They advocate **for** introducing **a basic income scheme** in the UK, mainly because they think that it will enhance personal freedom. They believe financial insecurity usually constrains our ability to make the right choices in life. For example, it is sometimes the case for people in oppressive or exploitative relationships.

*Display This Question:*

*If Some countries are currently talking about introducing a basic income scheme. In a moment I will... [ 1 ] = 5*

*Or Some countries are currently talking about introducing a basic income scheme. In a moment I will... [ 1 ] < 5*

Q4 These are Sarah and John.
They advocate **for not** introducing **a basic income scheme** in the UK, mainly because they think that it might undermine incentives of individuals to participate in society. They believe that by rewarding people for staying at home, it might limit their probabilities of getting jobs, finding friends through work and gaining meaning to their lives.

**Disagreement_Condition_LM**

*Display This Question:*

*If Some countries are currently talking about introducing a basic income scheme. In a moment I will... [ 1 ] = 5*

*Or Some countries are currently talking about introducing a basic income scheme. In a moment I will... [ 1 ] < 5*

Q6 These are Sarah and John.
They advocate **for** introducing **a basic income scheme** in the UK, mainly because they think that it will enhance personal freedom. They believe financial insecurity usually constrains our ability to make the right choices in life. For example, it is sometimes the case for people in oppressive or exploitative relationships.

*Display This Question:*

*If Some countries are currently talking about introducing a basic income scheme. In a moment I will... [ 1 ] > 5*

Q8 These are Sarah and John.
They advocate **for not** introducing **a basic income scheme** in the UK, mainly because they think that it might undermine incentives of individuals to participate in society. They believe that by rewarding people for staying at home, it might limit their probabilities of getting jobs, finding friends through work and gaining meaning to their lives.

*Dependent Variables:*

What about you? Overall, would you be against or in favour of having a basic income scheme in the UK?

| | Strongly against | | | | | | | | Strongly in favour |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 1 () | | | | | | | | | | |

Q15 Please justify the opinion you have expressed above in one paragraph (4/5 sentences).

_____

_____

_____

**Analysis**

I will implement the following sets of analyses. First, I will estimate the sample average treatment effect through regressions predicting my dependent variable - integrative complexity of thinking) with an indicator for experimental group. I will also use the following covariates: Gender, Age, Country (Chile or UK), marital status, and Dispositional Perspective-Taking Abilities (visual & spatial separately). For robustness checks I will also run & report a bivariate specification without these covariates for each model. Additionally, I will run the same analyses with opinion transformation proxy for comparison. For heterogeneous effects, linear regression models with interaction effects will be conducted.

Additionally, I will run CACE (Complier Average Causal Effect) analysis with 2SLS (two stage least squares) instrumental approach, with the correct answer to manipulation check question as compliance.

**Non-compliance**

Consistent with the best practice, I will not exclude those who fail the manipulation check. Instead I will run CACE for robustness checks.

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## F. **Deviations from the PAP**

1. In the pre-analysis plan, our H2 had two sub-hypotheses, which distinguished between two different types of perspective taking, spatial and visual. The idea was primarily to test and validate these differences (previously unstudied within the literature) with other survey data. This was ambitious from our part. Although we never conducted those studies, preliminary results from other data showed that there was no difference between these two items. However, we run the analyses with two items separately as well and the results are exactly the same.

2. In the PAP, we say that we would run CACE (Complier Average Causal Effect) analysis with 2SLS (two stage least squares) instrumental approach, with the correct answer to manipulation check question as compliance. Because of the space restrictions in the paper, we do not report it in the manuscript.

Titel: “Doctoraten in de Sociale Wetenschappen en in de Sociale en Culturele Antropologie”
Link: http://soc.kuleuven.be/fsw/doctoralprogramme/ourdoctors