

Previous studies consistently demonstrated that a strong belief in a just world was accompanied by the justification of inequality and by low political participation. On the other hand, political efficacy and collective efficacy were found to be positively related to political participation. It is assumed that when political efficacy is high, a strong belief in a just world would lead to participation instead of justification of inequality. Only when political efficacy is low, justification of inequality would increase with the belief in a just world. In a sample of 150 students the expected moderating effect of collective efficacy on the relationship between belief in a just world and justification of inequality could be established empirically: When collective efficacy was high, justification of inequality did not inevitably increase. However, political efficacy did not show the same moderating influence that collective efficacy had. Possible reasons for this discrepancy will be discussed. It is open to question whether the moderating effect of collective efficacy generalizes to political behavior.

The Impact of Everyday Talk on Political Knowledge and Voting Correctly

**Gabor A Toka, Central European University & University of Oxford*

[Panel] 4N Deliberation, Discussion, and Their Effects

[Section] Electoral Behavior, Participation and Public Opinion

This paper proposes a normative benchmark and a new empirical method to evaluate one possible contribution of political discussions with peers to democratic processes. While the empirical analysis only studies the impact of everyday interpersonal political discussion, the method can in principle be used for the same purpose in the case of any activity that can possibly lead to knowledge gains. The key idea is to evaluate the contribution of political discussions to the quality of democracy via their ability to assist participants to emulate what their voting behavior would be if they were fully informed. The method of evaluation starts off from Bartels' (1996) simulations of the difference between observed and hypothetical fully informed election outcomes in cross-sectional data. A related technique is proposed whereby a straightforward assessment of functional equivalence in promoting fully informed vote choices between knowledge gains and other variables—like frequency of political discussion in the given analysis—becomes possible. The results suggest that participation in interpersonal political discussions, in the given data, appears to increase one's ability to offer an opinion on political matters and may also lead to gains in factual knowledge. However, the respondents' ability to vote as if they were fully informed is, if anything, negatively affected by their participation in everyday political discussions.

The Impact of Year-Long Deliberative Processes on the Structure and Quality of Opinions

**Patrick Fournier, Université de Montréal*

Henk van der Kolk, University of Twente; André Blais, Université de Montréal; R. Kenneth Carty, University of British Columbia

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[Panel] 4N Deliberation, Discussion, and Their Effects

[Section] Electoral Behavior, Participation and Public Opinion

Abstract: In three recent instances, politicians have let a group of ordinary people decide important public policy. Citizen assemblies on electoral reform were implemented in British Columbia, the Netherlands, and Ontario. Participants were selected through a combination of random draw and self-selection. They spent almost an entire year learning about electoral systems, consulting the public, deliberating, debating and ultimately deciding what design should be adopted. This paper examines the structure and quality of individual and collective decisions reached by citizens during these lengthy deliberations dealing with a complex, technical and unfamiliar issue. Specifically, we ask: To what extent are individual preferences driven by general political values and specific objectives of electoral reform in a logical and coherent way? Did the structure of opinion determinants evolve (increasing or decreasing) over the span of the proceedings? Are there important differences in the decisions made by the (initially) better informed as compared to the less knowledgeable? And were the final collective recommendations to the public and the government reasonable? In sum, this paper evaluates the capacity of citizens to overcome their typical political ignorance and to articulate well-reasoned policy proposals.

The Influence of Perceived Threats & Racial Ambivalence on Attitudes toward Hispanic Immigration

**Todd K Hartman, Stony Brook University*

[Panel] 2D Correlates of Attitudes towards Immigrants

[Section] Intergroup Relations